

Academic flocking and global distress: Equitable south-north research partnering to promote quality education in diverse contexts and cultures

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Abstract In this article we apply an Afrocentric Resilience Theory (relationship-resourced resilience) to the domain of education research partnerships. We posit academic flocking as an equitable research partnership approach aimed at developing education knowledge that responds to collective distress and supports collective quality education. We provide support for our supposition regarding academic flocking by overviewing the mutually beneficial development of an online, home-based learning resource with relevance in two transnational contexts and cultures, South Africa and the United States of America. Whereas the context of the argument is a COVID-19 related global need for evidence-based education resources, conceptually we draw on lenses of resilience and emancipatory, democratising methodology to make sense of academic flocking as a fundamental structure for research partnership equity and relevant education innovation. As such, academic flocking holds value as a transformative alternative for South-North researcher partnerships in generating useful, quality educational innovations to address critical needs.

Keywords COVID-19 · Emancipatory research · Research partnership · Resilience

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„Akademisches Schwarmverhalten“ und globale Notlagen: Gleichberechtigte Süd-Nord-Forschungspartnerschaften zur Förderung einer hochwertigen Bildung in unterschiedlichen Kontexten und Kulturen

Zusammenfassung In diesem Beitrag wenden wir eine afrozentrische Resilienztheorie (beziehungsgestützte Resilienz) auf einen Ansatz der Bildungsforschungspartnerschaften an. Wir stützen uns auf die Annahme, dass „akademisches Flocking“ (Schwarmverhalten) eine Grundlage für gleichberechtigte Forschungspartnerschaften bildet. Der Ansatz zielt darauf ab, Wissen über Bildung zu generieren, das auf kollektive Notlagen reagiert und kollektive Prozesse der Qualitätsbildung unterstützt. Wir untermauern unsere Annahme über „akademisches Flocking“, indem wir einen Überblick über die für beide Seiten vorteilhafte Entwicklung einer Online-Lernressource geben, die zu Hause eingesetzt werden kann. Dieser Ansatz wurde in zwei transnationalen Kontexten und Kulturen – Südafrika und den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika – erprobt. Kontext der Argumentation ist der von der COVID-19-Pandemie verstärkt sichtbar gewordene globale Bedarf an der Bereitstellung evidenzbasierter Bildungsressourcen. Konzeptionell stützen wir uns auf resilienztheoretische Sichtweisen und eine emanzipatorische, demokratiefördernde Perspektive, wodurch „akademisches Flocking“ als ein vielversprechender Ansatz für ausgewogene Forschungspartnerschaften zur Begleitung relevanter Bildungsinnovation sichtbar wird. Insbesondere bei Süd-Nord-Forschungspartnerschaften bietet sich hier eine nützliche, qualitativ hochwertige Grundlage für die kollaborative Entwicklung von wissenschaftlich unterstützten Bildungsinnovationen.

Schlüsselwörter COVID-19 · Emanzipatorische Forschung ·
Forschungspartnerschaft · Resilienz

There is universal awareness that no individual, family, community, or nation is beyond the devastating reaches of the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 200 million individuals have become ill and more than 4 million have perished (Medical News Today 2021). Like other long-standing global challenges (e.g., war, natural disaster, or terrorism; Aydin and Kaya 2019; Betts 2013; Caruso 2017; UNESCO 2011), the pandemic has had catastrophic effects on a multitude of infrastructure support systems like food supplies, life-saving equipment, hospitals, and schools. Moreover, the pandemic has differentially affected countries with developing economies (e.g., South Africa). The differential impact is amplified by pre-COVID infrastructure challenges and an ever-increasing lack of resources needed to purchase large stores of vaccines (e.g., South Africa). Not surprisingly, crises like the COVID-19 pandemic have the most crippling effects on the most vulnerable among us (e.g., elderly, children, and youth; UNESCO 2020a).

What the literature also makes clear, however, is that productive global research partnerships play fundamental roles in addressing challenges that have historically disrupted education systems (UNESCO 2011). Indeed, UNESCO placed additional emphasis on such partnerships in their World Investment Report. Specifically, the

United Nations outlined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (UNCTAD 2015) that they believe will have the greatest likelihood of bringing dignity, peace, and prosperity to the global community in sustainable ways. “Quality education” is the 4th most important goal and “global partnerships” is listed as the 17th goal (UNCTAD 2015). Although global partnerships is ranked as the 17th most important goal, the report emphasizes the necessity of building global partnerships to realize the 16 preceding sustainable development goals. Among the subgoals or targets of SDG 17 are the enhancement of “regional and international cooperation on and access to science and technology” in addition to “innovation and enhanced knowledge sharing” (The World Bank 2020; UN 2015, target 17.6). Also relevant is the enhancement of multi-stakeholder partnerships for the mobilisation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources (UNCTAD 2015). SDG 17 emphasises “North-South, South-South and triangular” partnerships and collaborations as effective development ventures (The World Bank 2020; UN 2015, target 17.6).

The overarching purpose of this article is to highlight an alternative way in which global research partnering can help realize the sustainability goal of quality education in the face of a worldwide pandemic. Specifically, we forward “academic flocking” as an equitable research partnership approach for relevant education innovation. To illustrate the utility of this research partnership approach, we describe how a South-North research partnership used academic flocking to develop an online, learning support resource in response to a COVID-19 challenge requiring support for quality home-based learning. The context of the inquiry is, on the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic, representing a global challenge with widespread implications for educational systems (UNESCO 2020b). On the other hand, the context is that of South-North unevenness in access to high quality education evidence to support quality education practices (Santos 2007). The objective was to collaborate to support guardians in home-based learning by using relevant, existing shared resources including evidence-based education tools, networks, and institutional infrastructure.

From an emancipatory, democratising methodological stance and through a resilience theoretical lens, we argue that academic flocking differs from traditional knowledge transfer (Collins and Allender 2013; Rambla 2014) and educational borrowing (Auld and Morris 2014; Mukhopadhyay and Sriprakash 2011; Zufi 2018). A premise of both these approaches to knowledge sharing is that a knowledge holder, with best practice knowledge bases, distribute quality resources to knowledge recipients, by implication with lower quality resources (Ungar 2018). From an Afrocentric resilience theory, relationship resourced resilience (Ebersöhn 2019), we propose academic flocking as an alternative to knowledge transfer and borrowing in an education context. We use the designated case to argue that academic flocking is triggered by collective distress, which signals the need for research innovation, using existing research partnerships and their combined available resources to support positive outcomes (i.e., quality education).

To frame the study, we first describe the relationship-resourced resilience theory (Ebersöhn 2019) as a theoretical lens and emancipatory, democratising research as methodological position (Denscombe 2003). Next, we contemplate evidence on learning support resources which can be mobilised to address needs given home-based and online learning conditions by underprepared guardians. We then clarify the

methodology pertinent to this descriptive case study. We provide a rich description of the case of South-North academic collaboration in response to collective distress. We interpret the case as academic flocking by foregrounding how researchers mobilised cultural, collective- and explicit social resources to create and distribute evidence-based learning support resources. We posit that the academic flocking enabled equity in the research partnership and relevance in the education innovation. We conclude that, given worldwide education disruption, from a resilience stance, academic flocking constitutes a broad, responsive, affordable, and inclusive pathway to distribute evidence-based learning support resources that may promote education outcomes despite widespread collective distress.

1 Theoretical framework

1.1 Global challenges require innovative education research

Education challenges due to COVID-19 include rigorous hygiene protocols, increased anxiety, and rampant school closures impacting approximately 1.5 billion students worldwide (UNESCO 2020b). Data published by the United Nations indicate that 180 countries temporarily shut down their schools over the course of the global pandemic, causing approximately 90% of the global student population to rely on distance learning (UNESCO 2020b). Thus, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread, students' guardians were called on to manage students' remote learning while juggling their own work and household responsibilities (Bubb and Jones 2020). To compound the issue, many guardians lack formal experience facilitating meaningful learning at home (Duffy and Scott 2020). Taken together, these conditions have made students more vulnerable and exacerbated existing inequities in education systems across the globe. Guardians require learning support capacity to decrease vulnerability, guard against plausible negative effects of home-based learning and promote better-than-expected learning outcomes for students (Manullang and Satria 2020; Wang et al. 2020).

Global challenges not only destroy school infrastructure, but also the hopes and ambitions of generations of children and young people. Such worldwide disturbances hold back overall progress in education and reinforces national inequalities. As a case in point, data collected by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics revealed that the disparity in educational attainment between students living in conflict zones and students living in areas unaffected by conflict worsened over the course of Guatemala's civil war; that is, the gap in educational attainment widened over time (UNESCO 2011). Similarly, the civil war in Mozambique between 1977 and 1992 was associated with losses in educational attainment for students aged 11 to 15 (Betts 2013). Moreover, civil unrest has resulted in the displacement of millions of students in other low-income countries (UNESCO 2011).

Similar to the COVID-19 pandemic, these global challenges often required outside educational stakeholders to relieve the additional burden placed on teachers by such crises. For example, parents often have had to establish productive learning environments for their children while simultaneously working to settle into their new

community (UNESCO 2011). Further, teachers, whether in crisis settings or not, already face seemingly unsurmountable challenges such as huge class sizes, low or no pay and the stress of living in unstable environments themselves (MacIntyre et al. 2019). This is especially true for teachers in emerging economies. However, severe challenges, such as the growing refugee situation in Europe, pose additional complications for teacher recruitment, retention and training (UNESCO 2019). Countries such as Turkey, Germany, and Uganda would face significant teacher shortages if all eligible refugees enrolled in schools. UNESCO (2020b) also highlighted the shortages of qualified and appropriately trained teachers.

Challenges associated with COVID-19 also compound the adversity teachers face. Teachers have to adapt and continue to deliver education where schools are closed, and resources are extremely limited (UNESCO 2020b). During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents, guardians, and caregivers had to adapt to their newfound full-time role as formal educators and thus, require support. As a result, guardians needed large scale, immediate access to instructional resources in accessible formats. For example, Chee and Ullah (2020) found that although Pakistani immigrants in Hong Kong appeared less involved in their children's education than the native of Hong Kong the nature of their involvement was dictated by cultural norms. That is, their involvement was largely home-based rather than school-based. By comparison, Aydin and Kaya (2019) report that the effect of parental involvement and support for the education of refugee children made a noticeable contribution to the success of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Sadly, those who lost their parents in the war often lagged behind.

While there are numerous evidence-based instructional innovations globally (e.g., Formative Analytics, Place-Based Learning, Learning With Robots) (Herodotou et al. 2019), significant global challenge (such as COVID-19) mandate equitable access to such innovations in rapid user-friendly formats. Unfortunately, most innovations require both resources and support for effective implementation—resources and support that are often unavailable in the wake of global crises. Thus, methodologically, the collective education distress of a global challenge highlights the need for actionable questions from an emancipatory, democratising research stance that can promote evenness in resource distribution (Ansley and Gaventa 1997; Shuffelton 2013; Vallaincourt 2007; Van Dellen 2013).

1.2 Resilience as theoretical lens

Resilience has been conceptualized and operationalized in many areas of study, including environment perspectives (Marchese et al. 2018), socioeconomics (Westley 2013), human development (Luthar and Cicchetti 2000; Masten 2014a; Rutter 2013; Ungar et al. 2013), and sustainability (Fiksel 2006). Across these disciplinary lenses a common understanding is that resilience is indicated when predicted negative outcomes associated with a particular significant challenge are curtailed by using protective systemic resources to buffer against the risk of the challenge and support unpredicted positive outcomes. For example, in human development (Ungar 2018), resilience constitutes systemic processes and capacities to accommodate change prompted by disruption to normative behaviour and performance in terms of

absorptive (i.e., absorb, recover, and restore), adaptive, and transformative phases/stages over-time and affects interconnected systems (e.g., health, education, or information technology; Masten 2014a).

Our thinking was informed by the relationship-resourced resilience theory (Ebersöhn 2012, 2013, 2019). Recognising an Ubuntu Afrocentric socio-cultural position of interdependence (Letseka 2013; Lethale and Pillay 2013), the relationship-resourced resilience theory proposes that any significant challenge qualifies as collective distress and calls for adaptive responses. Such adaptive responses qualify as resilience-enabling when they promote collective wellbeing.

Flocking is an adaptive response to support collective wellbeing and circumvent the negative effects of collective distress (Ebersöhn 2019). Flocking is, above all else, a relational pathway to resource management (Ebersöhn et al. 2017). Ebersöhn (2019) argues that, during flocking, people use social resources for instrumental social support (Thompson and Goodvin 2016). Specifically, individuals and groups collaborate to identify, access, mobilise and distribute relevant available social resources needed to respond to adversity. Flocking collaboration mirrors values, beliefs and practices of mutuality, interdependence, and pragmatism. Regarding *mutuality*, the assumption is that all involved in flocking will share equally whatever is available to them, and that the benefits of support will similarly stretch beyond individual gain. In terms of *interdependence* the aim is not to provide support in a way that leads to chronic dependence on another. As pragmatic support, flocking uses low-threshold solutions to challenges (Ebersöhn et al. 2018).

The social resources used to support flocking have Afrocentric relevance (Kuku et al. 2013) and include collective, cultural, social and economic resources. *Collective resources* signify organisational structures that provide assistance—including self-help groups parent or youth groups and faith-based groups. *Cultural resources* indicate communal norms, values, beliefs and associated practices of a group. Whereas *implicit social resources* reflect emotional support of counselling, comforting and advising one another, *explicit social resources* include donations, as well as borrowing and lending practices. *Economic resources* include opportunities for income generation, employment and livelihood strategies. Together, these resource pathways support community thriving in the face of adversity.

1.3 Democratising research as methodological lens

Democratising research denotes intentional research pathways to make science useful to society with particular attention to knowledge creation (research) together with improved practice (social change) (Denscombe 2003). Moreover, democratising research necessitates leveraging evidence to directly support emancipation from excluded and marginalised spaces that constrain development (Ansley and Gaventa 1997; Vallaincourt 2007). De Sousa Santos (2014) argues that democratising research is necessary to achieve cognitive justice as research can diversify democratic solutions that enable transformative practices where most needed.

As a methodological lens, a democratising research stance thus aligns with tenets of emancipatory research. Both lenses position research as a pathway to enable democratisation (DeMeulenaere and Cann 2013; Greenwood and Levin 2000). The

ways in which knowledge is generated and how it is shared become drivers of activism to emancipate people from spaces of marginalisation. The research intent is knowledge creation to make a positive difference in the conditions or lives of people. The root of such research is that of indignation regarding, education and democracy as they failed to turn the tide of injustice for a majority of global citizens (Smith et al. 2016).

In her seminal work, Lather (1991) aligns emancipatory research with knowledge generation that is praxis-oriented, educative and touches on Freirean participatory action research (Freire 1970). Emancipatory critical paradigms emphasise emancipation of the weak and marginalised. Emancipatory research, from which post-modernity emerged, disturbs acceptable explanations of reality and knowledge. In order to democratise research, emancipatory research adds to research endeavours by questioning power relations in research and the relationship between emancipation and research. An emancipatory paradigm thus differs from an empiricism paradigm where reality is discoverable and valid knowledge can be proven by scientific means (Patton 2002). An emancipatory research stance also implies rejecting one-dimensional understandings of challenge as a space of stress, distress, resource constraint, and vulnerability. In a COVID-19 space of shock, utilizing a democratising research approach entails not being solely embroiled in the intersecting systemic obstacles facing education in trying to ensure equitable access, participation, and outcomes for vulnerable education populations. A democratising and just intent, as indicated in a capability thesis (Sen 2010), is to frame individuals as agents that bring abundant parcels of strengths, agency, and potential to the academic and social space. Structurally the issue of who gets what and how environments constrain or enable continue to matter.

1.4 Supporting student learning

School closures that emanated from COVID-19 pandemic lockdown highlight the need for collaborative learning and social support for students across all school years. By learning support, we mean the holistic support provided to facilitate children's learning (Landsberg and Matthews 2016). Whereas, social support refers to support emanating from external relationships and the environment which include a range of assistance and care (Li et al. 2018).

Early in the lockdown, it was evident that teachers could not continue in their roles without the support of parents, community structures and volunteers. Carver (2020) describes how communities, educators and businesses came together and developed partnerships in an attempt to support children and youth affected by school closures due to the pandemic. For example, partnerships facilitated online teacher training, instructional content was collaboratively provided, and computers were mobilised for students' use with the involvement of community of volunteers and structures (e.g., allowing students and other individuals access to their Wi-Fi from their cars parked in close proximity to the businesses; Carver 2020).

Within the South African context, non-profit organisations such as the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI) worked to provide social support and lessen the devastating social and emotional challenges that affect learning. The Me-

dia in Education Trust (MiET) is another organisation that has formed partnerships for the improvement of the lives of learners. From their efforts the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) was initiated to reduce the impact of intrinsic and societal barriers that impede learning. Li et al. (2018) argue that social support is associated with positive learning outcomes. There appears to be concurrence with this thinking as shown by the efforts of various governmental and non-profit organisation who created partnerships to provide learning support to learners, teachers and parents since the lockdown situations began.

1.5 Academic flocking: An instructional research partnership case

We made use of an instrumental case (Stake 2005) to describe the case of South-North academic collaboration to respond to collective education distress in South Africa and North America. An instrumental case study utilises a specific case to comprehensively understand and appreciate a social situation, context, practices and beliefs. Instrumental case studies highlight similarities and difference with the case and provide valuable information for future research (Bertram and Christiansen 2014; Nieuwenhuis 2016). We employed the case study to interpret, analyse and describe the processes, behaviours and responses of South-North education researchers as a way to understand practices which may be resilience-enabling to distribute education resources equitably. One of the advantages of case study design is that it offers opportunities for various interpretations and insights resulting in both self-development and seeking to add value to the subject under investigation. Of particular relevance for democratising research is that data gathered using this design, is embedded in reality and naturally-based with a wealth of descriptive material available (Cohen et al. 2011).

A disadvantage or limitation of a case study design is that it can be viewed as subjective, biased and not easy to replicate or cross-checked (Nieuwenhuis 2016). We attempted to counter this limitation by providing a rich description of the case of South-North academic collaboration. We used a purposive sample to select the case we investigated based on an existing multinational partnership. The learning materials (Quality Talk and Inkhulumo) were already available for use as a resource for parents. The particular sections we used were then selected based on the relevance to the COVID lockdown situation. The advantage of purposeful sampling is that we started with readily available materials which were designed for the contexts and expedited the process. Given the circumstances, it was our position that the benefits of this sampling technique outweighed the limitations, particularly in light of the pandemic.

We developed a novel, brief, and aesthetically appealing educational video in a relatively short period of time for guardians on ways to enhance student thinking and reasoning about what they were learning. In order to develop this education resource, the research partnership used a range of shared resources. We used existing evidence-based instructional tools from South Africa (Inkhulumo) and the United States (Quality Talk), existing linguistic networks to translate online instructional English questions into three South African languages (isiZulu, Sepedi, Afrikaans),

as well as joint information technology resources to record verbal translations, and upload the *Inkhulumo*-text, visual and audio-material for online use.

The video focused on strategies showing guardians how to pose rich, meaningful questions (i.e., authentic questions, Murphy and Firetto 2017) and elaborated explanations (i.e., using reasons and evidence, Murphy and Firetto 2017) in conversations with children and young people. The overarching goal was to create a video that could support quality home-based learning in diverse contexts. In developing the video, the research partnership was mindful of the resource constraints of families who could potentially find the video useful. The emancipatory goal was to increase the accessibility of the video for those most vulnerable based on few opportunity-pathways to education and those most in need of assistance in educating the students in their care. We intentionally used art and story-lines with which parents could practice rich questioning and reflective responses with children and that would also showcase familiar images and life-worlds.

Prior to the case of academic flocking under discussion, the South-North research partnership developed an evidence-based instructional innovation, *Inkhulumo* (Leask 2019). The emphasis of their school-based intervention study was to develop a novel instructional method, responsive to the constraints and strengths in a rural, South African high school, by considering an existing small-group discussion approach (Quality Talk). Quality Talk (QT) aims to promote students' high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking about, around, and with text and content (Wilkinson et al. 2010). The QT discussion approach has been implemented in numerous contexts, cultures, and languages beyond the United States, including Taiwan, mainland China, Switzerland, and South Africa (e.g., Murphy et al. 2020; Murphy and Quality Talk Team 2021; Wei et al. 2021).

Teachers opted to name the adapted QT approach *Inkhulumo*, which loosely translates to "talk or discuss" in isiZulu. *Inkhulumo* is novel in that it supports good teaching in a challenged context: it accommodates teaching an additional language with stories, images, and language familiar in a rural South African, and includes strategies for peer facilitation given high student-teacher ratios. The *Inkhulumo* instructional frame has a higher number of students per group (six to 10) to accommodate the larger class sizes. Also, teachers were unable to sit with every group, so we worked with teachers to select peer-leaders for each discussion group. The explicit *Inkhulumo* lessons on the discourse elements are shorter than those in QT, and can be printed as handouts for the teachers and students due to the lack of technology. In recrafting the lessons, we used culturally appropriate and familiar examples and pictures. These more succinct lessons were particularly useful given that some students struggled with written English. These adaptations gave way to substantively enhanced text-based discussions and student understandings.

As indicated in Table 1, we used both Quality Talk, as well as *Inkhulumo* instructional material to develop the video. To accommodate linguistic diversity we developed inclusive versions in three official South African languages, namely Afrikaans (<https://bit.ly/2CGNeEd>), isiZulu (<https://bit.ly/2P3iCip>) and Sepedi (<https://bit.ly/3f3uDPu>). We collaborated with language specialist researchers at the University of Pretoria to translate the transcribed English text. Translators emailed the written translation of video-text to a second language specialist for back-translation (Chen

Table 1 Text Translations of the Learning Support Videos

English text	Afrikaans text	isiZulu text	Sepeidi text
The first main question type is the authentic question. Authentic questions are open ended and have multiple plausible answers. Authentic questions often relate to children's interest or interpretation of a text or an experience. Authentic questions are open to argument, debate, or discussion, and they often elicit elaborated responses that contain evidence or reasons. Examples sound like this: What was the best part of your trip?	Die eerste tipe vraag is die outentieke vraag. Outentieke vrae eindig oop en het verskillende moonlike antwoorde. Outentieke vrae hou dikwels verband met kinders se belangstelling en interpretasie van 'n teks of ervaring. Outentieke vrae is oop vir argumenteer, debateer en voerige antwoorde wat bewyse en redes inhoud. Voorbeelde klink so: Wat was die lekkerste deel van jou vakansie?	Kubuza umzali: "Yini into oyithande kakhulu ngenkathi uvakashile?" Kuphendula ingane: "Ngithande yonke into! Ngiyathanda ukuvakashela uGogo wami futhi ngithanda ukuchitha isikhathi nabomzala bami. Ngidlale imidlalo eminingi nabomzala bami. Siphinde sasiza uGogo ngokuthenza izinkuni. Awakho ugesi lapho ehlaya khona uGogo. Imilo usize ngokusifudumeza emuva kokuthi uGogo apheke ukudla. uGogo utshala izithelo nemifino engadini futhi ufuye izinkuku. Azikho izitolo lapho ehlaya khona uGogo. Ebusuku silalele izindaba ezazioxwa uGogo. Ezinye izindaba zimavelana ngempilo. Ezinye izindaba zalapho ehlaya khona uGogo. Unenhliziyo entle uGogo, ngijabula ukuba naye." Umbuzo wesibini umbuzo wokuhlola. Lombuzo lo uphendulwa ngokuthi yebo noma cha futhi uphendulwa ngegama elilodwa nje kuphela.	Mehlala ke ya go swana le ye: Naa ke eng seo o se ratilego kudu ka maikhušo a gago? Dilo ka mokai. Ke ipshimme ka go etela makgolo le go ratokela le batswala ba ka. Re ratokile dipapadi tše dmiši tša go fapana ebile be re thuša makgolo ka go yo rwaletla dikgong tša go gotša mollo. Ka ge go se na le mohlakase mo a dulago gona, mollo ke wona o re futhumašago ge a feiša go apea dijo. Ga go na mabenkeleng kgauswi, bjalo makgolo o na le serapana sa mero go le dikgogo. Mantšiboa, ka moka ga rena re a kgobokana ra theeleiša makgolo a re anegelela dikanegelelo. Tše dingwe tša tšona di amana le bophelo bja gagwe mola tše dingwe e le dinonwane fela. Makgolo ke motho wa go loka ebile ke thaba kudu ge ke na le yena. Ntle le dipotišo tša mmakgonthe, tša moleko di na le dikarabo tše mmalwa tše kopana. Ga se tša nepiša dipolelišano, diphenkšišano goba dingangišano. Ka nako dipotišo tša moleko di na le karabo e tee fela bjalo ka ee goba aowa. Mohlala wo o latelago o laetša karabo ya potišo ya moleko e bapetiwa le ya potišo ya mmakgonthe ka ga maikhušo tšeo re di bonego slaedeng se fertiligo. O be o ile kae a maikhušo a gago? Go etela ka makgolo. O ile neng? Ka Julae. Go lokile. Ke potišo efe yeo o nagamago gore e tla tšweletša polelišano?
Everything! I loved going to visit my grandmother and spending time with my cousins. We played different games and helped my grandmother collect wood for the fire. There is no electricity where she lives so the fire helped to keep us warm after she cooked the food. There are no shops nearby so my grandmother has a small vegetable garden with some chickens. At night, we all sat together and listened to the stories my grandmother told. Some stories were about her life and others were myths from the area. My Gogo is such a kind person, I love being with her	Alles! Ek was mal daaroor om by oma te kuier en tyd met my niggies en nefies te spandeer. Ons het allerhande spelletjies gespeel en omaa gehelp om hout bymekaar te maak vir 'n vuur. Daar is nie elektrisiteit waar sy bly nie, so die vuur het gehelp om ons lekker warm te hou nadat sy vir ons kos gekook het. Daar is nie winkels naby Ouma nie, so sy het 'n klein groentetuinijie en hoenders. In die aand het ons almal saangesit en luister na die stories wat Ouma vertel. Party stories was oor haar lewe en ander was staalijies wat ons voorouers. My omaa is so 'n gawe mens en ek hou baie daarvan om by haar te wees	Kubuza umzali: "Uvakashe kuphi?" Kuphendula ingane: "Ngivakashe uGogo." Kubuza umzali: "Uye nini?" Kuphendula ingane: "Ngiye ngplulayi" Kusho umzali: "kukungile" Yimuphi umbuzo ozoqala inxoxo?	Ka nako dipotišo tša moleko di na le karabo e tee fela bjalo ka ee goba aowa. Mohlala wo o latelago o laetša karabo ya potišo ya moleko e bapetiwa le ya potišo ya mmakgonthe ka ga maikhušo tšeo re di bonego slaedeng se fertiligo. O be o ile kae a maikhušo a gago? Go etela ka makgolo. O ile neng? Ka Julae. Go lokile. Ke potišo efe yeo o nagamago gore e tla tšweletša polelišano?

and Boore 2010; Choi et al. 2012; Van Nes et al. 2010). We reviewed the back translated English text, noting where adjustments in the translation may be necessary. The final translated texts were audio-recorded using available technology (either WhatsApp or computer software). These audio recordings were edited into three final video-links which were made available on websites of the two universities.

Both universities used email to distribute links of the videos to existing international and local researcher networks. The networks included regional academic partners, as well as non-profit organisations and government-level partners (e.g. South African Department of Basic Education). Uptake included instances such as the spokesperson of the Indigenous Languages Action Forum (ILAF) requesting consent to disseminate the resources in their networks, a posting on the South African Association for Language Teachers website in the form of a blog, videos distributed to enrolled education students (pre-service education and postgraduate students), and requests from researchers at four South African universities to cross-share the links within their networks. In addition, Analytics from the Penn State video repository in June 2020 showed more than 125 views from individuals scattered across the United States, including Alaska. More views may also have resulted from disseminated links and the video repository at the University of Pretoria.

2 Discussion

Research partnerships as mechanisms of knowledge access, production, and change has been acknowledged as significant,—especially in spaces with uneven resource distribution due to geographical place (Ashcroft and Rayner 2011; Albertyn and Erasmus 2014; Beard and Dasgupta, 2006; Benneworth and Sanderson 2009). Similarly, there is evidence of flocking as resilience response in the education system. In studies with teachers in South Africa it was evident that, given the high need associated with structural disparities, teachers enacted flocking as a way to manage resources, support quality education, remain in the profession and experience eustress (Ebersöhn 2014; Ebersöhn and Loots 2017).

We propose that the case of academic flocking in a South-North collaboration illustrates the feasibility of such framing through research partnerships. We posit that, as is the case with collective distress triggering flocking (Ebersöhn 2019), global distress relative to student learning triggered academic flocking. Similarly with flocking, the purpose of academic flocking is to support mutually beneficial positive outcomes (e.g., quality home-based learning), whilst buffering against persistent negative risk factors (e.g., continued school closures with concomitant reliance on digital learning spaces and guardians as facilitators of learning).

Academic flocking partners, and consequently their associated knowledge resources, are equal. Unlike knowledge transfer (Collins and Allender 2013; Rambla 2014) or borrowing (Auld and Morris 2014; Zufi 2018) in the context of education, in academic flocking neither partner is viewed as the sole knowledge producer or recipient. Academic flocking develops responsive education innovations by mobilising existing joint knowledge resources in responses that are relevant to particular contexts and cultures of research partners. The purpose of academic flocking under

discussion, was to develop an online learning support video by combining shared evidence (Inkhulumo and Quality Talk) in order to (i) buffer against the risk of school closures, (ii) support conditions of home-based learning and, potentially, (iii) promote positive learning by children and young people taught at home by their parents or caregivers.

Flocking denotes the mobilisation of social resources with Afrocentric relevance (Kuku et al. 2013) to provide social support (Ebersöhn 2019). The South-North academic flocking indicates evidence of academics mobilising explicit social resources, as well as collective and cultural social resources. To provide social support academics mobilised a range of *explicit social resources*—denoting donations, borrowing and lending practices (Kuku et al. 2013). They contributed art and textual material on evidence-based education resources (Quality Talk and *Inkhulumo*). They offered the use of institutional technology infrastructure to revise the QT-online video for use in South Africa and leveraged available institutional technology platforms to post the learning resource. They volunteered human resources to, for example, translate and back-translate text, and match translated audio-recordings to visual material.

The academic flocking also mobilised *collective social resources* to provide social support—through organisational networks and structures that provide assistance (Kuku et al. 2013). Besides this global South-North network, the academics involved also mobilised local networks to distribute the learning resource.

Closely associated with collective resources, are *cultural social resources*, *-hich* refer to the communal norms, values, beliefs and associated practices of a group (Kuku et al. 2013). The academic flocking may be indicative of in-group and other-focused goals to attain shared relational goals (Markus and Kitayama 2004; Morris et al. 2001) In this case, the resources were made communally available to alleviate a burden on the education system.

In this article the disturbance, the COVID-19 pandemic, is a global health challenge external to the education system. The challenge is unknown and riddled with uncertainty as teachers, students, guardians, and policymakers alike need to function in unfamiliar spaces and roles. The pandemic appears to be intransient, as evidenced in the ebb and flow of infection rates and concomitant fluctuations in mitigating regulatory frameworks that effect, amongst others, education. There are existing vulnerabilities in the education system including lack of parental involvement in instruction (Munje and Mncube 2018; Patton 2019; Silinskas and Kikas 2019) and limited access to evidence for societal impact (Bandura et al. 2001). These vulnerabilities require that resources be mobilised to mitigate against the impact of the shock and potentially enable better-than-expected learning outcomes for home-based learning. The COVID-19 shock can be absorbed within the education system to recover to normative teaching and learning behaviour and performance. Alternatively, adaptive change to the chronic COVID-19 challenge can occur by adjusting known behaviours and structures to enable positive education outcomes in stable ways. Transformative education change in response to the pandemic is also possible. Here sustained restructured pathways innovated in response to the severe COVID-19 pandemic support positive education interactions and outcomes behaviours in the aftermath of disruption. The COVID-19 challenge, on the short

term, is negative as it disrupts normative education behaviour and, presumably, performance. It remains to be seen if the worldwide challenge to education holds promise for positive change in education.

As an emancipatory research endeavour this descriptive case chronicled how multi-country researchers responded rapidly to the intense need created during the COVID-19 pandemic to support guardians in their roles as teachers during large scale home-based learning. From a resilience stance, researchers pragmatically mobilised existing resources to buffer against the risk predicted and enable a supportive pathway to promote home-based learning. We mobilised available *Inkhulumo* (Leask 2019) evidence to adapt an instructional tool (Quality Talk, Murphy 2018) in a school-based study with teachers and students in a remote South African school. We leveraged an existing video-clip of related findings used in North America (Murphy and Quality Talk Research Team 2020). We adapted, translated and back translated the North American video-clip based on the contextually relevant *Inkhulumo* findings. We used existing digital institutional platforms to post the video-clips for future visits. We took advantage of existing global and local networks with researchers, learning support and language specialists, government officials, non-profit organisations to distribute the link to the resource widely. The platforms for access to evidence required structural support in the form of institutional technical support. It also required volunteerism in the form of time and expertise shared by colleagues and interns engaged in translation.

In the same way in which our study privileges the use of existing structural and social capital assets (e.g., platforms and networks) to enable accelerated access to resources, in Spain a number of communication platforms and applications are available through which teachers and parents/caregivers share and co-develop the learning process (Drane et al. 2020). Likewise, the New Zealand government recently announced the creation of two television channels to deliver educational content, combined with internet delivery and also hardcopy curriculum. Queensland government announced the delivery of the curriculum via television due to poor internet connectivity (Moore 2020). Other examples of resource mobilisation to enable access to education resources include a number of countries providing loans of laptops or tablets including pre-paid dongles to assist with internet access (e.g., China, or France, Drane et al. 2020).

Other global challenges beg questions on how to use research for emancipation. Proponents of a solidarity framework argue that, more and more, social responsibility for cohesion shifts to the scale of individual rather than public concern (Hulgård 2004). Consider, for example, the case of increasingly accommodating refugees as well as rising socio-economic inequalities. Similarly, crises often indicate the need for solidarity actions such as collaborative platforms to decrease gaps between research and policy, policy and practice, research and life. Solidarity positions leverage collaboration as an end to a means—whether for economic or social means. From a solidarity economy approach collaboration denotes voluntary engagement in solidarity action aimed at enabling the common good (Laville 2010). Here the emphasis of the collaborative response to challenge is not on securing relief. Rather, from a solidarity economy approach, the focus of solidarity actions, such as collaboration, is transformation. Such transformation is indicated as solidarity to redistribute

resources that can redress inequality, leverages voluntary social relations and invokes collaborators as volunteers and providers of capital (Laville and Salmon 2015).

Collaboration and solidarity do not come without hurdles. Diverse structural visions, strategies and actors indicate that trust, supportive policy and funds are prerequisites for pathways similar to that we describe in this article. Elsewhere it was found that, despite organisational barriers, the principle of reciprocity is valuable to mobilize voluntary resources for social innovation (Enjolras 2015). As found in other work on solidarity in Europe (Eschweiler and Hulgård 2018), collaborative research spaces also afford leverage for solidarity agency. From an emancipatory perspective, researchers with a shared view on equitable, common good may forge and maintain participatory partnerships that enable active solidarity innovations that may be responsive to crises.

A trend in some uptake of the shared on-line resource shows engagement from especially linguistic diversity groups (e.g., Indigenous Languages Action Forum or, the South African Association for Language Teachers), as well as higher education actors (e.g., enrolled education students and local South African universities). This finding highlights the importance of collaborative educational and research endeavours among individuals of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In this case, our multinational, multilinguistic, multicultural team was able to easily mobilize to address a shared need in ways that were accessible to diverse, multi-national communities.

A primary limitation of the current study was the focus on access to information rather than access to technological devices. While access to educational resources is crucial to students' success, our most vulnerable populations still lack access to the internet. Moreover, case studies are also susceptible to bias caused by researchers' lack of subjectivity. In this instance, an additional limitation could be associated with the school closures. The school closures resulted in the reduction of traditional avenues for dissemination through education-based channels, such as teachers and support staff.

3 Conclusion

What remains self-evident is that our global community will continue to face an unbridled spawning of devastating events like war, famine, and viruses in the future. Moreover, most of these tragedies will have differential impact among those most vulnerable among us, be they children, youth, or the elderly. Moreover, those living in emerging economies will continue to have these kinds of events impact social supports like healthcare and education. The question of central importance is how we as academics can respond in meaningful ways to resource supports for teaching and learning in useful and sustainable ways.

In this article, we argue that academic flocking offers an alternative mechanism for supporting quality education through equitable research partnerships. In essence, collective distress elicits academic flocking and promotes research innovation as existing research partner share knowledge and resources to support positive outcomes in student learning. Such partnerships are characterized by equity, relevance,

pragmatism, and mutual appreciation of place and context. Indeed, we contend that academic flocking to buffer against the extreme risk of a global education crises may provide some insight into this mechanism of change as a way in which to promote quality learning. Theoretically, we drew on the relationship-resourced resilience theory (Ebersöhn 2019) to posit that academic flocking may be one resilience-enabling pathway to use science equitably and promote better-than-expected educational outcomes in the face of global challenges.

We relied on an instrumental case study to describe a collaborative, flocking response between education researchers from the University of Pretoria and the Pennsylvania State University to collective distress of a global challenge aimed at supporting equitable access to educational resources. The instrumental case study adds to knowledge on education responses to global challenge from an emancipatory, democratising research position. We posit that the case of academic enabled platforms for equitable access to education evidence in terms of (i) responsiveness to collective need for evidence-based educational support, (ii) affordability using low threshold resource mobilisation, (iii) robustness to retain the integrity of findings, (iv) accessibility in multiple languages, and (v) relevance to culture and context. Plausibly, the descriptive case constitutes an example of an attainable emancipatory research pathway in education to address some of the SDG 17 ideals (UNCTAD 2015) to promote access to science in equitable ways by leveraging South-North capacity and diversity.

In sum, it is our position that of academic flocking could have value as a transformative alternative to engage with education evidence in ways that promote equity. Further, given education disruption world-wide, we conclude that, from a resilience stance, academic flocking culminated into a timely and pragmatic learning resource to buffer against the challenges of home-based learning and plausibly support better-than-expected learning outcomes. As such, academic flocking, which makes use of established research partnerships, stands as an important resilience pathway for education systems facing collective distress. Indeed, it is not enough to merely stem the tide of negative effects resulting from global tragedies. Rather, the goal must be better-than-expected learning outcomes through sustainable resilience pathways like academic flocking.

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Conflict of interest L. Ebersöhn, F. Omidire and P.K. Murphy declare that they have no competing interests.

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