

# *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*

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Special Issue: Overview of Educational Issues



Quarter Horse Foal Ready to Run  
Lenore, Manitoba



# *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*

**Volume 16, Issue 3, 2024**

**Special Issue: Overview of Educational Issues**

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Aloysius Anyichie (Ph.D.) is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Students' Services in Brandon University. His research focuses on supporting culturally diverse students' regulation of learning, engagement, and motivation. He collaborates with educators in designing learning environments based on a culturally responsive self-regulated learning framework (Anyichie, 2018; Anyichie & Butler, 2017) to support engagement and motivation for all learners. He teaches courses in the B.Ed. After Degree program (e.g., Adolescent Development and the Learning Processes, Evaluation and Assessment) and M.Ed. Graduate Program (e.g., Overview of Educational Issues, Motivation in Education).

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## INTRODUCTION

### Overview of Educational Issues

Aloysius C. Anyichie

Our classrooms in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially in the western world, attract students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds with diverse lived experiences and learning needs. The diversity of our student population is beneficial in the ways it enriches learning experiences as it creates opportunities for sharing multiple perspectives and experiences. However, this diversity has also become a challenge for students from the minority cultures who often experience lack of engagement especially in classrooms that do not value their background and lived experiences (Anyichie et al., 2023a, 2023b). Consequently, student diversity has become a contemporary educational issue as educators struggle in designing a supportive learning environment for all learners in culturally diverse classrooms. To better support all students in today's multicultural classrooms, there is a need to constantly examine how our educational policies and instructional practices are attending to their diverse needs (e.g., equitable access to quality education, language barriers, ensuring student mental health and well-being, financial and housing crisis). Therefore, educators are encouraged to engage in constant professional development, especially on cultural intelligence, to improve themselves so as to better understand the diverse needs of their students and support their positive learning experiences.

During the 2023/2024 fall term, in-service educators who are pursuing their master's degree in education enrolled in our graduate course Overview of Educational Issues in Brandon University. This course is designed to engage the students in exploring important educational issues through critical inquiry and [to] improve their academic writing skills. One of the major assignments in this course was for the students to identify, based on their personal experiences and perceptions in practice, what they consider the major issues in our educational system today. They were expected to conduct a literature review around their identified issue while proffering some solutions. Building on collaborative inquiry framework (Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Timperley et al., 2014), the students were guided in identifying their issues of interest, conducting brief literature reviews, reflecting on their practices, and improving their academic writings. Based on the similarities of some students' chosen issues, some opted to collaborate on the assignment by working in small groups. They had opportunities to offer and receive constructive feedback on their papers before final submissions. While each assignment was unique in how it addressed the identified issue, the common theme that emerged was the impact of multiple layers of socio-cultural context (e.g., home, family, cultural background, social media, classrooms, and teacher practices) on students' learning processes. This theme draws attention to the importance of understanding the interaction between the learners-in-context while addressing the current issues in education. This special issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education* features three outstanding articles from the students after undergoing additional reviews based on their interest in having their papers published.

It should be noted that Brandon University campuses are located on Treaty 1 and Treaty 2 homelands of the Dakota Oyate, Anishinabek, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dene, and Red River Metis Peoples. In the opening article, Carter-Plouffe (2024) considers the importance of sense of belonging in students' lives. She examines how educators could support sense of belonging in their schools and classrooms, especially for Indigenous students. Specifically, Carter-Plouffe argues for the implementation of Indigenous perspectives and practices (e.g., circle of courage, land-based education, whole-child approach to teaching, Seven Grandfather Teachings) as a way of supporting students' sense of belonging.

The next article by Hunkin (2024) looks at the key influences on the development of emergent literacy skills. Emergent literacy skills refer to knowledge of letter and their sounds, word recognition, comprehension and phonological awareness (Piasta et al., 2020; Puranik et al., 2021). Hunkin explored the many factors that influence children's ability to read and write which are regarded as the main components of literacy. However, the factors considered in this article include home literacy environment (i.e., parent teaching and shared reading), classroom dynamics (e.g., classroom sizes, teacher assistant supports, teacher assistant training), and classroom interventions (e.g., small-group tutoring, one-to-one intervention). Educators are called to consider these factors while supporting the development of their young students' literacy skills that are essential for academic success.

Another contemporary issue ensued from the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, we migrated to virtual learning that added to the amount of time students spent on social media. Although social media is a good tool for effective learning and communication, it also has some negative impacts on the students (Talaue et al., 2018). Thus, the third article by Ellis et al. (2024) examines the negative impacts of social media on adolescents. Based on their review, Ellis et al. identified impacts focused on health (e.g., social-emotional, mental, physical health) and academic performance. Ellis et al. note that adolescents are struggling a lot with the effects of social media usage on their learning, especially after the COVID-19, and calls on the need to support their responsible self-regulation of these tools and educate them on balancing their life online and in-person.

Student learning engagement is influenced by different contextual factors. For example, research has shown how students' task perception in terms of being valuable, important, and relevant to them is associated to their learning engagement (Anyichie, 2018; in press; Anyichie et al., 2023a, 2023b). As our classrooms are increasingly populated by students with diverse languages and cultures, the Focus on Faculty article by Anyichie (2024) circles back to the major theme across the articles in this issue, by examining the impact of social and cultural context on students' motivational beliefs, especially self-efficacy, and how educators could leverage the understanding of such impact in designing an efficacy-supportive learning environment for all learners. Academic self-efficacy defines students' judgement and interpretations of their capability to be successful in completing a task (Bandura, 1997). Building on a case study of Frank, an African international student in North America, the article exposes subtle ways in which Frank's self-efficacy development over the school years was shaped by his cultural background. For example, it shows how Frank's socio-cultural expectations (e.g., making the family proud), classroom context (e.g., teacher practices), and religious belief (e.g., the power of prayer in dealing with challenges and achieving success) were influential in his self-efficacy belief, motivation, and engagement. Anyichie (2024) strongly calls for more empirical study to investigate how non-western students' self-efficacy develops over time and how their self-efficacy, engagement, and motivation are situated in their social and cultural contexts.

The articles in this special issue together provide a great starting point for all educational stakeholders to consider some of the issues that classroom teachers, especially in Canada, consider essential to address in our educational system. These articles show how educators can be researchers as part of their journey to address the challenges they face in their classrooms. Finally, I hope that policy makers, educators, and researchers will find this special issue so informative that they will consider acting on the authors' recommendations in their various contexts.

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## INVITED ARTICLES

### Indigenous Perspectives and Sense of Belonging in the Classroom: A Literature Review

Madison Carter-Plouffe

#### Abstract

*This article examines how educators can create a sense of belonging in their school and classroom communities by infusing Indigenous perspectives. A literature review was conducted by examining various peer-reviewed sources. It was found that students who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to be more motivated at school, take risks, and have positive mental health experiences. Educators can promote a strong sense of belonging through the classroom community, peer relationships, and the physical learning environment by incorporating Indigenous perspectives such as a whole-child approach, land-based education, the Seven Grandfather Teachings, and the Circle of Courage. Results showed that a sense of belonging can be accomplished through Indigenous perspectives by considering social-emotional status of children, the peacefulness of the physical space, and seeing children as positive contributors to society.*

In Canada, students typically spend 5,500 cumulative hours between ages 6-11 in school (Statistics Canada, 2020). Children spend a large portion of their lives in classrooms, and many learning outcomes are affected by whether students feel they belong within their school communities or not. Bouchard and Berg (2017) described “sense of belonging” as feeling accepted and a sense of fit within a community. The literature shows centuries of Indigenous practices that support sense of belonging within a community. There are ways that educators can connect Indigenous perspectives to sense of belonging for students in their classrooms. As a result, this article presents how implementing Indigenous perspectives creates a sense of belonging for all students. It analyzes the importance of sense of belonging within a classroom community, peer relationships, and the physical learning environment using specific Indigenous perspectives such as a whole-child approach, land-based education, the Seven Grandfather Teachings, and the Circle of Courage.

#### The Importance of Belonging

To understand how to use Indigenous perspectives to create a sense of belonging, we must first analyze why belonging is important. Student sense of belonging is important because it impacts their success in school. Research confirms that a strong sense of belonging in elementary-age students has a positive impact on academic and health outcomes (Allen et al., 2021). When students feel they belong within their classroom and school community, they may feel more likely to fully participate in their learning experience and take more risks. For students to take risks, they must feel a sense of safety and support. This may also influence attendance because students who feel they belong to a community may feel more excited to be with that community. Consistent attendance has a positive correlation with students' academic success. Brendtro et al. (2013), creators of the Circle of Courage model, stated that students' understanding of how their behaviour and actions can benefit their community is a strong indicator of academic success. Students will contribute positively to their school and classroom communities when they are empathetic, helpful, generous, cooperative, and pleasant. These contributions and behaviours help to create a safe and supportive learning environment.



Student sense of belonging is important because it affects their mental health. If students do not feel a sense of belonging, they are more likely to experience negative mental health struggles such as depression and other risky behaviours (Millings et al., 2012). Insecure attachment styles that involve feeling abandoned or unsupported by others lead to a higher possibility of developing depression. Students' attachment styles can vary and change greatly during their adolescence. It is important that educators give students the tools to create healthy attachments and relationships with their peers, reducing the risk of developing depression. Insecure peer attachments also influence mood and self-esteem (Millings et al., 2012). Students who have insecure attachment styles and lack a sense of belonging feel distrust towards others and do not feel as though they have a support system during times of stress. They may not picture themselves as worthy of having positive connections with others. Using Indigenous perspectives in the classroom, such as the Circle of Courage and the Seven Grandfather Teachings, is a holistic way to ensure that all students have the tools to create positive relationships among others and create a sense of belonging within the school community.

### **Belonging Within the Classroom Community**

One Indigenous perspective educators can use to create a sense of belonging is the Circle of Courage. The Circle of Courage was first introduced by Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (Manitoba Education, n.d.). The four quadrants of the Circle are belonging, generosity, independence, and mastery, and the model is based on a traditional Indigenous medicine wheel or sacred hoop. The Circle of Courage gives educators a framework to create a sense of belonging in the classroom because it is a model for positive youth development. Jackson (2014) stated that positive youth development is an outlook that sees all youth as being positive contributors to society. When educators use the Circle of Courage model in their classroom, they are giving students the tools to become positive contributors within their classroom communities. A large part of being a contributing member to society is feeling as if one belongs to a community and therefore has responsibility towards that community. Jackson claimed that another part of positive youth development is socialization, focusing primarily on the skills, attitudes, and values of the groups of which they will become members of. Similar to the Seven Teachings, educators can incorporate the Circle of Courage into their classrooms by creating a class value or goal system around the four quadrants. Students can learn to value their classroom and community within the four quadrants of the Circle of Courage, which leads them to feel a sense of belonging and responsibility within that community. Positive youth development promotes self-efficacy because of the 5C's: competence, character, confidence, caring, and connection (Lerner, 2009). Each of these qualities builds students' independence, enabling them to accomplish tasks or goals. Therefore, the Circle of Courage can be used as a goal-setting system whereby students can set goals, self-assess, and reflect on their learning.

We see similar themes of strength in community and collectively working towards the greater good of community-based caring in land-based education. Land-based education occurs when students learn from the natural world and their responsibility to the land. It uses the land and nature as the first teacher (Bowra et al., 2021). Gaudet (2021) explained that when children learn with the land, they feel the unpredictability of the climate and their surroundings, which helps them to understand the difference between individualistic attitudes and sharing their resources and knowledge. This is a natural way for educators to teach their students about the values needed to create a healthy classroom community, such as sharing, problem-solving, and teamwork. As a strong classroom community is established, all students should feel a stronger sense of belonging. Learning how to rely on the land gives students the confidence and tools to be independent and fosters a sense of pride in what they are collectively working towards, such as protecting the land and resources. To do so, educators must ensure that the classroom community is a safe space where student behaviour does not impact the learning environment.



The Circle of Courage creates a sense of belonging in the classroom by offering educators a framework to better understand child behaviour. Reyneke (2020) stated that the Circle of Courage provides strategies throughout the four quadrants to manage unexpected behaviours and improve the classroom culture. When the Circle of Courage is used as a restorative justice model, it provides educators with the knowledge of why children behave the way they do, as well as proactive ways to change the classroom culture. Reyneke (2020) explained how certain behaviours impact both the learning environment and peer relationships. In order to create a safe and balanced learning environment, educators must have an understanding of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence, and of how to use classroom management strategies to manage the classroom and create an environment where children are ready to learn and develop positive peer relationships.

### **Belonging Through Peer Relationships**

When educators use a whole-child approach to teaching, students are more likely to feel a sense of belonging. According to Chafouleas and Iovino (2021), the whole-child lens of teaching is embedded within the six developmental pathways of child development previously established by Comer (2020). The six pathways are cognitive, physical, social, language, ethical, and psychological. The social pathway features the ability to build and maintain relationships with peers across multiple settings. As educators engage in whole-child teaching, they also facilitate the development of student relationships. As students create and maintain strong relationships across multiple domains, they are more likely to feel a strong sense of social belonging. According to Yoder (2014), two of the five social-emotional competencies required for students to be successful in school and life are related to social regulation and relationship management. Social-emotional learning considers the whole child rather than just academic ability. Students who have strong social-emotional skills are more likely to identify social cues, evaluate emotional reactions from others, appreciate diversity, communicate effectively, and manage conflicts appropriately. Whole-child approaches such as considering the developmental pathways and social-emotional teaching help students to cultivate relationships and establish a strong sense of belonging.

Cultivating and creating relationships is a way that a sense of belonging can be established through the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Using the Seven Grandfather Teachings as a classroom value system creates a culture of respect, inclusion, and belonging among students. When educators use the Seven Grandfather Teachings in their classroom values, they are teaching their students about the purpose and value of respect, love, humility, wisdom, bravery, honesty, and truth. Absolon (2016) clarified that the Seven Grandfather Teachings model mutual respect and inclusivity for everyone. These guiding principles are the foundation for mutual respect of all students and adults in the classroom, regardless of ability, identity, background, or status. Mahar et al. (2013) noted how social belonging is defined by the subjective feeling of respect. When students feel completely respected for who they are, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging within their classroom. Verbos and Humphries (2014) claimed that the Teachings are instructions on human responsibility and values that people need to create relationships with one another. Educators cannot assume that students have a complete understanding of human responsibility. They therefore need to explicitly teach these responsibilities in their classes by helping students understand the importance of respecting one another, acting with integrity and fairness, and being accountable for their share of the classroom environment. Using the Seven Grandfather Teachings as a value system gives students a reference point that is easy to understand and reminds them of their responsibilities towards the classroom and their peers.

## **Belonging Within the Physical Learning Environment**

Along with respect and inclusion, the Seven Grandfather Teachings highlight themes of peace and safety. Absolon (2016) stated that the Seven Grandfather Teachings are guiding principles that can restore balance and harmony. Mahar et al. (2013) claimed that physical and social environments affect sense of belonging. Because the physical environment impacts belonging, it is important to use principles that promote balance, harmony, peace, and safety in the classroom. While some students feel belonging as connection with others, others may see it as belonging within a physical space. Therefore, educators need to ensure that their classroom and school environments are safe and harmonious for students to feel welcomed into.

This relates to the Indigenous perspective of land-based education where the physical space is neutral, connected, and safe. Land-based education creates a safe space for students to connect with each other and nature. According to Fast et al. (2021), researchers view land-based education as a safe space where students can learn without feelings of shame or judgement. Land-based education occurs in a neutral place where students can learn and engage in inquiry about the natural world that surrounds them. Where some students may perceive the physical space of a classroom as a barrier to belonging, the outdoors is a space where most students feel calm, connected, and safe. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (2020) described land-based learning as asking questions, making mistakes, and learning from those mistakes. When students feel they are in a natural space where they can make mistakes without judgement from their peers, they are more likely to feel like they belong and are actively part of the learning experience. Educators can use overall skills and attitudes such as observation, constructing, inquiry, research, predicting, recording, exploring, and reflecting to guide their land-based education journey in all subject areas.

### **Conclusion**

To better understand Indigenous perspectives on belonging, this article first looked at why belonging is important and how it affects students' overall well-being and mental health. The literature confirms that a strong sense of belonging directly correlates to academic achievement. This relationship is due to the fact that a sense of belonging giving students the confidence to take risks in their learning, as well as an excitement to attend school. It also correlates with whether students may experience mental health struggles such as depression. It is important for educators to give students the tools to feel a sense of belonging and form healthy attachments with their peers.

Belonging within a classroom community can be accomplished through the Circle of Courage model and land-based education. The Circle of Courage creates a sense of belonging because it is a model for positive youth development, which is an outlook that children are positive contributors to society and therefore feel a sense of responsibility towards the community they belong to. When incorporating land-based education, students have the confidence to be curious and make mistakes, knowing they are supported within their community and feeling proud of what they are collectively working towards.

Belonging through peer relationships is modelled through a whole-child approach and the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The developmental pathways and social-emotional status of children as seen through the whole-child approach empowers students to cultivate relationships, which leads to a sense of belonging. The competency of emotional regulation highlights specific skills that would help students develop relationships. Using the Seven Grandfather Teachings creates an environment of inclusion and mutual respect, which leads to a feeling of social belonging. The Teachings are a model for human responsibility; therefore, educators must provide explicit instructions to students on their responsibilities towards each other and the classroom. This simultaneously creates an environment where students feel safe and welcomed into.

Lastly, this article analyzed belonging within a physical learning environment. The Seven Grandfather Teachings create safe and peaceful environments, which relates to land-based education that provides neutral and calm spaces where children can organically connect with one another and nature. Land-based education encourages children to be curious and make mistakes, leading to children feeling as if they belong through an active learning experience.

Future examinations of students' sense of belonging in school should consider how Indigenous perspectives fit into reconciliation efforts in Canada, including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. While Indigenous pedagogy dates back centuries, reconciliatory education is a relatively new concept. Due to the nature of this topic, limitations include lack of documentation for traditional Indigenous teachings because the main source of those teachings is traditional oral storytelling. There is also a lack of research directly relating to Treaty 1 territory teachings. Further research will need to take into consideration that there is no standard way to gather this data.

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### **About the Author**

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# **Key Influences on the Development of Emergent Literacy Skills: A Literature Review**

**Randi M. Hunkin**

## **Abstract**

*This literature review examines the main factors in a child's life that directly impact the development of emergent literacy skills. The literature in this review was collected from several peer-reviewed articles and government-certified websites. As discussed in the literature, the development of emergent literacy skills is dependent upon a child's phonological awareness. The review identified the home literacy environment (HLE) as an area that is influential in developing emergent literacy skills, as a result of providing a continuation from school to home. Other key factors include the dynamic of the classroom and programming or interventions provided. Overall, this literature review demonstrates the importance of emergent literacy. The author concludes that the home literacy environment, classroom dynamic, and interventions/programming provided are the main factors in a child's life that affect early literacy development.*

Literacy refers to the ability to read and write. Reading requires a wide variety of skills, and children who have not mastered these skills often struggle to be effective readers. Over the last ten years, approximately 46% of grade 3 students in Manitoba have met the literacy expectations for reading, so 54% do not yet meet the expected outcomes (Government of Manitoba, 2012-2022). Thus, 54% of grade 3 students have not mastered emergent literacy skills. Three of the most prevalent factors affecting emergent literacy skills are the Home Literacy Environment (HLE), classroom dynamic, and interventions and programming. Within the HLE, parent teaching and shared reading are areas that impact literacy skill development. The classroom dynamic includes class size, teacher assistant (TA) support, and TA training. Based on a review of the literature, this article discusses the importance of emergent literacy skill development, and argues that the main influences on early reading/writing skill development are the HLE, classroom dynamic, and programs or interventions provided.

This literature review has three goals. The first is to discuss the importance of emergent literacy skill development and to elaborate on what emergent literacy skills entail. The second is to evaluate the influence of the HLE and classroom dynamic on early reading. The third is to discuss the effect of interventions and programming on literacy skills development. Overall, this article aims at foregrounding the importance of emergent literacy and identifying a few areas for improving emergent literacy.

## **Literacy and Emergent Literacy Skills**

Reading and writing are the main components of literacy. According to Frankel et al. (2016), literacy is how people use reading, writing, and oral language to develop meaning. To successfully accomplish this, it is crucial that emergent literacy skills are developed. Emergent literacy skills include letter/sound knowledge, word recognition, phonological awareness, and comprehension (Piasta et al., 2020; Puranik et al., 2011). A major component, and arguably the most important, as stated by Slavin et al. (2010), is phonological awareness (PA). PA refers to the ability to manipulate and recognize letter-sound relationships, syllables and words (Rice et al., 2022). When students understand letter-sound relationships, they can apply that knowledge to understand how syllables and words are formed. This understanding is vital to the development of early reading skills. Without PA, early readers will have a difficult time developing the reading and writing skills needed to advance (Rice et al., 2022). Notable factors

that have a positive effect on the development of emergent literacy skills are the HLE, classroom dynamic, and interventions/programming.

### **Home Literacy Environment**

The HLE (i.e., parent teaching and shared reading), has an important impact on emergent literacy skills. Fikrat-Wevers et al. (2021) defined the HLE as the environment created by the family to assist with the learning of early reading, writing, and language skills. The HLE can be categorized into formal and informal activities. Formal activities include direct teaching of letters, sounds, and words, whereas informal activities refer to shared reading experiences between the parent and child, or the singing of nursery rhymes (Inoue et al., 2018; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). An example of a formal activity could include flashcards of letters and words, or using pictures to work on naming beginning sounds. Informal activities could include reading stories before bed and singing nursery rhymes on road trips or short drives. Both formal and informal activities, as part of the HLE, are beneficial to the development of emergent literacy skills.

#### **Parent Teaching**

Parents play a significant role in their children's development of literacy skills. Therefore, parental involvement in such educational activities as literacy-based activities is essential to the development of emergent literacy skills. Inoue et al. (2018) concluded that parent teaching correlates with letter knowledge, phonological awareness (PA), and vocabulary and naming speed, all of which provide the basis for early literacy skills and reading comprehension. When parents spend time immersing their child(ren) in literacy-based activities at home, they are helping to develop the fundamental skills needed to read and write. Research also shows that children's participation in shared reading at home helps to increase their oral vocabulary and their knowledge about print (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014), which in turn will help with comprehension. In addition to shared reading, Inoue et al. confirmed that when parents lead their child in formal activities, specifically the teaching of letters, words, and spelling patterns, they are assisting the development of the child's PA. By working with their child at home, the parent provides an alternate learning environment apart from the classroom setting. This parental involvement supports what is being taught at school, encourages the learning process, and positively impacts the development of emergent literacy skills.

#### **Socio-Economic Status**

The effectiveness of the HLE depends on the number of accessible resources; therefore, socio-economic status (SES) can have an effect. SES directly impacts the financial capabilities of each family and as a result has a direct connection with the parents' ability to maintain the HLE. Fikrat-Wevers et al. (2021) stated that family income can directly impact the ability to purchase engaging resources and provide a stimulating HLE. As a result, the variety of children's storybooks or educational resources in the home may be restricted by SES. In addition, the access to free resources, such as the public library, may be limited due to transportation availability or limitations (Burriss et al., 2019).

#### **Supporting the Home Literacy Environment**

If resources are scarce as a result of low SES, it can be difficult for a parent to develop an HLE that nurtures emergent literacy skills. It is important that the HLE is supported, for both the children and the parents. There are different ways that this can be accomplished. Family Literacy Programs that include parent training on how to effectively teach specific skills have been found to be successful (Fikrat-Wevers et al. 2021). The donation of resources, such as

children's storybooks or games that work on letter knowledge or different PA skills, would be beneficial and help to offset the limited resources that some low-SES families are able to obtain (Fikrat-Wevers et al. 2021). By supporting the HLE, the development of emergent literacy skills improves, reinforcing the correlation between the HLE and emergent literacy.

### **Classroom Dynamic**

The dynamic of the classroom plays an important role in how effectively a teacher can teach in order to support emergent literacy skills development. Therefore, there is a need to consider the connection between classroom dynamic, teacher instructional practices, and literacy skill development. Important areas in the make-up of the classroom that influence a teacher's ability to teach include class size and TA support and training.

### **Classroom Sizes**

Class sizes have a fundamental role in student-teacher interaction in regard to both the quantity and quality of interactions. The number of students per classroom varies depending on the location and setting of the school (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural). Classes often contain anywhere from 15 to 30 students, one teacher, and possibly a TA (Laitsch et al., 2023). Class size reduction can have a positive impact on teacher-student relationships, student achievement, and engagement (Francis & Barnett, 2019). For example, as student-teacher interactions increase, the more connected the students feel with their teacher, which then increases their engagement and performance in class. Additionally, teachers with smaller class sizes feel as though they can provide more one-to-one or small-group instruction (Laitsch et al., 2021). Francis and Barnett's (2019) research found that smaller class sizes resulted in improved basic literacy skills due to a higher number of quality interactions with the teacher. Teachers with smaller class sizes are able to spend more time individually with their students, therefore increasing the quality of engagement and academic achievement within the classroom.

### **Teacher Assistant Support**

TAs are an important part of the educational system. Their role traditionally involves supporting students with individualized educational plans (IEPs) and the delivery of intervention programming for low-achieving students (Bennet et al., 2021). However, the more support students require and receive from a TA, the less contact time they have with a qualified teacher, which leads to less academic progress than students who receive less TA support (Webster et al., 2013). If struggling students were to spend more time with a qualified teacher or TA, they would be more likely to receive higher quality instruction. Additionally, Bennet et al. (2021) found that students who spend more time with the TA, and less with their teacher and classmates, can have feelings of separation and exclusion. Feelings of separation will then take a toll on how comfortable these students feel in the classroom, leading to disengagement. The less engaged students are, the more difficult it is for them to learn. As a result, the role of a TA should be re-evaluated. Students who require more support should have more direct contact with the qualified teacher, and less with the TA, unless that TA is adequately trained. A reassessment would result in a change to the daily role of TAs, where they would provide more support to the students who have a higher academic success rate and help the teacher by way of classroom management (Webster et al., 2013). In so doing, the teacher would be able to work in small groups with struggling learners or IEP students, and provide one-to-one support when needed. As a result, every student would benefit and be provided the opportunity to be successful and develop those fundamental literacy skills. TAs are an important part of education and can be helpful in many ways.



## **Teacher Assistant Training**

For TAs to be the most effective, it is very important that they are sufficiently trained. The role of the TA typically consists of working with struggling learners or students with IEPs, and as a result separates those students from the qualified teacher. While the specifications of the TA's job are being discussed, it is also important to discuss TA training. In many cases, as identified by Bennet et al. (2021), TAs are tasked with the differentiation and instruction of curriculum for the students they are assigned to work with. This means that the TAs are directly teaching the students they are assigned to and having to adapt the tasks to the students' specific needs. In addition, many TAs do not have the qualifications or professional training to implement these tasks (Bennet et al.). Webster et al. (2013) found that when TAs were explicitly coached and prepared, they had a positive impact on a student's progress. The proper and professional training of TAs is fundamental. At the very least, it is important that adequate time is allocated for teachers to work and collaborate with the TAs. As discussed by Bennet et al., when schedules have been adjusted and time is provided for preparation and collaboration between the teachers and TAs, TA understanding is enhanced, resulting in improved lessons and instruction. Training and collaboration will not only improve TA impact on the classroom, but also provide adequate assistance to the teacher and the students, which will have an overall positive impact on emergent literacy skill development.

## **Interventions/Programming**

Over the years, there have been many different intervention programs for struggling readers. These intervention programs include Reading Recovery, Success for All, Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing program (LiPs), Response to Intervention, and Reading Rescue (Miles et al., 2022; Siegel, 2020; Slavin et al., 2010). Among these programs, the most effective programs contain a strong phonics component (Rice et al., 2022). Because phonological awareness is essential for reading and writing abilities, phonics development is necessary in literacy interventions and programming. It has also been noted that small-group tutoring and one-to-one intervention programming yields higher results (Piasta et al., 2020).

## **Small-Group Tutoring**

Small-group tutoring occurs when the teacher or TA work with a set of students who require extra support. This tends to be the traditional form of remedial instruction (Slavin et al., 2010). Small-group interventions have shown improvement in vocabulary, phonological awareness, and decoding skills (Piasta et al., 2021). Due to the effect of smaller group sizes, teachers are able to provide higher quality interactions with the students, which in turn increases their engagement, demonstrating positive effects on emergent literacy skill development. The more engaged students are, the more likely they are to be active learners and participants, increasing their knowledge and understanding of what is being taught. Additionally, small groups provide more opportunity for response and feedback from the teacher (Rice et al., 2022). When teachers are able to provide more feedback, they are also able to immediately address misconceptions that the students may have. Small-group tutoring also allows for the promotion of positive social interactions, and the ability for students to learn from others that are at a similar level (Miles et al., 2022). Students learn from each other just as much as they learn from their teacher. When they are provided the chance to work with peers, they can help to support each other in their learning, providing an additional opportunity to improve their literacy abilities. As a result, small-group tutoring can be as effective as one-to-one interventions, and is ultimately more effective than whole-group instruction when developing emergent literacy skills (Piasta et al., 2021).

## **One-to-One Intervention**

One-to-one intervention is a remarkably effective form of remedial instruction. Slavin et al. (2010), argued that one-to-one intervention is very effective in improving emergent literacy skills and reading performance. This form of intervention allows teachers to provide individualized instruction and feedback (Miles et al., 2022). As a result, teachers are able to focus on and address a student's individual needs. Additionally, one-to-one tutoring enables the teacher to put more attention on specific skills, and explicitly teach skills that a student may be struggling with (Slavin et al., 2010). Research on one-to-one intervention validates the positive effect of individualized intervention on emergent literacy skill development (Miles et al., 2022).

## **Phonological Awareness**

Both one-to-one interventions and small-group tutoring are effective methods of working towards improved phonological awareness. Phonological awareness (PA) is the ability to manipulate sounds, syllables, and words (Rice et al., 2022). More specifically, it includes rhyme detection, syllable segmentation (separating syllables), blending sounds to make words, and phoneme detection and segmentation (i.e., beginning and final sound recognition and separation; Siegel, 2020). PA is the most important aspect of emergent literacy skills, because it provides children with the necessary concepts for reading and writing. The different aspects of PA help students to understand how words work. Teachers often use a scope and sequence (i.e., chronological order) to ensure they are teaching the major letter-sound relationships required to decode (read) words (Miles et al., 2022), focusing on the most common spelling patterns first, then increasing in difficulty. PA contains the necessary components needed to develop emergent literacy skills, and to decode words. Research continues to emphasize the importance of having a strong phonics component in all literacy teaching, including whole-class, small-group, and one-to-one interventions (Miles et al., 2022; Rice et al., 2022).

## **Limitations and Recommendations for the Future**

In education, the ability to implement programs and provide professional development usually comes down to funding. Providing resources for families' HLEs, such as family literacy programs, can be costly. Similarly, training for TAs requires professionals to train them and time allocated for the training, all of which can be expensive. Due to the importance of emergent literacy skills and the effect these factors have on students' literacy development, it would be beneficial for research to be conducted on different modes of funding for these initiatives, or government grants that provide financial support in these areas (Hadley et al., 2023; Henríquez, 2005; Laitsch et al., 2021; Smith, 2011). Another limitation that was found to be consistent throughout the review of research was the potential bias from the HLE. Most data collected was received via self-reported surveys, therefore potentially inflating some of the data collected on what some families do in their HLE (Inoue et al., 2018; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). It might prove beneficial to collect data through observation of individual HLEs. With the knowledge obtained from this literature review, it is obvious that phonological awareness is the most influential aspect for developing emergent literacy. Furthermore, it is crucial that research continue to be conducted in regard to finding and implementing the most effective literacy programming, and providing sufficient support to those in need (Miles et al., 2022; Rice et al., 2022). This is how successful development of emergent literacy skills will be guaranteed for all children.

## Conclusion

The ability to read and write is fundamental to daily life; therefore, the development of emergent literacy skills is essential. The HLE, classroom dynamic, and interventions and programming are crucial factors in developing emergent literacy skills. Research has proven the positive effect that the HLE can have on emergent literacy skills, because it provides continuation from school to home, and further nurtures those much-needed abilities. Classroom dynamic (i.e., class size, TA support, and TA training) has a direct correlation with a teacher's ability to provide quality literacy support, including specific programming or interventions. Strong programs that contain a heavy phonics component are the most effective for improving and mastering emergent literacy skills. Phonological awareness provides children with the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds, syllables and words, which are essential aspects of reading and writing. Overall, the development of emergent literacy skills is of the utmost importance, and is directly influenced by the HLE, classroom dynamic, and interventions and programming provided.

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# Examining the Negative Impacts of Social Media on Adolescents: A Literature Review

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## **Abstract**

*This article examines the negative effects social media has on adolescents' health and well-being, and how it impacts their academic life. Research was conducted by using scholarly search engines to locate several articles that examined the effects of social media use on adolescents within the last ten years. After reviewing the articles, five main themes emerged: social media's impact on (1) social-emotional health, (2) mental health, (3) physical health, (4) academic performance, and (5) the effect of social media use during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings from the literature review show the adverse effects of social media on adolescent social-emotional, mental, and physical health, and student academic performance. This review of the literature concludes by observing that adolescents are struggling with problematic social media use and need to learn responsible self-regulation tools and strategies. Future research should consider how to effectively protect and limit students from having to experience these adverse effects, while promoting a healthy and responsible balance of life online and in-person.*

Social media has become a prevalent and vital aspect of our daily lives. Statistics Canada (2021) reported that 9 out of 10 Canadians aged 15 to 34 used social media regularly to share and create material, display online profiles, and communicate with others. Although social media has proven to be an effective learning and communicative tool (Talaue et al., 2018), most social media use has had a negative impact on the overall health and well-being of adolescents (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020; Gupta et al., 2022; O'Reilly et al., 2018; Pellegrino et al., 2022). In support of that argument, this article's authors reviewed a range of research in the last ten years regarding social media use, and they found a correlation between problematic use and negative social-emotional, mental, and physical health effects impacting student learning and achievement. From those findings, the authors identified and investigated five key areas: social-emotional health, mental health, physical health, academic performance, and the rise in social media use during COVID and its increasing negative impact on all of these areas. This review of the literature is organized thematically into sections, providing evidence and analysis for each of the five key areas. Each section provides suggestions and strategies to address the concerns and issues identified. The article concludes with a summary of the overall findings.

## **Impact on Adolescent Social-Emotional Health and Well-being**

One way social media is impacting adolescent social-emotional health and well-being is by creating pressure for adolescents to have a constant online presence. According to Popat and Tarrant (2023), adolescents describe online interactions as a vital role in their daily lives and there is a sense of pressure to stay connected and engaged online despite the difficulty of meeting these unrealistic expectations. This pressure to stay connected online can cause an individual to feel social-emotional distress. Students believe they are at risk of social exclusion from their peers if they are not up to date with social media news and information. As adolescents struggle to cope with the pressure, they experience negative impacts on their face-to-face interactions and overall social-emotional well-being (O'Reilly et al., 2018).

Adolescents who spend more time on social media have an increased likelihood of experiencing a fear of missing out (FOMO), which can lead to additional social-emotional distress. When people view edited posts, they compare their own accomplishments, appearance, and aptitudes to the false realities of others (Gupta et al., 2022). Social media platforms have made it easy for people to use editing filters, which can cause confusion for the viewer as to what is real or fake. When there is a discrepancy between one's own experiences and the perceived positive experiences of others, adolescents start to internalize their feelings of FOMO. When FOMO occurs, self-esteem decreases and the feelings of depression and anxiety become heightened (Barry et al., 2017). Adolescents have a strong desire to feel included and accepted, which can create feelings of anxiety, believing they should also be having similar positive experiences. Adolescents are experiencing FOMO through self-comparisons of others' posts and not receiving positive feedback on their own posts. This increases their state of depression or anxiety, leaving a lasting impact on adolescent social-emotional health.

Additionally, social media platforms place adolescents in situations that make them vulnerable to peer rejection in an unsupervised domain. Adolescents desire the rewards provided by social media, such as making new friends and receiving affirmation for their posts and online content (Boer et al., 2021). The interactive nature of these platforms allows adolescents to comment on or "like" each other's posts, which can lead to critique and criticism of an individual's appearance, thoughts, and beliefs. When students receive insufficient validation from their peers, they tend to experience stress or lowered self-confidence (Hawes et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020). Adolescents who experience rejection online are not only hurt by the individual making the comment, but by all others who witness and engage in the post. Spending more time online increases not only peer interactions, but also the opportunities for adolescents to experience exclusion by their peers.

Another form of rejection impacting student social-emotional health online is cyberbullying. Exposure to cyberbullying on social media directly impacts victims' and bystanders' emotional health, often triggering emotional distress and other detrimental effects. According to Whittaker and Kowalski's (2014) study, 22% of participants had been a victim of cyberbullying and over half of the participants had been a witness to cyberbullying. Young people have the right to be safe, even in the virtual world. Cyberbullying is a prevalent problem and additional safety precautions are required. Exposure to cyberbullying is known to have a corresponding link to emotional and psychological distress such as, anxiety, suicidal ideation, self-esteem, lack of control, social exclusion, threats to belonging, loneliness and isolation (Popat & Tarrant, 2023; Sampasa-Kanyinga & Hamilton, 2015). These intense emotional encounters caused by cyberbullying can have a lasting impression on one's emotional well-being.

Social media provides unlimited access and exposure to harmful content that is often intriguing to adolescents, encouraging risky behaviours. Young people's exposure to content that depicts dangerous behaviour, such as drinking or drugs in a glorified way, increases their interest in exploring those behaviours (Gupta et al., 2022). Adolescents are naturally curious and when they view Tik Tok or Instagram videos that show peers taking part in activities that are not safe, they often want to replicate the video without considering the risks involved. The attention they receive appears to have a greater influence on their decision to participate rather than the risks and consequences, even if it could lead to physical injury, overdose, or death.

Participating in risky behaviours not only impacts adolescent social-emotional health, but it also creates many mental health challenges. Recognizing the impact of social media on adolescents is important for teachers to understand as students are bringing their developing emotional selves to school every day. Teachers are witness to how adolescents present themselves in class without knowledge of the underlying emotional factors that hinder their learning. It is important for teachers to identify these behaviours and strive to understand the emotional distress in adolescents. School divisions should provide professional development for

staff to help them identify when young people are in crisis (Odgers et al., 2020), and engage and inform parents about cyberbullying and other online safety concerns (Fredrick et al., 2022).

### **Impact on Adolescent Mental Health and Well-being**

In addition to social-emotional concerns, excessive social media use can lead to serious mental health challenges such as addictions. Bhargava and Velasquez (2020) found that internet addiction is a significant public health issue, and social media companies often structure their platforms in a manner that fosters addictions by prioritizing engagement over the well-being of their users. Adolescents have become accustomed to scrolling through posts, images, and videos, which leads to decreased attention and focus on the physical or real world around them. Once adolescents feel dissociated from reality, their stress and anxiety levels go up and concentration levels go down. According to Keles et al. (2023), an addiction to social media can cause distractions, which can adversely affect student productivity and learning. The cause of the addiction needs to be addressed in order to ensure that academic learning can occur. Mental health challenges associated with problematic use indicate the need for further education around self-regulation and responsible use. McNaughton et al. (2022) emphasized the role of parents in supporting their child's self-regulation and digital skills at home. When parents are actively engaged in their child's life, including social media use, it can help to ensure the child is having a safe and more positive online experience. The role of parents is important because they act as a guide in helping the children to develop their own self-regulation skills and learn how to critically process and navigate their way through controversial and negative online content.

Furthermore, excessive social media use can increase exposure to body image comparisons that lead to other mental health issues such as eating disorders. Adolescents are often exposed to online content associated with body image idealization and disordered eating patterns (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2023). When adolescents are frequently exposed to unrealistic body images, they tend to engage in body comparisons that lead to lower feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. The desire to reach certain appearance standards could also lead to unhealthy eating behaviours, or even self-harm or suicidal ideation.

Self-harm and suicidal ideation are two major mental health concerns associated with problematic social media use. As explained by Gupta et al. (2022), when adolescents are exposed to social media content depicting dangerous behaviour such as self-harm and suicide, the probability of participating in such behaviour may increase. Most adolescents' social media use is not monitored by adults; therefore, disturbing online content that encourages self-harm and suicidal ideation is easily accessible. This content often attempts to normalize self-harm and suicide, potentially leading adolescents to replicate the actions that they are exposed to (Srivastava et al., 2019). There is an urgent need for continued education and preventative measures to be put in place to reduce the risks and protect adolescent mental health. Without these safety measures, not only will their mental health be impacted, but also their physical health.

### **Impact on Adolescent Physical Health and Well-being**

Problematic social media use is having a significant impact on adolescent physical health and well-being. According to Pellegrino et al. (2022), people who use social media in a problematic manner are more likely to be associated with unhealthy lifestyle practices, such as lack of exercise or trouble managing daily tasks. Although it is important for students to manage daily tasks and exercise regularly, social media has become an additional barrier adolescents must overcome. Adolescents need to manage their daily exercise and academic responsibilities in order to be effective students and maintain a physically healthy lifestyle. Lack of exercise and



inability to manage daily tasks is causing physical pain and discomfort in adolescents' bodies (Nilsen et al., 2023).

In addition, the problematic social media use that is limiting adolescents' physical activity is resulting in physical ailments. Nilsen et al. (2023) found that physical complaints such as headaches, eye pain, back pain, nausea and abnormal heart rates are linked to exposure with higher screen time and social media use. There is thus a direct correlation between time spent on social media and its impact on one's physical health and well-being. Although social media may have the power to motivate and improve physical health, more often than not the research shows it has a negative effect.

Problematic use of social media also has a significant impact on adolescent students' physical and social interactions with their peers. Adorjan and Ricciardelli (2021) documented evidence from teenagers describing scenarios wherein friends are solely on their own devices during their time together. With this behaviour becoming widely common and seemingly accepted, there is a risk that this type of social interaction is replacing what was once an opportunity for friends to get together to play a game or enjoy a more movement-based outdoor activity. Problematic social media use will continue to compromise young people's physical activity levels and peer interactions unless adolescents can learn to be more responsible with their social media use and find a blended model of social engagement.

As constant online communication with peers becomes more acceptable, this problematic pattern is also impacting their physical health at night. Unrestricted social media use at night is disrupting students' sleep cycles and causing sleep deprivation, which affects their physical health and ability to function at school. Paiva et al. (2015) found a link between sleep deficiency and headaches, fatigue, body pains, and emotional irregularity. This connection shows the importance of sleep and how it may affect students' physical bodies, emotional regulation, memory, and cognitive function. Students need consistent sleep for their minds and bodies to work to the best of their ability. Scanning through apps and artificial lights on devices cause an increase in cognitive arousal that can make it hard to fall asleep, often leading to shorter sleep durations (Popat & Tarrant, 2023; Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2017). With this awareness, students must consider taking a proactive approach to protect sleep routines by motivating each other to disengage with technology prior to and during designated sleep periods. The following examples are ways to regulate nighttime use of social media: purposefully have your phone on night settings where you will not receive notifications, refrain from using the phone once you have started your bedtime routine, and strategically placing your phone in a location away from your bedside. Because quality of sleep impacts one's physical health and academic performance, responsible practices must be established to support adequate sleep and limit nighttime social media use.

### **Impact on Student Academic Performance**

The amount of time spent on social media platforms can distract adolescents from concentrating on their studies and interfere with their ability to manage their time, impacting their academic performance. Students' inability to manage time impacts learning because it disrupts their cognitive processes. As discussed by Talaue et al. (2018), lack of time management skills can determine the success or failure of an individual student's academic success. Students with poor time management skills spend insufficient time on their studies and miss deadlines. They also engage in procrastination, which can increase their stress levels. In order to achieve academic success, students need to complete assignments and meet respected deadlines.

Social media use not only negatively influences students' time management skills, but it can also contribute to impaired memory, concentration, and focus. Talaue et al. (2018) found that when students are on their devices, they do not have the capacity to retain information. When students are on their phones, they are unable to properly process the teacher's instructions and are often more interested in communicating with friends, playing games,

scrolling through pictures, and watching videos. This off-task behaviour is making teaching and learning difficult, because multitasking is an ineffective way to take in relevant information. Problematic social media use is impacting student time management skills and cognitive abilities. It is important for schools, parents, teachers, and students to find solutions that address these concerns through policies on social media use in schools (Muls et al., 2020), developing self-regulation skills (McNaughton et al., 2022), and providing education on appropriate in-person cell phone etiquette (Azad, 2013). These interventions will promote positive digital citizenship and educate students about maintaining a responsible digital footprint.

### **Impact on Adolescent Health During COVID-19**

In order to prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus, the government shifted all personal and work-related communications online. This shift significantly increased students' social media use, which triggered social-emotional, mental, and physical health concerns. During this time, device usage skyrocketed because students were instructed to attend school online, to stay home, and to socially communicate behind a screen (Shutzman & Gershey, 2022). The increase in device usage was inevitable as it became the primary way for students to communicate with peers and to participate in school academics and activities. In this process, some lost the benefits of an active and social lifestyle that included interpersonal relations, physical movements and exercise, and engagement with their bodies and minds in a classroom setting. The lack of face-to-face connection continues to have lasting negative effects. Hill et al. (2016) concluded that school aged children should spend no more than two hours a day on social media, in order to prevent the possible risk of reality impairment and inaccurate self-judgement. Although students are no longer forced to communicate digitally, they have chosen to continue to use social media as their preferred method of connection, and it is negatively impacting their mental health.

Student stress, anxiety, and depression increased as social media use became more widespread during COVID-19. Drazenovic et al. (2023) reported that students' anxiety, stress and depression increased as a result of excessive social media use. During COVID-19, adolescents' communication and connection was almost entirely through social media and this shift simultaneously increased their stress, anxiety, and depression levels. The surge in social media usage led to greater exposure to content affecting individuals' self-esteem, and also contributed to an increase in sleep deprivation (Woods & Scott, 2016). The mental health concerns and effects will continue to negatively impact adolescents if they cannot regain a healthy online and in-person life balance and develop adequate self-regulation skills.

The increased social media use during the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the adverse effects on adolescent health and academic learning. This effect supports the argument that social media use has significant negative impacts on student learning and on adolescent health and well-being.

### **Conclusion**

Although social media has become a necessary aspect of adolescent life, problematic use is having an adverse effect on their overall health and well-being. Based on a review of the literature, this article examines the detrimental impact that problematic social media use is having on students' physical, social-emotional, and mental health, and on their academic performance. Increased social media use leads to many social-emotional concerns, such as pressure to stay online, peer rejection, fear of missing out (FOMO), cyberbullying, and other risky behaviours. Irresponsible social media use is connected with mental health issues such as addiction, stress, anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation. The physical impacts of social media include lack of exercise, the inability to manage daily tasks, physical ailments, reduced physical activity levels, and increased sleep deprivation. In addition to these concerns,

students are showing more signs of procrastination, poor time management, impaired memory, inability to focus and lack of concentration, which are impacting academic performance. The COVID-19 pandemic increased social media use by shifting society from a blended human communication model to an entirely virtual one. Most of the research reviewed considered the immediate impact of social media use (e.g., social isolation, depressive symptoms, cyberbullying, and increased exposure to harm). Therefore, more research needs to be conducted to determine the long-term effects that social media use has on students. Future considerations must be placed on programming and intervention strategies to facilitate responsible social media use, both inside and outside school.

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## FOCUS ON FACULTY

### Understanding Students' Motivational Beliefs and Academic Engagement: A Case Study of an African International Student

Aloysius C. Anyichie

#### **Abstract**

*Motivational beliefs, especially self-efficacy, are very important in understanding students' academic engagement and achievement. Students' self-efficacy influences their academic decisions, choices, and learning behaviours. Building on a case of an African international student identified as Frank, this case study illustrates the influence of socio-cultural contexts on students' development of motivational beliefs, such as self-efficacy, across the school years. Specifically, it considers how Frank's social expectations, goals, cultural norms, school structure, and experience of teacher support shaped his motivational beliefs and influenced his academic engagement. The article emphasizes the need to understand how students' motivational beliefs and academic engagement are situated in context. Implications for theory, practice, and research are discussed.*

Motivational beliefs, or individuals' perceptions that drive their actions, are very important in understanding one's drive to achieving a set goal. Self-efficacy, as a motivational belief proposed by Bandura (1977), refers to individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to perform a task successfully. Motivational beliefs determine how students participate in learning tasks. Research has shown some developmental patterns in students' motivational beliefs across their school years, especially as they progressed from elementary to high school (K-12). For example, Eccles et al. (1998) and Liou et al. (2021) observed that student motivational beliefs, including self-efficacy, tend to decrease from elementary to secondary school. These variations in students' motivational beliefs, which influence their motivation and engagement, have been linked to their personal characteristics and socio-cultural contexts (Anyichie et al., 2023; Liou et al., 2021).

Much research, involving western-developed theories and students from the western countries with independent sense of self, have tried to explain motivation and its development through a psychological lens. However, less research has considered how those motivational theories are situated in non-western students' cultural contexts with interdependent sense of self (King & McInerney, 2014). Students from both western and non-western countries with individualistic and collectivist cultures populate our classes. Thus, more effort is needed in examining the role of socio-cultural contexts (e.g., the values, customs, religious beliefs, norms, social structures of a particular community), and individuals in multiple layers of contexts (e.g., individualistic and collectivist cultures) in the development of non-western students' motivational beliefs. This understanding is important in designing culturally appropriate instructional practices to better support all learners in today's multicultural classroom contexts where students are influenced by many cultural groups.

This case study aims to advance our understanding of the possible influences of students' cultural background, societal expectations and school structure on their motivational beliefs, and how those shape their academic decisions, choices, behaviours and learning engagement. Specifically, it appraises the learning engagement of a non-western international African student (i.e., Frank) in the light of motivational beliefs, especially self-efficacy. The author starts by describing motivational beliefs, especially self-efficacy and its sources, and engagement. Next, he situates the article in Frank's background. The article continues by tracing Frank's developmental trajectories of motivational beliefs and self-efficacy over the school years, how those were related to his engagement, and the potential influences of context in that

development. Finally, this reflective case study considers the implications of Frank's experiences for educational practice and future research.

### **Motivational Beliefs and Self-Efficacy: Influence on Engagement**

Motivational beliefs describe a wide range of perceptions that fuel an individual's engagement in an event or behaviour. These beliefs, such as academic self-efficacy (Usher et al., 2023), goals (Ames, 1992; Huang, 2016), and task values (Harackiewicz, et al., 2016) are critical in learning. Motivational beliefs determine students' learning behaviours, including how much effort to invest in a learning activity, the kinds of choices to make, staying on task, and whether to persist in the face of challenge. One of the major motivational beliefs commonly studied in education is self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy describes students' judgements and beliefs about their capability to be successful or not in performing a learning task (Bandura, 1977). There are four major sources of influences on self-efficacy development: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1977). Mastery or past experience describes how students' interpretation of their past experience or performance influences their beliefs about their capability in successfully completing a task. For example, students who were successful at solving a quadratic equation in the past will most likely believe in their capability to succeed when faced with a similar equation. Likewise, students who were not successful in the past will less likely judge themselves to be capable of succeeding in the future. Vicarious experience illustrates how students' experience of others' performances shapes their judgement about their own capability in being successful in performing similar task. For example, students who observe a classmate's success in completing a high-quality essay writing might judge themselves capable of writing a good essay as well. On the other hand, if a student who is perceived as being intelligent struggles in completing a calculus assignment, other lower achieving students might consider themselves less capable of performing well in the same assignment. Social or verbal persuasion refers to the messages students receive that influence their judgement about what they are able to do or not. For instance, students who receive positive feedback from their teachers about their capability to be successful in completing a task are most likely to develop the belief that they will be successful in completing such tasks. Physiological or affective states refer to the feelings or thinking of students as they participate in a learning task. For example, students who experience an increased heart rate or anxiety in the face of a task might interpret the feeling as a sign of incapability of being successful in that task, different from someone who experiences calmness that might be interpreted as a sign of competence. All of these sources influence students' self-efficacy in the ways they impact students' judgements about what they can do or not (Usher et al., 2023).

There is evidence of variation in ways and degrees in which these sources influence students' self-efficacy. For example, mastery experiences have been shown to wield the strongest influence on students' self-efficacy development because they involve students' direct experience of successful completion of a task (Butz & Usher, 2015). Huang et al. (2020) found that a combination of sources have more powerful influence. However, students tend to interpret these sources in different ways based on their social norms and cultural identity (Usher & Weidner, 2018), as well as their socialization contexts (Gebauer et al., 2021). For instance, in their study, Gebauer et al, (2021) measured the four sources of self-efficacy among students in different socialization contexts. They found that while mastery experience had the strongest influence on students with non-immigrant backgrounds, social persuasion was strongest for immigrant students. This finding draws attention to understanding how immigrant students' perceptions and interpretations of these sources might be different from those of non-immigrant students, and thus shape their academic self-efficacy development.

Overall, students' self-efficacy influences their effort, choices, and achievement (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Usher et al., 2023). When students believe they are capable of successfully



completing a task, they are motivated to engage in learning the task (Azila-Gbettor, 2021; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003).

Engagement defines students' participation or involvement in a learning activity. It is a multidimensional construct with distinct but related dimensions, such as behavioural, cognitive, and emotional (Fredricks et al., 2019). In this article, the term *engagement* refers mainly to behavioural engagement that captures students' overt involvement in the classroom, including effort, persistence, help seeking, and concentration. Engagement is critical in learning because it predicts students' positive outcomes, including achievement (Fredricks et al., 2019), and is influenced by self-efficacy (Ouweneel et al., 2013). For example, a student with specific task-positive motivational beliefs in reading will be more disposed to focus attention and spend extra time in reading class materials. Similarly, a student with high self-efficacy in solving math problems will concentrate more and persist in completing math homework even when it becomes challenging. On the contrary, students with low self-efficacy easily give in to self-doubt and give up in the face of learning difficulty.

### **Who Is Frank?**

Frank is a pseudonym for an international African student born in a family of educators. His parents and three siblings were teachers. One of his siblings was a high school math teacher. Growing up in a household that valued education, Frank was socialized into a culture that emphasizes learning as a viable tool for success in life. In his social context, there is often an expectation that children whose parents are teachers will excel academically, and probably become teachers themselves. As a collective society, his African culture emphasizes the value of collective responsibility in raising children, which is captured in the African proverb that "it takes a village to raise a child." It also highlights the importance of an extended family system, religion, hard work, and perseverance that inspire children to be resilient in the face of challenges. For example, his religious culture foregrounds the importance of praying during trial moments. One of the major goals of this article is to use Frank's case to highlight the powerful role of students' social and cultural contexts in their development of self-efficacy, which in turn influences their motivation to engage in learning activities.

### **Development of Motivational Beliefs Across the School Years**

This section describes Frank's experiences in relation to the development of his motivational beliefs, and how those beliefs shaped his engagement across his school years. Occasionally, attention is drawn to how his social and cultural contexts could be responsible for his developmental trajectory, and to the implications for educators.

### **Elementary and Secondary School Education (Grades 1-12)**

Frank started his elementary school education in his village. This community expected him to be intelligent and successful in academics, since his parents and some of his siblings were teachers. Presumably, responding to this social norm of a cultural and family belief system, his parents, who were both teachers, made sure that Frank and his siblings had a very structured program of studies at home. Frank received constant family support in completing school homework, especially in math which is his favourite subject. In the school, all of his teachers and peers would regularly call him "Nwa onye nkuzi," meaning "the son of the teacher," which re-echoes in him the societal expectations for great success. Although he loves school, these societal expectations (King et al., 2012), and family support (Gao et al., 2021; Simpkins et al., 2019), undoubtedly influenced the development of his high self-efficacy and learning engagement (Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Interestingly, building on this self-efficacy he exerted extra efforts toward his studies, constantly prayed for success, and experienced great success

in his elementary school. Frank's experience corroborates Wang and Degol's (2013) finding that multiple layers of context, including family, school, and larger society, influence the development of motivational beliefs. These beliefs are sustained when students feel supported (Wigfield et al., 2015). Frank's experience also aligns with the understanding of engagement and achievement as socially embedded in collectivist societies where people are motivated to be successful not only for personal interest but also for their family (Dekker & Fischer, 2008).

For his secondary school education (i.e., high school), Frank went to a top-rated missionary boarding school. This decision relates to his religious identity and affiliation. This institution, located in another town, has strict rules and regulations, emphasizing the role of prayer, morals and academics in human formation. Nevertheless, its emphasis on academic performance creates a competitive environment among top achieving students. Research has shown how a restricted environment (Eccles et al., 1993), social comparison and controlling classroom atmosphere (Eccles et al., 1984) are associated with a decline in students' motivational beliefs, especially from elementary to secondary school. In contrast, the competitive environment challenged and motivated Frank to pray and work harder to improve his learning and secure a better grade. For instance, based on his religious belief in the power of prayer in dealing with challenging situations, he made decisions to pray before studies and exams, and spent extra time in studies. Frank's case portrays how students can perceive a similar context differently (e.g., competitive environment), leading to different decisions. It also shows how students' religious beliefs might shape their motivational beliefs. Educators can better support students' development of self-efficacy beliefs if they understand how students' backgrounds influence their perception and interpretations of their learning contexts.

Frank has a specific domain interest in math. In his math class, praising students was an occasional occurrence in acknowledgement of an outstanding commitment to successfully solve math problems. This contextualized informative use of praise is associated with improvement of perceived self-efficacy (Ouweneel et al., 2013), and subsequent feedback seeking (Dimotakis et al., 2017). Receiving this positive feedback from his grade 8 math teacher (i.e., social persuasion) sustained and enhanced his self-efficacy belief, interest, motivation, and engagement in math (Butz & Usher, 2015; Ouweneel, et al., 2013; Peng, 2021). Later, the teacher, who happened to come from the same town as Frank, would always invite Frank to solve math problems on the board. He felt that this teacher not only believed in him but also had high expectations of him. To avoid letting his teacher down and maintain his self-concept as a "math kid," he developed a mastery orientation goal, that is, aiming to gain mastery and acquire new skills (Ames, 1992). Based on his mastery goal, he spent extra time working on math classes, and improved his math competence which sustained his self-efficacy. Consequently, the teacher encouraged his peers to seek support from him. Frank's mastery or past experience of successfully solving math problems, and his perceived teacher support and feedback (Rice et al., 2013), influenced his self-efficacy belief. Also, his perceived connection with the teacher (i.e., coming from the same town), teacher acknowledgment of his math capabilities which highlights the importance of teacher-student relationship (Liu, 2024), interest in math (Renninger & Hidi, 2020), and mastery goal (Huang, 2016) have contributed in a more complex way to his motivation and engagement (Harachiewicz et al., 2016), competence belief, and self-efficacy beliefs in math (Nuutila et al., 2020).

Although the teacher's feedback and high expectation motivated Frank, they demotivated a lot of his peers who felt disengaged. The peers' disengagement was associated with their perceived teacher's favouritism towards Frank, and lack of creating equitable opportunities for all students' learning (Anyichie, 2018, in press). Frank's interest and active engagement in solving math problems outside the classroom continued until grade 11. At this time, he had a math teacher whom he perceived to be less competent and with low expectation of the students, leading to his focusing on performance goal in math (i.e., emphasizing achievement to outperform others in order to maintain his math identity). He developed a negative feeling and thinking about solving math problems in this class (i.e., affective or physiological states). Thus,

he was demotivated and rarely worked on his math problems beyond class except during exam periods. However, due to his past experiences with math (i.e., mastery experience), he still believed in his capability to be successful during the exam. In grade 12, he had another math teacher who challenged the students with tasks within their zone of proximal development, that is, the “zone” between what they can do independently without help and what they cannot do without the help of more knowledgeable other, such as a teacher, peer or parent (Vygotsky, 1978). Frank’s experiences with the grade 12 teacher increased his motivation to engage in solving math problems again after school. He ended up becoming one of the three best math students in his class during the final school certificate exams.

Frank’s experience suggests how school context, inclusive of teachers’ instructional practices and expectations, shape students’ achievement goals that subsequently influence their motivational beliefs (e.g., self-efficacy) and engagement (Ames, 1992; Huang, 2016). It also confirms mastery or past experience as a stronger influence of self-efficacy in math (Butz & Usher, 2015). Additionally, it affirms how students’ motivational beliefs, especially self-efficacy, engagement and achievement goals, are shaped by socio-cultural contexts. Some of these contextual factors are social goals of making one’s family proud and meeting societal expectations (King et al., 2012), competitive school culture, and teacher classroom practices, including feedback (Dimotakis et al., 2017; Peng, 2021). Therefore, educators are invited to consider the impact of these factors in their classroom designs.

Students who feel supported by family, teachers, and friends have high motivational beliefs that impact the quality of their classroom engagement (Simpkins et al., 2020). For example, teachers can support students’ awareness of their culturally shaped prior knowledge and academic experiences (e.g., through reflective assignments such as “know your self”), and build on those to design instructional practices that are personally meaningful to the students (Anyichie, in press; Anyichie et al., 2023). Educators can support students’ motivational beliefs and learning engagement by helping them experience learning success by setting mastery goals (Huang, 2016), offering supports (Qiong et al., 2023; Rice et al., 2013; Wigfield et al., 2015), and holding high expectations of all students (Dekker & Fischer, 2008; Ladson-Billing, 2021).

## **Undergraduate Program**

Frank started his undergraduate program at a Catholic missionary university in his home country. His past academic success through primary and secondary school reinforced his general self-efficacy beliefs while starting at this university. His professors, who were mainly trained overseas, emphasized critical thinking and hard work. However, Frank felt that there were too many courses and lectures with lesser personal connections between the professors and students, and too much emphasis on student grades and academic positions. As part of his extracurricular activities, Frank was assigned to the university clinic where he assisted the visiting doctors in attending to ill students. Occasionally, he missed lectures and study time due to the needs at the clinic. Over time, he experienced a decline in his academic achievement level. He started doubting his ability, which led to a decline in his self-efficacy and academic motivation (Kasimatis, et al., 1996; Schunk & Pajeres, 2009). However, since this university emphasizes the power of hard work and prayer, Frank did not give up on his studies. Instead, he spent some of the regularly scheduled morning meditation in the university to reflect on his learning experiences while praying for academic success.

Through constant meditations, Frank learned to focus more attention and increase his concentration level (e.g., by staying on task), and gained more learning insights and problem-solving strategies (e.g., by setting learning goals). Also, he became aware of how he had navigated similar challenges in middle school through teacher support and desire to meet social goals, including family expectations of success. His past experience (i.e., mastery experience) increased his self-efficacy to handle the current situation. This experience highlights how

educators can enhance students' self-efficacy by supporting their self-reflection and metacognitive awareness of how they successfully completed a challenging task or overcame a related difficulty situation in the past (Usher et al., 2023).

Moving forward, Frank interpreted his grades as a pointer to his current level of academic achievement, which is different from his ability and intelligence. He could tell that his prior academic motivation and success had been largely dependent on external factors (i.e., extrinsic motivation), including high expectations from family, friends, teachers and peers. The absence of some of these external motivators, together with the university academic structure (e.g., less connection with the professors, more emphasis on grade and academic positions), limited his opportunities to access help and affected his motivation and engagement. However, he internalized these extrinsic motivational factors, that is, autonomous extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020), by savouring the intrinsic satisfaction of meeting these expectations. Thus, Frank autonomously engaged in his learning processes by spending a good amount of time developing his learning strategies (e.g., exerting efforts and spending extra time in learning new ideas, reading self-development books), regulating his learning (e.g., monitoring his learning progress), and seeking help from professor and students (e.g., clarifying ideas about assignments). With time, he developed a stronger growth mindset, that is, belief in the malleability of ability and effort (Dweck, 1999; Dweck & Yeager, 2021) which motivated his learning engagement (Rhew et al., 2018) towards achieving success.

Again, Frank's experiences relate to research findings about the role of social goals such as making family proud (King et al., 2012) and teacher supports in navigating classroom challenges (Anyichie, 2018; Liu, 2024; Qiong et al., 2023), fostering motivation and engagement (Simpkins, et al., 2020), and growth mindset (Dweck, 1999; Rhew et al., 2018). It also relates to how self-efficacy and autonomous motivation enhance engagement (Azila-Gbetor et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2020). His internalization of socially oriented goals (e.g., making the family proud) supports Vygotsky (1978)'s view of the social origin of psychological processes, including the regulation of learning.

Educators can support students' motivational beliefs (e.g., self-efficacy), and academic engagement through fostering students' self-regulation skills by involving them in setting realistic goals, controlling the level of their academic challenge, and self-assessing and monitoring their learning (Panadero et al., 2017; Saks, 2024). Students could be assisted to develop a growth mindset by emphasizing the effort required to achieve success (Dweck, 1999; Dweck & Yeager, 2021; Rhew et al., 2018). Additionally, students' self-efficacy could be enhanced by developing a good relationship with them (Liu, 2024) through spending time with them to know more about their lives outside of school, providing opportunities for success through designing challenging activities that still allows students to experience success (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003), and helping them see their academic progress (Usher et al., 2023).

Therefore, attention should be paid to how students' socio-cultural contexts (i.e., external environments), including culture, religious beliefs, values, social norms and expectations, might be shaping their motivational belief system and learning engagement. As seen in Frank's case, his societal and family expectations (e.g., to be intelligent because of being a child of educators, making the family proud), religious beliefs (e.g., the power of prayer in facing challenges, achieving success) all came together in informing his judgement about his capability and motivation in achieving success even in challenging situations.

## **Graduate and Postgraduate Programs**

After his undergraduate program, Frank completed two different graduate programs at a public university in his home country. At this time, he developed a strong interest in pursuing a Ph.D. program, which was primarily born out of his aspiration to become a university professor. His desire for an academic career is connected to his being raised in a family of educators.

However, during his graduate programs, he encountered many locally trained professors whom he perceived as lacking commitment and competence (Anyichie, 2023), which contributed to his desire for international training. Thus, he applied for Ph.D. programs in different top universities in Europe and North America.

During his Ph.D. applications, he was faced with the hurdle of completing the General Record Examination (GRE) required by some North American universities. GRE assesses students' critical thinking, quantitative and verbal reasoning, and analytical writing skills. Peers who had taken the exam shared with Frank their difficulty passing it. Since this exam was congruent with his future identity, that is, becoming a professor, Frank interpreted the difficulty as important and necessary (Oyserman & Horowitz, 2023). Similarly, connecting the expectations of this exam to his prior knowledge of critical thinking in his undergraduate logic class, quantitative reasoning and interest in math during his high school, Frank developed high self-efficacy to do well in this exam. Building on his attribution of his past success to prayer and hard work, he studied and prayed hard to pass this examination. These decisions confirm how students' current and future identity (Oyserman & Horowitz, 2023), prior knowledge, and past experiences shape their self-efficacy and choices (Usher et al., 2023).

As a self-regulated learner, Frank exercised control over his thoughts (e.g., by convincing himself that he would be successful in the exam), emotions (e.g., by appreciating the positive feelings of past success), actions (e.g., by seeking the help of a math tutor), and learning behaviour (e.g., by spending extra hours reviewing GRE preparatory texts), in order to navigate the challenges of GRE, and he achieved his goal of studying abroad (Zimmerman, 2008). These motivational beliefs evident in his self-efficacy informed his engagement in self-regulatory behaviours of developing effective and adaptive strategies to pass the GRE examination, including hiring a tutor (Schunk & Pajeres, 2003).

Frank's experience in preparing for his Ph.D. application abroad confirms Bandura's (1977) hypothesis that higher self-efficacy entails choosing challenging activities, exerting more effort towards success, and persisting longer on difficult tasks. Frank's motivational beliefs also connected to his personal interest (e.g., math) and achievement goal (e.g., passing the exam, studying abroad). Thus, he devoted the time and energy judged sufficient to achieve his goal while believing that effort is unstable and controllable (Graham, & Williams, 2009). Frank's case aligns with research findings that highlight the context-dependent nature of motivation, engagement (Anyichie, et al., 2023; Nolen et al., 2015), and self-efficacy (Mitchell, et al., 2021; Usher et al., 2023), and how they cannot be fully understood outside the context wherein they occur. To illustrate, Anyichie (2018, in press) documented evidence of how students' perception of task values, including whether the learning activities were judged relevant, important, interesting, and enjoyable, explained the variations in their level of motivation and engagement across days. Students' development of motivational beliefs, such as self-efficacy, could be enhanced when educators support mastery goals in their classes (Huang, 2016), connect classroom learning activities to students' interests (Nuutila et al., 2020; Renniger & Hidi, 2020) and lived experiences, or assist them to make those connections themselves (Anyichie, 2018, in press; Anyichie et al., 2023).

Interestingly, Frank's efforts were rewarded with multiple admissions and scholarships to different universities. He attributed this performance outcome to his effort and prayers that strengthened his competence belief, self-efficacy, and motivation for higher success. As an international student, he opted for the university that offered him a full scholarship. While in the Ph.D. program, he received much positive feedback from his professors who had high expectations of him and expressed belief in his potential to be successful. For example, the supervisor supported his ambitious research interest and agenda while constantly communicating high confidence and belief in his capability to succeed. Frank's interactions with the supervisor, who created multiple opportunities for him to drive his research agenda (e.g., setting both long-term and short-term goals about completing his studies), increased his sense of ownership of his learning processes. The feedback from his professors (i.e., social

persuasions) positively impacted his self-efficacy (Usher et al., 2023). His perceived social support (Liu, 2024), high expectations of the professors (Ladson-Billings, 2021), and sense of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2020) motivated him to invest a lot of energy engaging in all of the learning opportunities that were available in his program (Liu, 2024; Simkins et al., 2020). It is noteworthy to remark that this case study was inspired by a class assignment during Frank's Ph.D. program, which asked students to appraise their motivational beliefs. Most of Frank's decisions while in his Ph.D. program were influenced by his identity and experiences as an African international student. His attribution of all his past success to effort and prayer, including meditations, led to the development of his academic motto "hard work and prayer equals to success" ( $H + P = S$ ).

Finally, educators can support students' development and awareness of their motivational beliefs, which in turn increase their self-efficacy, motivation, and engagement by fostering constant reflection and monitoring of their learning experiences (Panadero et al., 2017), encouraging their goal setting (Saks, 2024), offering honest constructive feedback (Dimotakis et al., 2017; Hattie & Timperley, 2007), maintaining high expectations of all the students (Ladson-Billings, 2021), creating opportunities such as choice provision to support their autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2020), and connecting class activities to students' backgrounds by using their daily life experiences as examples in the class teaching and/or encouraging them to make those connections by working on interesting tasks that are personally meaningful to their experiences and aspirations (Anyichie, 2018, in press; Anyichie et al., 2023).

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Research has shown that students' motivational beliefs, including self-efficacy, predict their engagement and achievement (Liou et al., 2021). Less research has considered the impact of social and cultural contexts on students' development of motivational beliefs and engagement. This reflective article demonstrates how an African student's socio-cultural beliefs, values, and aspirations influenced his development of motivational beliefs, especially self-efficacy, and how those beliefs shaped his motivation and engagement in school. Frank's case study highlights how motivational beliefs are situated in context and can vary over the school years and across subject areas. The outcome of this article has some implications for theory, classroom practice, and research.

First, it adds to self-efficacy belief theory by drawing attention to how the socio-cultural contexts of non-western students might be influencing their development of motivational beliefs different from western students. Second, consistent with prior studies, it recommends that educators can support students' self-efficacy beliefs, motivation, and engagement by holding high expectations for all students, providing challenging tasks that are not beyond the students' ability, fostering students' self-reflection, enhancing their growth mindset, supporting their autonomy, building trusting relationships, offering honest constructive feedback, supporting students' specific academic domain interests, and making meaningful connections between classroom activities and students' lives. Third, it adds to the literature on self-efficacy by highlighting the dynamic interplay between Frank and multiple different layers of contexts, and the need for more cultural and in-situ approaches to understanding students' self-efficacy, motivation, and engagement. Therefore, educators must understand their students' background (e.g., their cultural and religious beliefs, societal norms and expectations, values and aspirations) and how those influence the students' motivational beliefs, in order to better provide multiple efficacy-supportive opportunities. Finally, future empirical research is needed to investigate how motivational beliefs of non-western students, especially of African descent, evolve over time during their school years. Longitudinal studies will be helpful in uncovering how different factors, including social and cultural expectations (e.g., society, family), school contexts (e.g., teacher practices, peers), and religious beliefs (e.g., the power of prayer in overcoming challenges and achieving success), influence students' motivational beliefs such as self-

efficacy, and in turn shape students' motivation and engagement. Cross-cultural research will be beneficial in revealing what is universal and what is unique to specific cultures, individual differences, and contextual factors in the development of motivational beliefs.

It is hoped that this article will trigger more interests among educators and researchers to design learning environments and research based on the understanding that students' socio-cultural contexts influence the development of their motivational beliefs (e.g., self-efficacy), in turn impacting their motivation and learning engagement.

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### **About the Author**

*Dr. Anyichie is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Students' Services in Brandon University. His research focuses on supporting culturally diverse students' regulation of learning, engagement and motivation. He collaborates with educators in designing learning environments based on a culturally responsive self-regulated learning framework (Anyichie, 2018; Anyichie & Butler, 2017) to support engagement and motivation for all learners. He teaches courses in the B.Ed. (e.g., Adolescent Development and the Learning Processes, Evaluation and Assessment) and M.Ed. (e.g., Overview of Educational Issues, Motivation in Education).*

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