



Editorial Note

This issue of the Artha Journal of Social Sciences contains five articles addressing significant concerns of governance, mostly related to education and the environment. Of the five articles, four are on examining closely questions of corruption, ICT in teaching and learning, and a matter of utmost significance in contemporary times - academic freedom. The fifth article takes the case study of Ashtamudi Lake in Kerala to examine the fragile coexistence of conservation of both natural resources and heritage.

The articles by Somagaca & Mawela and Nosihle Veronica Sithole look at technology integration and ICT in teaching and learning in township schools. Both look at the South African region. Somagaca and Mawela investigate the factors influencing successful technology integration in teaching and learning within the private school context. The data is derived from respondents from primary and secondary schools, adopting a quantitative cross-sectional survey strategy and collecting data from educators and school management using a questionnaire. The study showcases positive educator attitudes towards using ICT tools in classroom teaching and learning, and a highly positive benefit of exposure levels to technology tools for efficient classroom learning. The article also builds arguments on how educators' ICT skills significantly influence technology integration in teaching and learning. The study offers several recommendations for enhancing technology integration in the classroom.

Nosihle Veronica Sithole's article critically reviews social issues negatively impacting ICT integration. Using a qualitative approach, the study highlights the various factors—high crime rates, theft, etc.—that hinder teachers in successfully infusing ICT in township classrooms. Within a conceptual framework composed of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), employing a constructivist paradigm and case study research design, the author builds and supports their claims regarding the impact of social issues on ICT integration. The article argues that the government and education stakeholders must improve security by installing high-quality security measures, such as cameras, building strong rooms, and secure places for technology resources.

In alignment with the ongoing discourse on education, particularly in the realms of higher education and research, is Mohammed Xolile Ntshangase's article titled *Exploration of Philosophical and Legal Reasons for Inclusion of Academic Freedom in the Bill of Rights*. Drawing on the need for academic freedom within universities, the article critiques the lack of freedom of expression in teaching and assessment that needs to be outlined

in the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution. Through a philosophical and conceptual analysis, the article argues that despite 30 years of democracy in the country, academic freedom still needs to be explicitly addressed in a constitutional amendment. Moreover, pointing out the challenges faced by academics in higher education institutions currently governed by an overarching regulatory body, the author puts forward four suggestions that will aid in the smooth functioning of these institutions. The article is structured as an argumentative discussion of a significant concept in the field of higher education, providing insights into university management and academic rights.

The fourth article, titled *Corruption during and after COVID-19: Analysis of the factors impeding anti-corruption initiatives in South Africa* by Shikha Vyas-Doorgapersad investigates corruption and financial misconduct recorded during COVID-19. This is done via a qualitative approach, by compiling information and suitable analysis of relevant data. Various journal articles, books, and official documents are considered to gather available data. This methodology forms part of the literature review, where the information gathered was assessed and analysed. The findings highlight the failure of anti-corruption acts and propose that strategies have to be employed to address the implementation gaps to combat corruption. Through this, the researcher highlights the significant role the government can play in reducing corruption as a suggestion for policymakers to consider.

Last, but certainly not the least, is Rajagopal P K and Sreekala K's cogent analysis of conservation in the article titled *Ashtamudi Lake: Balancing Ecosystem Conservation and Socio-Cultural Heritage*. The authors study the environmental risks that endanger Ashtamudi Lake's existence, such as water pollution, loss of biodiversity, unsound human interference, and their effects on the sensitive ecosystem of the lake. The study also highlights the socio-cultural and economic importance of the lake as a hub for fisher folk's traditional employment, such as fishing, fish curing, and coir making, which are the relevant occupations of the area's inhabitants. The researcher highlighted the importance of adopting sustainable practices, implementing policies for the development of the Ashtamudi Lake ecosystem and culture, and encouraging people's participation in the conservation of the area. Further, it proposes the importance of a sustainable approach to balance the protection of the environment and the socio-cultural values of the lake, which will benefit the state's sustainable development in the long run. The findings highlight the importance of maintaining traditions while minimising environmental threats. Emphasising its economic contributions and the hazards posed by environmental deterioration, the article offers the groundwork for

achieving a balance between economic development and conservation, underlying the value of integrated approaches to sustainable development by bridging the gap between environmental conservation and socio-cultural preservation.

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