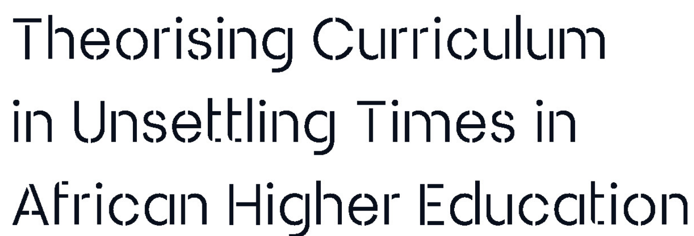

Theorising Curriculum in Unsettling Times in African Higher Education

Kehdinga George Fomunyam

UNIVERSITY
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Introduction

Curriculum Theory and Theorising in Unstable Times in African Higher Education

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Curriculum and all its discourses constitute the heart of education and all its paraphernalia and largely informs the happenings in schools or universities. As a result of the importance of curriculum, all scholars in the field of education in general claim or appear to claim expertise in all things curriculum and how the field should unfold. These struggles in the field of curriculum studies are made more complex by the unstable times the world as a whole and higher education in particular is currently facing. The world in general and higher education in particular is currently dealing with and striving to readjust to the new normal and abnormalities created by the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the calls for decolonisation, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and other contextual crises in different nations across the African continent. How are curriculum scholars responding to these crises through curriculum theorising, curriculum theory, curriculum change, curriculum innovation and development amongst others? What are the changes happening in the field of curriculum studies within this period and how are these changes changing the curriculum experience? What curriculum encounters are emerging within these times? What curricular charges are shaping the curriculum conversations and what curriculum matters are currently being prioritised in curriculum conversations? These questions amongst others, are the immediate concerns of this book. This edited

volume seeks to chart a new course by providing alternative insight from both empirical and theoretical research. This book takes on all things curriculum as pertains to the current education landscape. To get into the crux of the issues in this book, it is important to situate them with within broader curriculum conversations.

Fomunyam (2021) articulates three theorising approaches: contextual theorising; responsive theorising; and theoretical theorising. He argues that contextual theorising is at the heart of relevance in theorising since curriculum theorising focuses on the process rather than the product. If the process is problematic, the product will be the same. Contextual theorising not only opens the conversation up, but ensures that all the dimensions of context - that is, context as place, time and space come into play. This way, everything that works towards ensuring relevance is prioritised, especially in uncertain times like this when new solutions and approaches are needed to address educational challenges. Responsive theorising on the other hand deals with the process of making curriculum pedagogically, disciplinary, culturally, and economically responsive. These dimensions can only be achieved by a multiplicity of voices, articulating curriculum pathways that are responsive. Responsive theorising experiments with voices that matter as a way of creating alternative curriculum responsibilities that shape or redefine the power dynamics in educational spaces, creating disciplinary and interdisciplinary spaces, and shaped curricular charges that make for responsiveness. This type of theorising takes the curriculum further by ensuring that it articulates responsive solutions to educational challenges, since the educational landscape has been drastically altered by the COVID-19 pandemic, decolonisation, and the 4IR, amongst others. Lastly, theoretical theorising moves beyond the continuous process of thinking, imagining, and positing new ways of understanding curriculum to theory theorisation, which explores theorising approaches and the trustworthiness of theory development process as we move to decolonise the curriculum and everything about it or respond to the

challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that not only solve the current problem but prepare the academic to be ready for such challenges in the future. Theoretical theorising focuses on failed curriculum theories and the processes that made them fail, so as to theorise alternative pathways for new theory generation.

Theorising curriculum matters

The first chapter of this book and section is titled "quality education for what, how, who, and why in the Fourth Industrial Revolution?" and it argues for quality education (curriculum) defined as a reconstructed process of teaching and learning based on the critique of pragmatic-, performance-, and competence-based curricula, in order to address the 'why' question of education (driven by education reason). This chapter focuses on the integrating of digital technologies for a performance or competence-based curriculum, as a way of ensuring quality within the context of the curriculum.

The second chapter in this book and section is titled "curriculum decision-making in times of uncertainty: A case study of a technicist approach during the COVID-19 pandemic".

The chapter explores curriculum decision-making processes especially in times of uncertainty. This chapter uses the Mauritian experience during the COVID-19 pandemic as a case study to examine curriculum decision-making in a centralised education system. The chapter also deals with the significance of a close collaboration between stakeholders at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels of curriculum decision-making during times of crisis.

The third chapter in this book and section is titled "'brave new world' revisited: drama education in a virtual landscape". This chapter is a follow-up on a previously published chapter titled "Brave New World: Decolonising Shakespeare in the Drama Education Curriculum", which dealt with curriculum prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and gave an account of an extra-curricular drama education project

using interactive workshopping and syncretic theatre, and recommended teacher agency as a powerful mechanism for transforming university curricula from within. The authors posit that:

> *"the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the context overnight, and we now have two years' experience of the shock and dismay with which university educators have greeted and addressed the changed circumstances. Not only Drama Education, but the real-world phenomenon of drama itself has been affected, with many theatres closing down".*

This chapter critiques the approach described in the previously published chapter from the point of view of its feasibility in the virtual landscape to which we have been forcibly exiled by the exigencies of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The fourth chapter in this book and section is titled "curriculum implementation dilemma imposed by COVID-19 pandemic: Re-engineering curriculum through self-directed learning approaches". The chapter poses that curriculum implementation in many schools in South Africa has exposed a huge disparity which is historic in nature between well-resourced and under-resourced schools. This chapter draws from the partial implementation of blended learning introduced in 2020 and 2021 as a critical intervention for curriculum implementation and concludes that the introduction of new subjects and content are necessary to improve the quality of education.

The fifth chapter in this book and section is captioned "enactment principles underpinning the digitalised curriculum during the COVID-19 pandemic: Lesotho higher education". The COVID-19 pandemic introduced a hasty paradigm shift in higher education institutions (HEIs), with most having to move from traditional to digitalised curriculum (DC). This chapter draws from the connectivism theory and the natural identity framework to undergird and provide solutions for effectively using DC. This chapter poses that DC should display balanced principles of both the performance-based curriculum (implementation) and competence-based

curriculum (enactment), without inclination to either, lest there be an imbalance of knowledge-building.

The sixth chapter in this book and section is titled "theorising the politics of curriculum responsiveness in a Cameroonian university". The chapter sees content as the epicentre of the educational experience, without which no meaningful learning can take place. The research was designed as a qualitative case study of three literature modules and data was generated using semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observation. The chapter concludes that curricula charges like educational integrity and moral commitment are vital for the continuous blossoming of the higher education.

Theorising Decolonisation in Contested Spaces

The seventh chapter in this book and the first in this section is titled "Science Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions towards Developing isiZulu Vocabulary for Chemistry". This chapter explores the need for decoloniality of the Chemistry curriculum, to make it relevant to our context. In this chapter, the author argues that there is an obligation to develop an isiZulu vocabulary for chemistry. This is a qualitative case study of six universities of technology in South Africa.

The eighth chapter in this book and second in this section is captioned "Decolonising Teacher Education Curriculum in South Africa: the Realities and Challenges in Higher Education". The chapter argues that there is a growing demand for the decolonising of teacher education curriculum, as a paradigm shift from the Eurocentric-dominated curriculum which spans from the apartheid era until the present democratic period in South African society. The chapter examines the teacher education curriculum within a post-colonial context as it exists in South Africa.

The next chapter which is the ninth in this book and the third in this section is called "Walking the Tightrope of Decolonisation in Education: Critically Gauging Curriculum Emancipation in SIDS Contexts". This chapter examines two disenfranchising moves in the Mauritian curriculum. The

chapter makes the case for the establishment of a creolised curriculum for global citizenship.

The next chapter is the tenth in the book and fourth in the section is titled “Decolonising Curriculum Practices: an Analysis of Student Perspectives from a South African University”. This chapter describes student experiences on the delivery of a newly introduced university language-acquisition course as part of the institution’s curriculum decolonisation agenda. Guided by the null curriculum theory, the chapter employs both open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires for data generation.

Chapter eleven is the last chapter in this book and the fifth in this section. It is dubbed “Dancing with Decolonial Curriculum Theorists: Technology as a Shapeshifter in Art and Design Education”. The chapter posits that some decolonial theorists have associated the notion of decolonisation with changing the nature of knowledge, shifting our position in relation to knowledge, and economic transformation. The chapter proposes a framework that can be used to position, or bridge informal learning knowledges driven by technology outside the boxes of curriculum to support disadvantaged students to meet industry requirements or employability in art and design disciplines.

These two sections explore different kinds of crisis affecting education in different context and how the institutions, or academics within the institutions, responded to such crises and the way forward. While the chapters explore uniquely different contexts and different kinds of crisis, they all deal with uncertainty in education in general and curriculum particularly. Whether the uncertainty is the cause or the effect, it is clear that there is crisis at hand and the curriculum must respond. This is part of such response as well as a call to further engagement on the multiplicity of crises rocking the African continent as far as education is concerned.

Reference

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Theorising Curriculum Matters

Chapter 1

Quality Education for What, How, Who, and Why in the Fourth Industrial Revolution?

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Abstract

In this chapter, we argue for quality education (curriculum) defined as a reconstructed process of teaching and learning based on the critique of pragmatic, performance, and competence-based curricula, in order to address the 'why' question of education (driven by education reason). This is a proposed quality education theory (QET) for higher education which is not only integrating digital technologies for a performance or competence-based curriculum, but also for addressing the 'who' and 'why' questions of education. Digital technologies have been used by higher education institutions (HEIs) to address societal (competence-based), and professional (performance) needs, through responding to the 'how' and 'what' questions of education. This has been happening at the expense of addressing personal needs that respond to the 'who' and 'why' questions of education. Even after the integration of various digital technologies in education, student results or performances have not improved because the integration process is not driven by

relevant education theories. This chapter does not intend to discuss any specific digital technology, because the QET is proposed to incorporate any relevant digital technology for the 4IR. The chapter includes the influence of the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious mind, in driving reflections to produce relevant critiques that inform academics and students of the relevant reasons for education that drive any digital technology used in education.

Keywords: *competence-based*; *curriculum*; *digital technologies*; *Fourth Industrial Revolution*; *performance*; *quality education*

Introduction

Even after the emerging of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) in the twenty-first century (Schwab, 2016), higher education institutions (HEIs) used digital technologies for the teaching of prescribed course content known as legacy content. This label was applied because the content is based on print media, needed by digital immigrants or refugees (Khoza & Manik, 2015; Prensky & Berry, 2001), and used by HEIs to keep their legacy (Khoza, 2017). Digital immigrants or refugees are digital users who are not fluent in using digital technologies. On the one hand, when students use digital technologies, especially various types of learning management systems (LMSs) to master the legacy content, they pass their courses with high marks; HEIs claim this as quality education. On the other hand, the majority of students learn better with electronic activity-generated content or future content, because they are digital natives, residents, or the Google or DotNet-generation (Khoza, 2016a; Prensky, 2001).

Students prefer to start learning by using activities to interact with others (especially through social networks and media), in order to produce or generate content (future) for their courses, legacy content being abstract to the majority of them. For the students, activity-generated content produces quality education. As a result of these various definitions of quality education, the majority of students fail to finish their qualifications within the prescribed period; which is a

cause for concern for HEIs and students themselves (Khoza & Biyela, 2019).

The 4IR, with its technologies, has disrupted most of what HEIs and students have been doing. These digital technologies are introduced in order to improve teaching and learning that may result in high throughput rate. As witnessed by Schwab (2016, p. 7), although these digital technologies are in their infancy, they are starting to catch academics and students off guard, having this unresolved issue of teaching and learning preference.

> *"Consider the unlimited possibilities of having billions of people connected by mobile devices, giving rise to unprecedented...the staggering confluence of emerging technology breakthroughs, covering... artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, the Internet of things (IoT), autonomous vehicles, 3D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage and quantum computing,... Many of these innovations are in their infancy, but they are already reaching an inflection point..."*

The unresolved issue or contestation between the definition of quality education by HEIs and students suggests an important need for a new definition of quality education. Such a novel definition would harmonise these two definitions of quality education, based on the 4IR needs. Therefore, in this chapter, we argue for new ways of defining quality education through interrogating performance (drives legacy content for the 'what' question) and competence-based (drives future content for the 'how' question) curricula, studies suggesting this as a major concern in HEIs (Biesta, 2015; Khoza, 2018; Schwab, 2016; Waghid, 2019). The new ways of defining quality education should be able to answer the questions of 'to whom is the quality education directed?', and 'why?'. This chapter may be useful to HEIs, students, academics, departments of education, and other related sectors.

Integrating Digital Technologies for the 'What' of Education

Digital technologies are used to master the prescribed or legacy course content when academics (teachers) use performance curriculum in teaching and learning (Khoza, 2019). Performance curriculum is a prescribed or formal plan for teaching and learning, in which the system of teaching is driven by prescribed structures. Such structures must be followed by both academics and students in order to address professional, discipline, subject, or course needs (Khoza, 2018; Mpungose, 2019a). The prescribed structures include prescribed course content collected by academics from prescribed policies before they teach, in order to teach students to master the content. Mastering the content will lead to students being able to reproduce the content when they write examinations or tests. Digital technologies are programmed to support academics in drilling students with prescribed course content (Khoza, 2016b; Mpungose, 2019b). An example of this is a teacher robot designed by Bengaluru School in India to teach more than 300 students, while teachers were focusing on social and personal needs of the students. The strength of the robot teacher was that it was able to teach all the students in the same way, even when it was asked to repeat the prescribed content several times. Such is not possible for the teachers (academics) to do. Over and above the prescribed course content, prescribed structures of performance curriculum consist of prescribed objectives, activities, and summative assessment (Shoba, 2018; Tyler, 2013). Table 1.1 is an example of teaching based on the performance curriculum.

For example, if teachers were to teach students to *create a table* (Tables 1.1 and 1.2) using any application software, they would search for the prescribed *teaching objectives*; steps of a specific application software (Microsoft Excel) with content of Tables 1.1 and 1.2 to represent the *content*; model of the table to represent *activities*; and a *summative assessment.*

Table 1.1: Model Example of Creating a Table

Test Marks for Grade 10					
Surname and Initial	**Test 1**	**Test 2**	**Test 3**	**Total**	**Final**
Ali SB	54	61	66	181	60
Basi PT	62	59	65	186	62
Dongwe ZC	45	56	48	149	50
Pillay YN	70	67	73	210	70
Smit RE	66	65	68	199	66
Zondi P	83	80	91	254	85
Highest	83	80	91	254	85
Lowest	45	56	48	149	50

Objectives are short-term goals for teaching guided by the research of Benjamin Bloom (Hyland *et al.*, 2006; Fomunyam, 2017). In an example of a teaching objective for this table (Tables 1-1 and 1-2), one may say: "*Students will understand the concepts of creating a spreadsheet table using relevant formulae and functions*". This objective use of 'understand' is a keyword for the cognitive domain, while 'creating' would represent the higher-order levels (evaluating and creating) (Budden, 2017). Activity is any product of hardware and software resources that guide teachers' and students' actions (Govender & Khoza, 2017; Khoza, 2017).

A resource that may produce activities is defined as any object or person that communicates teaching and learning (Khoza, 2018). An important resource for teaching is the idea or theory that drives hardware and software resources, known as the ideological-ware (IW) resource (Khoza & Biyela, 2019). Activities that may come with the teachers are given in Tables 1-1 and 1-2 (in the form of worksheets), so that students would know what the steps set out by the teachers would produce. Students are assessed by means of summative assessment. Summative assessment is a system of asking students specific questions based on the content they have learnt, in order to collect, analyse, and store the responses, with the aim of

Table 1.2: Model with Formulae and Functions

Test Marks for Grade 10					
Surname and Initial	**Test 1**	**Test 2**	**Test 3**	**Total**	**Final mark**
Ali SB	54	61	66	=B3+C3+D3	=Average(B3:D3)
Basi PT	62	59	65	=Sum(B4:D4)	=Average(B4:D4)
Dongwe ZC	45	56	48	=Sum(B5:D5)	=Average(B5:D5)
Pillay YN	70	67	73	=Sum(B6:D6)	=Average(B6:D6)
Smit RE	66	65	68	=Sum(B7:D7)	=Average(B7:D7)
Zondi P	83	80	91	=Sum(B8:D8)	=Average(B8:D8)
Highest	=Max(B3:B8)	=Max(C3:C8)	=Max(D3:D8)	=Max(E3:E8)	=Max(F3:F8)
Lowest	=Min(B3:B8)	=Min(C3:C8)	=Min(D3:D8)	=Min(E3:E8)	=Min(F3:F8)

grading students. The questions asked are guided by prescribed objectives. Summative assessments for this lesson may be class tests or examinations. Teachers teach as instructors who give instructions to passive students. Both parties follow the linear system, and are forced to follow set instructions (Makumane, 2018). According to Le Grange (2016), this is a market-driven system which treats students as products produced by machines, because students have limited or no voice in the system. According to Biesta (2015) and Khoza and Biyela (2019), the strength of a performance curriculum is that it grades students, moving them to the next level of thinking, by giving them qualifications that record their cognitive development. The above studies support the notion of Kanu and Glor (2006, p. 102) of an 'over-regulation and soul-less standardization' system, in which teaching aims at advancing disciplines at the expense of human beings (students) because it does not consider students' different abilities and needs. For example, if Microsoft PowerPoint software is prescribed as the teaching resource, academics may even use it to teach 'students with blindness', without supporting them with job access with speech (JAWS) or Braille technology. As a result, the students may fail their courses, not because they are challenged by the content, but because they are affected by the teaching resource. At the same time, if prescribed structures are always aligned with students' abilities and needs, students become dependent on prescribed structures, failing to produce their own structures for themselves taken from those of their disciplines.

From the above example and discussions, it is clear that in a performance curriculum, teachers and students know in advance what is to be taught and learned; the objectives guiding teaching and learning; the activities used for engagement; and the assessment that will be administered for grading. Therefore, prescribed objectives, content, instructor role, activities, and summative assessment become the five minimum requirements for *quality education* in the performance curriculum. Any digital technology used should at least be in line with these requirements, in order to advance

and address subject or professional needs. As a result, HEIs mostly use LMSs such as Blackboard, Moodle, WebCT, and others to reflect the performance curriculum. LMSs can be programmed for the prescribed, structured programmes, to which only course registered students have access.

Integrating Digital Technologies for the 'How' of Education

Using digital technologies to answer the 'how' question is a function of a competence-based curriculum (Hoadley, 2018; Khoza, 2016a). A competence-based curriculum is an experienced plan of teaching and learning. Under the competence-based curriculum, students are given activities in which to interact in order to produce content for the course. For example, in the above example of creating the table (Tables 1-1 and 1-2), students would be given computers and be told to create a table. Students would reflect on their experiences of creating the table using various types of application software (eg, MS Word, MS Excel, MS Access...). Facilitators (academics) would ask at least one student from each software group to demonstrate to other students how such application-type software is used in creating the table. When they demonstrate, students use their skills or competences generated from their experiences, based on their societal needs and history. When students reflect on their experiences in order to create the tables, they achieve learning outcomes as their student goals. Assessment may be in the form of peer-assessment; the main aim is to facilitate students to learn as a group, or to collaborate with others. The students demonstrate how learning takes place in addressing the 'how' question of education, while also addressing societal needs.

Therefore, the minimum requirements for a competence-based curriculum are learning outcomes, resources to drive learning activities, facilitating role, and peer-assessment. These principles suggest a minimum criterion of defining quality education within competence-based curriculum, which seems to be preferred by digital

natives. The most popular resources that drive the students to interact in the 4IR are mobile devices with WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and others, together with various student IW resources (Khoza & Biyela, 2019; Schwab, 2016). Students become good at debates, but poor in terms of planning that demands that they follow strict rules (Dlamini, 2018). Although the competence-based curriculum involves democratic decisions through collaboration, in most cases, these decisions overlook self-reflection as one of the important principles of democratic quality education (Waghid, 2019). Self-reflection helps academics to address the 'who' question of education, as demanded by the 4IR (Fomunyam, 2014; Biesta, 2015; Khoza, 2018; Schwab, 2016; Waghid, 2019).

'Who' are digital technologies for?

Self-reflection is a process of questioning or interrogating one's mind in order to improve one's teaching and learning actions. The mind is the cognitive structure of thoughts housed in the brain. The mind is divided into conscious, subconscious, and unconscious divisions (Khoza, 2018). The conscious mind is the one that helps us to reason. It processes several items of information at a time, and it needs to rest in order to have a long lifespan. Through its reasoning power, it helps to predict our future actions, using past or present information from the subconscious mind. The subconscious mind stores information on all actions we experience every second of our lives. It does not rest, nor is it replete until we die. The subconscious mind helps us to perform actions even when the conscious mind is busy with other important actions or is resting. Although the subconscious mind stores both the past and present information for future actions, it only responds to what is demanded by the task at hand. The subconscious mind always needs to be guided by the conscious mind, to distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary. The subconscious mind overpowers the conscious mind when we are excited, upset, drunk or drugged, or sleeping. The unconscious mind is the body system that helps us with breathing, heartbeat, perspiration, digestion, and with all our bodily systems and

processes. These systems are driven by the historical (past) nature of our body that conditions us to be physically healthy, or to be what we are, and the conscious mind has limited or no control over the unconscious mind.

Self-reflection occurs when the conscious mind is questioning or interrogating the past and present information of actions from the subconscious mind, required by the tasks at hand that must be addressed. Self-reflections are important resources that help academics and students to go beyond the definitions of the performance-based (the 'what' of professional needs) and competence-based (the 'how' of societal needs) curriculum, in defining quality education. When academics and students reflect 'on' (what - past prescribed professional information), and 'in' (how - present societal information), and 'for' (who - personal), subjects become aware of whose needs are being addressed by generated definitions of quality education (Khoza, 2019; Mabuza, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). Self-reflections help academics and students to find and understand their identities that address their personal needs. Such can be achieved through combining strengths of both the performance and competence-based curricula (Pinar, 2012). When academics and students reflect, they play the role of researchers because they collect, store, and analyse information. This is in order to know and understand their needs for reconstructing their next level of thinking about their teaching and learning (Khoza & Biyela, 2019). Academics and students who have mastered the self-reflection process, adopting it as their lifestyle, become the self-actualised individuals who, according to a study conducted by Tay and Diener (2011) in support of Maslow (1970) make up less than one per cent in the entire world. These few 'self-actualised' individuals ('self-actualisers') have unique qualities in which they accept themselves and others as they are. Self-actualisers perceive reality efficiently and tolerate uncertainty; they look at life objectively; are highly creative; are problem-centred; maintain strong moral or ethical standards; need privacy; amongst many other features, as recommended by Maslow (1970). However, it

should be noted that these qualities only indicate that they know or understand their identities, not necessarily that their life actions are better than other people who are not self-actualised.

According to Berkvens *et al.* (2014), academics' and students' identities are influenced by their physical (professional), financial (social), and cultural (personal) abilities. For example, students with disabilities need special digital technologies to address their needs, and special financial support for their activities. Disabilities are driven by various cultures of how they address their needs. This suggests that self-reflections should use these three principles as the minimum criteria for defining quality education, based on 'who' one is defining quality education for. In turn, the definition produces a pragmatic curriculum which is a curriculum designed according to the knowledge, skills, and values of the users. Such features guide the number of performance- and competence-based curricula issues required in education (Khoza, 2014). The pragmatic curriculum does not have a final design: even after it has been enacted, the curriculum users keep on reflecting on it, improving it for the next enactment. According to Waghid (2019), reflections are only strong enough to address the 'why' question of quality education if they are driven by critiques that bear witness to effectiveness.

'Why' digital technologies?

> *"To bear witness, implies that the person him or herself is conscientious and committed to making the act of critique unfold. It is witnessing that allows one to tackle the inhumane from inside, in other words, to prevent a thinking university from collapsing into an abyss of deceit, dishonesty, academic perjury and injustice" (Waghid, 2019, p. 2).*

A critique is a resource that advances self-reflection, using the conscious mind to draw information from the subconscious mind based on a performance, competence-based, or pragmatic curriculum in order to improve teaching

and learning actions. These types of curricula help academics and students to bear witness to take through the critique and re-construct new ways because they are consciously aware of the 'what' (descriptive), 'how' (operational), 'who' (personal), and 'why' (philosophical) questions apropos of quality education. Biesta (2015) argues that critiques of good education should be guided by the purpose or reason (the why of education) for education or educating. Such a reason is divided into qualification (the what of performance-based), socialisation (the how of competence-based), and subjectification (the who of the pragmatic curriculum). When the critiqued resources have been enacted to address the why question, academics and students should reconstruct their curriculum according to the outcomes of their reflections and critiques of the existing curriculum (performance- and competence-based) (Khoza & Biyela, 2019).

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter concludes by proposing a Quality Education Theory (QET) (Figure 1.1) for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). QET goes beyond what Biesta (2015) termed good education, which consists of teaching for the three domains (qualification, socialisation, and subjectification) of education. QET proposes teaching and learning that start by critiquing the intended curriculum to be enacted, with the aim of reconstructing it so that it will be enacted according to the needs at the time of both academics and students. This suggests that the critique for the reconstruction should be driven by a pragmatic curriculum with its reflections, in order to align physical, financial, and cultural needs of academics with the strengths of the performance- and competence-based curricula. When these needs are considered in the reconstructed curriculum resulting from the critique, this may improve the student throughput rate. Any digital technology to be used in teaching and learning should be part of the comprehensive process that defines quality education, based on the intersection of the three predominant types of curricula. Therefore, according to QET, quality education is

defined as a reconstructed process of teaching and learning. Such reconstruction is based on the critique of pragmatic-, performance-, and competence-based curricula, in order to address the 'why' question of education. In other words, self-reflections and critiques should drive education at all times, in order to prepare for any disrupting digital technologies within the 4IR.

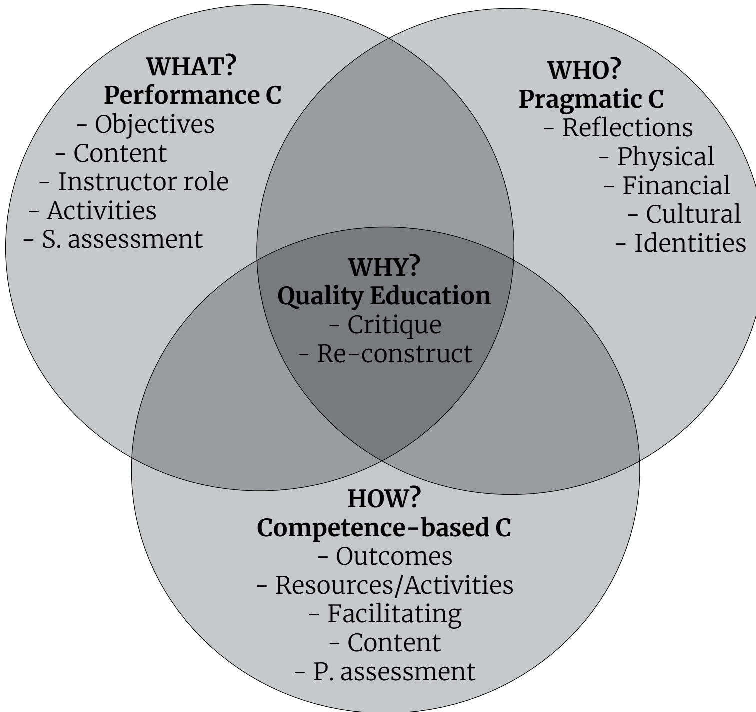

Figure 1.1: Quality Education Theory (QET) for the 4IR

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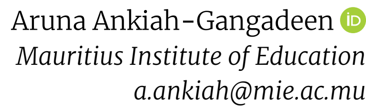
Chapter 2

Curriculum Decision-Making in Times of Uncertainty: A Case Study of a Top-Down Technicist Approach During the Covid-19 Pandemic



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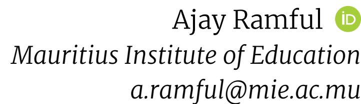

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Abstract

Curriculum decision-making is a key process in curriculum development and implementation. It involves a complex set of elements and diverse stakeholders who are geared by governmental objectives for the country as well as the values and orientations of the educational system. However, in times of crisis or uncertainty, such a process may be curtailed while responding spontaneously and urgently to unpredictable situations. If not properly steered, curriculum decision-making can result in visible incompatibility between the intended and implemented curriculum. Policymakers, by virtue of their position and power, are key players in this process. This chapter uses the Mauritian experience during the COVID-19 pandemic as a case study to examine and theorise curriculum decision-making in a centralised education system during a crisis. It analyses the underlying factors that influenced the moves of policymakers during the COVID-19 pandemic and reflects on the impact of a top-down technicist

approach on the main stakeholders, namely headmasters, teachers and parents. Using a combination of Brofenbrenner's ecological systems theory and ecosystem functioning as a lens, the chapter reveals how, in times of crisis, policy decisions that are guided by predominantly administrative values and accountability mechanisms can disrupt the balance in a harmonious educational ecosystem despite the prevalence of a shared ideology. The study highlights the significance of participatory curriculum decision-making through a close collaboration between stakeholders at the strategic, tactical and operational levels of curriculum decision-making during a crisis.

Keywords: *curriculum decision-making, top down technicist approach, curriculum intention and implementation*

Introduction

Towards the end of 2019, the world gradually started to shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. What had started in China soon spread worldwide, bringing all economic, social, and educational activities to a halt. More than two years later, even though these activities have slowly resumed, stumbling on the way as new waves of the COVID-19 pandemic were encountered and with a heavy reliance on the efficacy of vaccines, the educational sphere, globally, is having to deal with the consequences of school closure. Undeniably, the circumstances were dire for all educational stakeholders, mostly policymakers who were expected to proclaim firm measures for continued teaching and learning within a context that was new, unpredictable, and constantly in flux. No less than 1.6 billion learners worldwide (UNESCO, UNICEF & World Bank, 2021) were affected. Decision-making in matters of curriculum content and implementation is a complex endeavour on account of the particularities of education systems rooted in historical and political contexts and the varying values, aspirations, and motives of different stakeholders (Frede & Ackerman, 2007). During the COVID-19 pandemic, problems were exacerbated by emergent and

unpredictable situations, and educational decisions had to be taken to the tune of new variants. Inevitably, factors such as disrupted school calendars, closure over diverse time spans and disparate provision for or access to alternate modes of delivery impact curriculum implementation. In this chapter, we use Mauritius - a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) - as a case study to explore curriculum decision-making in a centralised education system during the COVID-19 pandemic. An analysis of the moves of policymakers and the underlying factors influencing these as the educational ecosystem of the prior to the COVID-19 era shattered into an unstable environment during the COVID-19 pandemic, allows us to theorise curriculum decision-making in times of crisis. We highlight the decisions taken towards ensuring the continuity of learning and the new problems these generated. Finally, we propose a participatory approach to curriculum decision-making in times of crisis with due consideration to the strategic, tactical, and operational levels to ensure that all aspects of the situation are dealt with in collaboration with all stakeholders.

Dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic: A glimpse of the educational sphere

As the COVID-19 pandemic gained ground, education authorities and higher officers scrambled to salvage teaching and learning as best they could amidst health concerns. Amongst the most common responses were periodical school closures and remote learning. Regarding the latter, the nature of teaching and learning depended greatly on the facilities available and thus varied from online modalities using digital resources to paper-based resources, radio transmissions and television broadcasts (Meinck *et al.*, 2022). The implementation of measures taken differed in relation to how far the educational system was centralised. For instance, the degree of leeway afforded to educational partners differed in Burkina Faso, which has a centralised system; Ethiopia, where schools have some autonomy; and Denmark that has a decentralised system (Meinck *et al.*, 2022). However, as noted

by Sayed and Singh (2020, p.27), the main preoccupation remained curriculum coverage:

> *A remarkable feature of the debate about the impact of COVID-19 and education responses is the strong focus on educational content. Rearranging school timetabling, extending the school year and increasing teaching hours for each learning area focus education policy attention on the loss of learning content, measured by the amount of time children are expected to spend on learning. Underpinning this understanding of education in times of crises is the notion of learning as curriculum coverage. In other words, school closure as a response to the pandemic is understood as the loss of learning content due to insufficient time for covering the content specified in the curriculum.*

Policy decisions pertaining to curriculum implementation were scrutinised. A survey of the literature revealed that, in most instances, the inadequacy of these decisions is brought out. Staton (2021) vociferously highlights the flaws of the educational policy decisions in the UK, especially the fixation on centralisation and constant changes. Commenting on curriculum revisions, which they term ‘tinkering’, to ensure coverage in South Africa, Amin and Mahabeer (2021, p.496) criticise the unilateral decisions that disregard contextual and individual disparities:

> *Policy statements are generic in nature and address broad parameters of action. In the case at hand, the curriculum recovery plan is just that: an interim set of measures to deal with the aftereffects of the closure of schools for more than two months and the resultant loss of contact time. However, the recommendations offer little, if any, direction for reducing inequalities. In fact, the revised curriculum ignores the contextual distinctions amongst schools (readiness to deliver technology-based education), glosses over pedagogical approaches (how to teach a compressed and complex curriculum), overlooks student diversity (how to accommodate differentiated needs), and is vague on the guiding principles for teachers (how to implement the recommendations).*

Similarly, Ramrathan (2021, p. 386) disapproves of the top-down decision to do away with continuous assessment in South Africa, arguing that it signals a technical concern that "*speaks to issues of accountability through curriculum coverage rather than accountability through competence or outcomes of learning*". The top-down approach, also adopted in Pakistan, is rejected by Gul and Khilji (2021) due to its lack of responsiveness to current conditions and straight-jacketing decisions that take away teacher autonomy to turn the COVID-19 pandemic into live learning experiences for their learners. What emanates from the literature surveyed is dissatisfaction at policy decisions not deemed adequately responsive (a recurrent term in most of the articles consulted) to the realities of the situation.

Additionally, the upheaval created by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing policy decisions have led to questioning the curriculum as we traditionally know it and, hence, the nature of and goals of education, that is 'How ought we to teach or learn?' (Le Grange, 2021, p.426). A simple answer may be a reconsideration of the instruction theory, for instance adopting the Thinking-Based Instruction Theory which, according to Li *et al.* (2021, p.2),

> *"could arouse students' motivation, suitable for students to study at home, and meet the requirements of curriculum reform (i.e., conducive to students' intellectual development, while enabling students to cultivate their key competencies, and facilitating systematic knowledge construction)".*

However, taking the reflection to another level, Wong and Mishra (2021, p.891) aver that the reconceptualisation of the curriculum in line with "what our students truly need both right now (in this moment before a vaccine is widely available) and years from now, when our children become leaders in this world" is required. To them, "(i)t is increasingly clear that this 'one-size-fits-all,' age-driven curriculum does not work" (Wong and Mishra 2021, p. 892). Pushing the debate a step further, Goodson and Schostak (2021, p.30) ask a fundamental question:

> *"How might this experience stimulate a reimagining of the curriculum? More fundamentally, how might it lead to the development of a knowledgeable, intelligent, effective public, able to engage freely and equally in decision-making at all levels of social, cultural, political, and economic life, as a condition for personal freedom?"*

The authors contend that the uncertain times have shown that

> *"the notion that schooling can transmit certainties and verities through a pre-planned and preactive curriculum can no longer hold sway. We have to think of ways of moving beyond preactive planning by elites and top-down transmission into a more collective, cooperative, mutual pattern of learning." (2021, p.35).*

Goodson and Schostak (2021, p.42) thus propose

> *"a curriculum founded upon real experiences, real practices, and real infrastructures that extend way beyond a given classroom and age group, one that can be carried forward into the lives of the adults capable of demanding a social system that meets their desires for a good life for all."*

Like them, others have tendered proposals to replace a curriculum that is no longer deemed relevant in an era where the traditional notion of 'normal' has been effaced. For instance, Cahapay (2020, p.2) points to the need for a curriculum that is

> *"relevant, appropriate, and responsive (by catering for) the development of preparedness in times of disasters, diseases, and emergencies."*

For Ramrathan (2021, p.390) "*a new conceptual architecture of school education that straddles a contextualized and responsive curriculum addressing local educational needs and a global imperative formed by core literacies that will enable one to work within and be part of a globalized world context*" is required. He thus propounds "*an exploitation of the COVID-19 context to make school education relevant to the lives of the people, the community and the country.*" (Ramrathan, 2021, p.386). All these authors

espouse the philosophy that the curriculum is not a static document to be implemented as given but, rather, one that requires reshaping in line with the realities of the times.

The gamut of dissenting comments on top-down policy decisions taken relate to the different aspects of the curriculum, namely content, operationalisation and assessment. The disavowal of these decisions is an apt reflection of the upheaval the COVID-19 pandemic caused in the educational sphere worldwide. When all sense of normalcy has been brushed aside by the COVID-19 pandemic, and ontological and epistemological stances disrupted, what paradigm does one draw from to provide a curriculum experience in keeping with the needs of the learners and of the times? While Maistry (2020, p.28) avers that the COVID-19 pandemic "*presents with novel challenges for higher education curriculum theorising since it brings into view the need to re-orient thinking in this field*", we argue that this applies to the education sector as a whole. Curriculum theorising is an important feature of curriculum studies as it foregrounds the philosophical underpinnings of processes involved, ranging from educational policymaking to curriculum development, implementation and assessment. However, the predominant focus in the literature tends to be on the latter aspects as opposed to policy decision-making, especially in crisis situations. This is the gap that the current chapter addresses. It engages in an examination of curriculum decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic with a view to theorising the process in a top-down technicist context. This endeavour, situated in a small island state east of Madagascar and the African continent, is aligned with Fomunyam and Khoza's (2021, p.1) call for action so that "*African contextual matters can form the basis of curriculum theory and theorising*".

Examining curriculum decision-making though the lens of ecosystem functioning

Curricular endeavours are not the sole concern of an individual or an institution. The emergence of insights

into the complexity of curricular processes (for example, see Kelly, 2009) drew attention to the plethora of actors involved – the main ones being policymakers, curriculum developers, school principals, teachers, learners and parents. The recognition that a network of stakeholders impacts curriculum development and operationalisation, often interactively, calls for the conceptualisation of curriculum processes as an ecosystem functioning. The term 'ecosystem' is not new in the educational arena, as can be inferred from Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory (Tudge *et al.*, 2009) or concepts such as 'educational ecosystem' and 'learning ecosystem'. The terms 'educational ecosystem' and 'learning ecosystem', as seen in the literature, at times have nuanced meanings or tend to be used interchangeably. In either instance, they place the learner and learning that is responsive to the times (often involving technology) at the centre of all considerations (eg, Lamprini & Bröchler, 2018; Niehmi, 2016; Pillai *et al.*, 2019). Shedding further light on the way ecosystems function, biological ecosystems reveal that organisms within an ecosystem function interactively in the quest of homeostatic stability, particularly when external events disrupt that system. Far from being static, ecosystems are affected and even transformed by events as the different organisms holding varying roles adapt to the changes. In an ecosystem, all organisms hold equal importance, and the emergence of dominant organisms causes a disbalance. By mapping this as a metaphor onto the educational sector, it becomes clear that the collaboration of all stakeholders is crucial if the educational or learning ecosystem is to function smoothly and efficiently, since each acts as a significant cog in curriculum implementation. As Lamprini and Bröchler (2018, p.5) aver, it is essential that *"all the stakeholders of the learning ecosystem (be brought) into a shared and common site, where they share their responsibility in the learning process, and they openly collaborate and interact as a part of the same community with common goals."* Their views are elaborated by Niehmi (2016, p.9) who posits:

> *For an educational ecosystem to be sustainable, its participants must intentionally share joint aims and take action to ensure interconnectedness, interdependence, and open and transparent mutual communication between all partners. In complex and moving systems, many of the components undergo their own change processes, and this information needs to be analysed, updated and shared when working towards common goals. Interaction and communication with the flow of information are basic conditions for maintaining commitment from partners.*

The success of the collaboration is inevitably determined by the performance of the various partners and their ability to review initial stances and adapt to circumstances.

Making curricular decisions within an ecosystem that constitutes a web of educational stakeholders with varying functions, accountability thresholds, values and expectations can be a convoluted process. Decision-making is a process of selecting lines of action from amongst a number of alternative courses. With respect to curriculum decision-making, a particular choice may have significant repercussions regarding educational investment and desired or expected outcomes.

Klein's conceptual framework for curriculum decision-making (Klein, 1991) is a practical model to analyse the interaction of different stakeholders with respect to curriculum elements. The framework consists of two interacting dimensions, namely participants at different levels and curriculum elements. The participants in the curriculum decision-making process comprise the following seven components: academics (eg, experts in subject areas and curriculum development), societal (eg, government agencies, business, industries), formal (curriculum development authorities), institutional (the school), instructional (teaching), operational, and experiential (the students). The nine curriculum elements include: goals, objectives, purposes; content; materials, resources; activities, teaching strategies; evaluation; grouping, time, and space. The framework is useful to identify gaps in decision-making in terms of incompatibility of the same curriculum elements at different decision-

making levels. Amongst the seven levels of decision-making, the formal, institutional and instructional are particularly critical and align complementarily with the commonly used managerial concepts, namely strategic, tactical and operational decision-making (Kaufman *et al.*, 1996).

Decisions in matters of curriculum may thus be viewed at three different levels, as follows: (i) the policy level, where strategic decisions are taken by policymakers, who are in a position of authority, to set the course of action; (ii) the tactical level, where curriculum designers and pedagogical experts, including representatives of teachers and headmasters, are involved in providing guidelines for the smooth enactment of the policy in schools; and (iii) the operational level, where headmasters and teachers decide what and how to enact the curriculum in their particular setting. The tactical and operational level decisions may be context dependent.

The context of the study

Context is a key aspect of curriculum theorising (Fomunyam, 2014; 2021). Having situated the curriculum decision-making process within the premise of an ecosystem, we now provide some contextual information about the Mauritian education system to illustrate how the different elements of the system interacted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mauritian education system comprises state (or government) schools and private (fee-paying and non-fee paying) pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. State schools are funded by and are under the administrative purview of the Ministry of Education (MOE) or Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA) in the case of pre-primary schools. Private fee-paying primary and secondary schools have the freedom to choose their curriculum and examining body but must abide by the broader regulatory structures and decisions of the MOE. For instance, while they had to abide by decisions regarding school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they did not necessarily modify their school calendar. The secondary sector comprises a category known as private grant-aided

schools which function under the aegis of a parastatal body, the Private Secondary Education Authority (PSEA). These schools are owned by individuals, companies or religious bodies but are wholly funded by the government, hence they are non-fee paying. The staff of private-subsidised colleges have the same employment conditions as their colleagues in state schools and also implement the National Curriculum Framework. All the students take part in the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) national examinations at the end of the primary cycle (Grade 6), the National Certificate of Education (NCE) examinations at the end of middle school (Grade 9), and the Cambridge School Certificate (SC) and Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations at the end of Grades 11 and 13 respectively. In this chapter, we focus mainly on policy decisions pertaining to the primary and secondary schooling sectors.

The Mauritian educational system has a relatively rigid system of control from a centrally driven administration. The control is manifested through a prescriptive curriculum, an examination-oriented focus and accountability-led mechanisms where schools are under the purview of the Ministry of Education and teachers and school administrators are at the executing end of policy decisions. From their vantage point, decision-makers have the privileged authority to decide on the course of action in matters of curriculum selection and implementation. This does not suggest that schools do not have autonomy in curriculum implementation, but they must conform to the policy guidelines of the central administration. They follow a standard curriculum which is ultimately assessed by a local or an external body, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) and Cambridge Assessment International Examinations (CAIE) respectively. The heavy premise on high-stake examinations at four points (Grades 6, 9, 11 and 13) of the education cycle implicitly provides a product-oriented rendering to the implementation of the curriculum, giving way to a highly competitive system with a ripple effect of massive private tuition practices (Bray & Silova, 2006; Hollup, 2004). The conviction that education

is the major driver to economic success is reflected in key policy documents, such as Educational Reforms in Action 2008-2014, (Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2009) and the National Curriculum Framework (Mauritius Institute of Education, 2015). This scenario is not surprising in a postcolonial SIDS lacking natural resources, that has developed an examinations-oriented culture due to the affordances of academic certification for social mobility and openings in the global world. The overtly result-driven philosophy and culture of education is espoused by all Mauritian educational stakeholders, shaping parental and students' objectives, pedagogical choices, schools' ethos, etc (Altinyelken, 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted successive changes in the running of the educational system (see Table 2.1 for an overview of changes) with the consequence that the key players in the ecosystem felt insecure and vulnerable due to the inevitable disruption of their routine and comfort zone. Parents feared that the loss of precious school time would negatively impact performance (Coronavirus: la nouvelle réalité, 2020). Simultaneously, they were apprehensive about the sanitary security of their wards. Teachers and school administrators were concerned about curriculum coverage and examination-preparedness as well as safety (Éviter le décrochage, 2020). In addition, they grappled with new ways of operating in a dystopian environment with novel and unfamiliar work-related demands. Struggling with policy fatigue and operating in survival mode, the stakeholders sought support structures to protect their well-being and values. Teacher and headmaster unions were continuously solicited to raise their concerns while parents voiced out their worries and anxiety through the media. The debate was also fuelled by opinion leaders, including politicians.

Undeniably, the volatile COVID-19-ridden ecosystem, with new variants or threats unpredictably surfacing and overturning established operational structures and practices, makes decision-making a challenging endeavour as measures constantly need to be reviewed and readjusted. The resulting

Table 2.1: COVID-19 pandemic triggered changes in the Mauritian educational system

Ecosystem 1 (prior to the COVID-19 period)	Ecosystem 2 (COVID-19 period)	Issues / concerns / rationale for decision
Established syllabus: full coverage of syllabus	Syllabus for national programmes de-loaded Syllabus for international programmes maintained	Reduced school time No control on external examinations syllabus
Established administrative procedure: Headmasters monitor teachers' work	New control mechanisms for teachers' work (eg, Online Teaching Learning reports) to ensure that teachers are connected to students Tracking of students' online presence WhatsApp groups for permanent communication with teachers	Need for accountability
Established school calendar	School calendar drastically changed with varying periods of closure Staggered timetable to limit student population on site Timetable changed from periods to hourly slots upon resumption	Ensure curriculum coverage Students should be on task Online timetable should follow school timetable to maintain contact hours
Established teaching practices	Online teaching for upper secondary students Broadcast of lessons for primary students on national television Handouts provided to students No provision for the Extended Programme	Ensure pedagogical continuity Monitoring of students' work under less control Issues with access to technology Limited face-to-face interaction New forms of indiscipline High rate of absenteeism

Ecosystem 1 (prior to the COVID-19 period)	Ecosystem 2 (COVID-19 period)	Issues / concerns / rationale for decision
Established assessment practices (local and international examinations)	Assessment on de-loaded syllabus for national examinations Minor adjustment for international examinations Prioritisation of continuous assessment Disruption in assessment practices Automatic promotion to the next grade level for grades where no national examinations involved	Reduced syllabus coverage
Established ways of working: students - at school from 8.00 a.m. to 2.30 or 3.30 p.m.	Video lessons Online learning Student Support Programme Private tuition online	Students should be on task
Established routines of parents	Provide technological and academic support to their wards	Loss of precious school time Examination readiness lacking Marginalisation of students from precarious home backgrounds

frustration of school administrators and teachers, who find themselves at opposite poles of the central administration, tends to mount. While policymakers affirm that appropriate decisions have been taken, teachers perceive guidelines as jarring with the reality of the field and constraining their autonomy. Parental concern is exacerbated in the face of continuously changing measures. In summary, the ambiguities and uncertainties generated by the pandemic perturb the balance that normally prevails in the educational ecosystem due to the heightened and dominant role of policymakers and lack of say of other partners.

Curriculum decision-making in Mauritius during the COVID-19 pandemic

While the country is still dealing with the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, in this section we scrutinise a slice of this turbulent period, namely decisions taken during the first COVID-19 wave from its onset in March 2020 to its stabilisation in December 2020. Our main data sources were our lived experiences as curriculum developers deeply involved in implementing policy decisions and highly sold Mauritian newspapers that communicated policy decisions and reported the reactions of various stakeholders. The exhaustive document analysis (Bowen, 2009; Altheide *et al.*, 2008) conducted was an apt supplement to our first-hand knowledge of the situation. It allowed the construction of a detailed chronological account of key policy decisions and events during the COVID-19 pandemic, giving due consideration to the voices of all the actors in the local education ecosystem. The main concern of decision-makers during the discontinuous schooling period was to ascertain that students continued to receive formal education as prescribed in the curriculum by deploying a range of support structures, such as video lessons broadcast on national television for primary pupils; the Student Support Programme, which is a website harbouring instructional videos based on the Grades 7 to 9 curriculum; and online teaching and learning for Grades 10 to 13 (Rivet, 2020). There was a noted inclination

towards providing added attention to grade levels concerned with national examinations, that is Grades 6, 9, 11 and 13. In addition to online classes, the staggered timetable whereby upon resumption, students in different grades attended school on scheduled days, attributed more time to Grades 9, 11 and 13 students - again revealing the preoccupation with examination preparedness. Furthermore, there were more time slots for core subjects such as English, French, and Mathematics.

On the other hand, low-achieving students (such as those on the Extended Programme), most of whom did not have the required logistics for online classes, did not appear to be a major concern for decision-makers. The Extended Programme is an integral part of the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education reform implemented since 2015. Students who fail to attain level 1 for the Grade 6 PSAC examinations are promoted to Grade 7 but sit for the NCE examinations after four years, as opposed to mainstream students who sit for the NCE examinations after three years. As reported by the press, the Ministry of Education relegated the decisions regarding the support attributed to low-achieving students: *"Mais le ministère de l'Education est silencieux en ce qu'il s'agit des élèves de l'Extended programme du secondaire et les parents d'élèves aussi bien que leurs enseignants se posent des questions sur cette situation."* [1]*(Silence total du ministère*, 2020). They were given relatively less support although they needed it more than mainstream students as they sit for the NCE examinations despite having severe learning difficulties. Such a tendency, where existing inequities are reinforced due to policy during the COVID-19 pandemic, can be observed in other contexts, surprisingly even in affluent countries such as the USA (Sellers, 2021). Thus, in times of uncertainty, the implicit values of an education system become more overt as we observe what is prioritised and what is downplayed. In such times, values propounded by the National Curriculum

1 Statement in French which means: "However, the Ministry is silent with regard to students of the Extended Programme while the students' parents and teachers are wondering about the situation."

Framework (Mauritius Institute of Education, 2015), like equity and inclusion, are superseded by mainstream concerns.

The strong orientation towards core subjects and examinations, as well as the marginalisation of the casualties of the system, bring to light the underlying priorities of the Mauritian educational ecosystem. Although examinations are the drivers of both policymakers and consumers in the system, policymakers are empowered by their central position. Reminiscent of Weddle's (in Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015) level 1 decision-making, which is usually adopted in crisis situations, they strategise a technicist approach driven by administrative values and accountability mechanisms to cater to the requirements of the examinations-oriented education system. Within such an administrative system, however, the practical realities of schools have little bearing on their decisions due to inadequate communication with stakeholders in the field: "Le ministère informe, mais ne communique pas avec ses partenaires"[2] (Rentrée scolaire, 2020, p.16). As policymakers adopt a one-size-fits-all approach towards schools which vary in terms of public or private status, levels of academic achievement and logistics, teachers and headmasters deplore the dearth of consultation. This may be evidenced in a headmaster's statement to the press, namely that "Il est important (...) d'ouvrir le dialogue et ne pas prendre des decisions unidirectionelles et unilaterales"[3] (Retour des cours en ligne, 2021). Figure 2.1 illustrates the decision-making approach with respect to curriculum implementation during COVID-19. The lack of communication between policymakers and stakeholders operating at the tactical level is brought out through the absence of connecting arrows.

2 Statement in French which means: "The Ministry informs but does not communicate with its partners."

3 Statement in French which means: "It is important (...) to engage in dialogue and not take unidirectional and unilateral decisions."

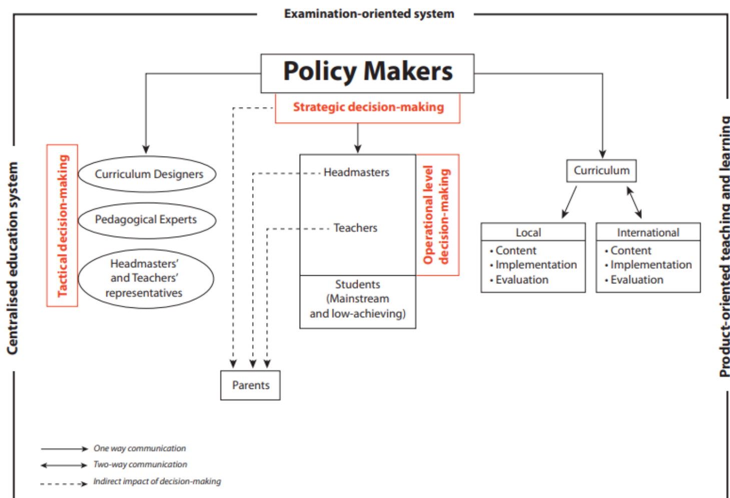

Figure 2.1: Decision-making approach for curriculum implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic

However, even as we highlight the lack of consideration attributed to operations at the tactical level while examining decision-making processes during the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot downplay the dilemma of policymakers who were themselves dealing with unforeseen and highly uncertain situations. The constant review of previous decisions and often lengthy delays in communicating measures may be indicative of the caution that had to be exercised. Possibly, policymakers had to gauge the implications and repercussions of such decisions in relation to diverse stakeholders. In matters of curriculum decision, it is often difficult to reach a consensus amongst stakeholders who bear different ideologies. In crisis situations, policymakers thus resort to taking decisions by accommodating, as best as they can, the stakes of different partners.

There is little doubt that the new ecosystem that was generated by the COVID-19 pandemic required different stakeholders to adapt to the new realities. This entailed a change of mindset and a pragmatic alignment of expectations with the affordances of the situation. It should be recognised

that, in times of uncertainty, the situation is effervescent and unpredictable. Taking decisions swiftly to the satisfaction of every actor in the ecosystem within such complex configurations is bound to be challenging, especially when certain decisions may have unanticipated repercussions. As a case in point, we refer to the change in the conventional school calendar (January to December) to a new one (July to March) and back again to the conventional calendar in 2022. This led to a range of disruptions at the levels of the examinations period (which additionally clashed with the season of cyclones and flooding); the movement of students from one grade level to the next; and the need for curriculum readaptation or new routes to be promoted to a higher grade due to the broadening age range of students within one classroom after the extension of the school year.

Discussion

In this chapter, we examined and theorised decision-making pertaining to curriculum implementation in a centralised educational system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using Mauritius as a case study, we explored the crisis decision-making approach adopted by policymakers and its impact on other stakeholders in the educational ecosystem. We found that, even if all stakeholders are performance-oriented, lack of consultation leads to decisions that are not aligned with the realities of the field. This finding corroborates with the findings of a study by Ankiah-Gangadeen and Nadal (2021), which revealed how policy decisions curtailed the actions of heads of schools who were themselves exercising democratic leadership. As such, centralised decision-making that is primarily at the strategic level and with limited attention to the tactical and operational levels gives rise to frustration, since it disrupts the prevailing harmonious relationship of a shared ideology. It is precisely the overemphasis on strategic actors that pushes Hart *et al.* (1993, p.30) to rightly highlight the "*crucial significance of (operational actors) in determining the course of events*" during crisis decision-making. In 'normal' times, top-down administrative moves ruffle less because

processes are devolved according to an established method. However, in times of crisis, when educational parameters are unfamiliar, the overt dominance of one stakeholder irks especially as the others grapple to reinstate stability. With reference to Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory, it may be said that the learners are at the centre as the key consideration in curriculum implementation; the microsystem constitutes parents and the school that establish the goal and pedagogical orientation; the exo-system comprises policymakers; the macrosystem involves the forces of an examinations-oriented culture; and the chronosystem, in the context of the study, represents a disrupted COVID-19-ridden environment. Due to the change in the environment, the mesosystem, that is the interrelations among microsystems, is perturbed because of tensions generated between the micro and exo-systems. Constant policy changes are disruptive, more so when the stakes (here represented by examinations) are high. This explains the trend made overt in the literature review, whereby top-down policy decisions regarding curriculum implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic have attracted criticism from diverse quarters, been countered with alternative solutions and triggered fundamental questions about the nature and goal of education. Citing the case of South Korea which successfully dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic, Lee *et al.* (2020, p.374) attribute the success to *"policy decisions at each stage (that) were chosen based on the government's awareness of objective reality and following adaptive policy-making principles to minimize risks and damages."* The authors go on to explain how, what they term 'adaptive policy-making in quadruple-loop learning' is sensitive to the reality of the field since it *"includes both detecting changes in external environments (backstage) and activating a relevant internal response system, and finding adaptive solutions to solve problems organization face at each stage"* (Lee *et al.*, 2020, p.374).

However, it is interesting to note that in Mauritius, although policy decisions attracted criticism, they did not lead to a reflection on the way in which curricular goals were

flouted or the essence of education distorted. This could be explained by the inherent ideology shared by all stakeholders, whereby more significance is given to performance in examinations to the detriment of other aspects of education.

Conclusion

Klein (1991, p. 24) rightly avers that *"The topic of curriculum decision-making clearly needs further study and clarification."* The scrutiny of curriculum decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic was enlightening as it revealed the shortcomings of a top-down technicist approach even in a context where the different stakeholders upheld the same ideology. It should be said that, like other partners, policymakers also strive for stability despite the contestations they generate. This includes the forced unwinding of some decisions, similar to the feedback loop of the ecosystem, which serves to reinstate balance in the system after a disruption. Curricular decisions have wide-ranging consequences, whether immediate or in the long term. Consequently, the decisions taken by policymakers are critical in that they affect every stakeholder in the educational ecosystem. It is thus imperative to include the different stakeholders in the decision-making process, especially in a centralised education system, as each represents different vantage points that deserve consideration. The recommendation emanating from the study is that a participatory approach to curriculum decision-making, with due attention to the strategic, tactical, and operational levels, will ascertain that policymakers have a comprehensive picture of the situation and address all aspects of the problem. It also ensures that decisions are appropriated and executed as a collective endeavour rather than an externally imposed plan.

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Chapter 3

‘Brave New World’ Revisited: Drama Education in a Virtual Landscape

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Abstract

In ‘Brave New World: Decolonising Shakespeare in the Drama Education Curriculum’, which dealt with curriculum prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we gave an account of an extra-curricular Drama Education project using interactive workshopping and syncretic theatre, and recommended teacher agency as a powerful mechanism for transforming university curricula from within. It is our view that curriculum is a lived experience for lecturers, teachers, and students, and involves the community as well as the university; we have personally experienced, in curricular *research and practice, the fact that the context determines the form which will be taken for* instruction, assessment and eventual real-world application of the competences learned. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the context overnight, and, at the time of writing, we have had two years’ experience of the shock and dismay with which university educators greeted and addressed the changed circumstances. Not only Drama Education, but the real-world phenomenon of drama itself, was affected, with many theatres closing down. We critique the approach described in our earlier chapter from the point of view of its feasibility in

the virtual landscape to which we were forcibly exiled by the exigencies of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a landscape, we believe, which is devoid of the very characteristics which make Drama Education viable, in particular, a sense of personal presence and care, as well as the intense group bonding which characterises amateur and professional dramatic productions. We then look at the Drama curriculum situation as reflected in the experiences of those Drama educators who lived through the first two years of the pandemic in order to ascertain what, if any, strategies they found to work in practice, and what implications these have for Drama Education curricula as well as curriculum theory in general. A theoretical framework for curriculum design is provided by a systemic model of teaching and learning which suggests how input in the form of contextual factors can materially affect the carrying out of various activities, as well as the overall effectiveness of the teaching or learning process.

Keywords: *Drama Education, COVID-19, virtual learning, theory, practice, systemic modelling*

Introduction

In 'Brave New World: Decolonising Shakespeare in the Drama Education Curriculum' (Ngcongo-James & Pratt, 2021), which dealt with curriculum transformation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we gave an account of an extra-curricular Drama Education project using interactive workshopping (Oshionebo & Asen, 2017) and syncretic theatre (Balme, 1999), and recommended teacher agency as a powerful mechanism for transforming university curricula from within (Biesta & Tedder, 2006; Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, & Miller, 2012; Toom, Pyhältö, & Rust, 2015). It is our view that curriculum is a lived experience for both lecturers and students (Pinar, 2011), and involves the community as well as the university. We have personally experienced, in curricular research and practice, the fact that the context determines the form which will be taken for instruction, assessment, and eventual real-world application of the competences learned (Branch &

Dousay, 2015; Cornbleth, 1988; Duran, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic changed the context overnight, and, at the time of writing this chapter, we have had two years' experience of the shock and dismay with which university educators greeted and addressed the changed circumstances. In this chapter, we critique the approach described in our earlier chapter from the point of view of its feasibility in the virtual landscape to which we were forcibly exiled by the exigencies of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 'Brave new world' we envisaged in 2020, full of hope and possibilities, then became a barren landscape, and not an ecosystem in which professional skills or research could flourish (Biesta & Tedder, 2006, 2007). It was a landscape, we believe, which was devoid of the very characteristics which make Drama Education viable, in particular, a sense of personal presence and care, as well as the intense group bonding which characterises amateur and professional dramatic productions (Davis & Phillips, 2021; Lehtonena, Kaasinena, Karjalainen-Väkeväa, & Toivanena, 2016). In fact, the lack of opportunity for group bonding has been identified as an integral part of university functioning, not just for social activities but for effective carrying out of curricular activities (Mitchell, 2020; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Tan, 2021). Not only Drama Education, but the real-world phenomenon of theatre itself, was affected, with many theatres closing down (Fischoff, 2021; Moon, 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2020; Toczauer, n.d.; Yezulinas, 2020). Thus, it was not only Drama Education which suffered, but the real-world theatre experience, which appeared to be in a decline just as people worldwide had become desperate for safe (ie, at home) entertainment to inject some form of intimate social experience into their lives through television and mobile devices. It must be noted that, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for entertainment in digital format had become insatiable (Glenday, 2019; Sayal, 2019).

After critiquing the approach described in Ngcongo-James and Pratt (2021) in terms of how it would fare in a virtual landscape, we look at the Drama curriculum situation as reflected in the experiences of those Drama educators who

lived through the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to ascertain what, if any, strategies they found to work in practice, and what implications these have for Drama Education curricula as well as curriculum theory in general. A theoretical framework for curriculum design is provided by a systemic model of teaching and learning (Pratt, 2011b), which provides the basis for a tentative framework for analysing curriculum to show how input in the form of contextual factors can materially affect the carrying out of various activities, as well as the overall effectiveness of the teaching or learning process. It is hoped that an explication of the framework will provide insight into how curriculum theory and practice are related in Drama Education, the difference between theory and practice, and the main points of difference in curriculum theories and models of virtual learning currently available.

We concur (gratefully) with the authors, who state that it is near impossible to define the term ‘curriculum’. Our working definition of curriculum is a ‘course of study’ (Merriam-Webster, 2022), the nature of the course and its subsections depending on what kinds of know-how are required and what methods of instruction (including practical) and assessment are thought to best fit the desired outcomes. The desired outcomes and the nature of the curriculum designed to achieve these are decided by context (Brady & Kennedy, 2010), including historical period and socio-political context, as well as the educational history and current stage and status of various institutions, and the greater community in which educational institutions are situated. In South Africa, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, curriculum transformation involving postcolonial or decolonial theories was well in progress (Lowman & Mayblin, 2011). A decolonising approach was preferred for the 2019 Curriculum Project (Bala, 2017; Grosfoguel, Hernández, & Velásquez, 2016; Mignolo, 2011). This was because postcolonial approaches tended to be text-focused and reactive (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffen, 2013; Földváry, 2013; Jeyalakshmi, 2019; Loomba, 2005; Loomba & Orkin, 1998), and we saw decolonisation as an interactive, multifaceted process. Furthermore, we believed that all

stakeholders should be consulted, and that a curriculum should not be imposed from above; also that constant regular consultation should take place to check the quality of both curriculum and delivery and ensure that changes are made if necessary (Le Grange, 2016). This means that curriculum is negotiable, and that all role players may not actually like it, but that it fits what they have agreed on. Values and beliefs, as well as the nature of the physical and social world for which the curriculum is designed, will always play a key role in curriculum construction. The only 'given' is that whatever curriculum theory is applied will change with the context, particularly in the virtual landscape of our 'brave new world'. To what it will change, we cannot predict: we can only affirm that, for Drama Education, curriculum is not about 'words on a page', but 'people on a stage', whether in an actual or virtual landscape.

Shakespeare in a Virtual Landscape

From glorious summer…

The 2019 Curriculum Project (Ngcongo-James & Pratt, 2021) consisted of an extra-curricular project in which a group of Drama Education students workshopped excerpts from *Julius Caesar* in ways which were accessible to local viewers (the 'Durban view'). The students became a 'theatre crew', experimenting, scriptwriting, rehearsing and finally enacting an excerpt of the play which was filmed and posted on YouTube, adding to the rich repository of Shakespearean plays already on the Internet (Marowitz, 1991; Mondello, 2006). It also engaged the student teachers in experiential group learning about the theatre-making process, which they would need so as to be able to teach Drama Education as a lived experience, as well as running school theatre productions or adaptations of the usual prescribed plays. Ngcongo-James' 'double consciousness' (Du Bois, 2007; Fanon, 1986) made it possible for her to see a Shakespearean text in the context of the Western tradition as well as its potential for local interpretation 'by the little people' (see Figure 3.1).

It enabled her to develop a pedagogy which empowered young black students, because she had the empathy to understand *their* disempowerment as well as the means whereby they could be empowered, that is, by acquiring *her* professional skills.

Figure 3.1: Two Sides of the Same Coin: Nellie's Double Consciousness (Figure 2.1 in N. N. Ngcongo-James, 2021, p. 37)

Ngcongo-James used a constructivist pedagogy informed by Paulo Freire's (2005) critique to 'decolonise Shakespeare', which shifted the Shakespearean text from a position of colonial elitism to a vibrant process in which students celebrated 'their' Shakespeare. In our previous chapter, we describe this process as an example of agential curriculum transformation, and suggest that Ngcongo-James' model (Ngcongo-James & Pratt, 2021, p. 184) might be adapted for use in other academic subjects in order to effect curriculum transformation at grassroots level, in the process, decolonising the curriculum (Grosfoguel *et al.*, 2016; Langa, 2017; Le Grange, 2016; Sithole, 2016). We cited this process as an example of the robust nature of syncretic theatre (Balme, 1999), where traditional Western theatre texts can become infused with the vigour of local indigenous culture (Ngcongo-

James & Pratt, 2021, p. 188). Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the elements which made this curricular innovation work were as follows:

- As with professional theatre-making, it was interactive and collaborative: planning and production involved all participants. The group of diverse students (not all from the same year or class) 'bonded' like a real-world theatre crew.
- The workshopping process challenged traditional Western theatre practice by a 'grassroots' approach instead of a top-down imposition of the 'Western canon'.
- Theatre-making involved local themes and interpretations, making it 'their' Shakespeare for the students.
- It was a form of self- and other empowerment.
- It was a form of decolonising and curriculum transformation: the 'Durban view' triumphing over the Western canon of supposedly 'universal' (but really oppressive) Shakespeare.
- It made student teachers realise the empowering potential of this kind of interactive grassroots theatre, so they could 'pay it on' to their school pupils in not only Drama Education but other subjects.
- It even made students interested in the original Shakespearian texts, so that they could show a genuine scholarly interest in traditional dramatic texts and not just pay 'lip service' to Shakespeare's achievements.

In both the *Shakespeare Project 2016* and the 2019 Curriculum Project, digital technology was used as an innovative strategy (Anderson, 2005; S. E. Davis, 2010; Nicholls & Philip, 2001, 2012; Philip & Nicholls, 2009). The students, while predominantly isiZulu-speaking, were city-smart millennials familiar with online learning (ie, on the institutional LMS) and familiar with YouTube and social media applications ('apps') such as WhatsApp and Instagram (Lupson, 2017; Proserpio & Gioia, 2007; Sandpearl, 2016). While cell phones and Moodle (in computer labs) were used for the *Shakespeare Project*

2016, tablets were provided for workshopping in the 2019 Curriculum Project to facilitate online viewing and sharing of dramatic moves and rehearsals on Instagram and small group communication on WhatsApp. This was necessary for the second project because of time constraints on contact time. While students in both projects expressed a marked dislike for Moodle, Figure 3.2 below shows how the presence of an animated lecturer in the Drama Computer Laboratory (at the Durban University of Technology) could bring the Internet alive and not make students feel that they were being deserted (Bhorat, 2014, p. 26).

Figure 3.2: Nellie bringing the Internet alive in the computer laboratory

It must be stressed that these projects used blended and hybrid approaches very successfully before the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 forced a switch to what Czerniewicz *et al.* (2020, p. 946) termed 'Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning (ERTL)'. As we will suggest in this chapter, it is not the use of various forms (partial or total) of online learning which are the problem, but the features of the current context in which they

are applied, including serious deficits in preparedness and the infrastructure necessary for use. To this must be added the state of deprivation, distress, and despair which many South Africans experienced, and which could not be alleviated by cosmetic changes in curriculum design. It is clear that teaching and learning in universities needed to be thought through as a matter of urgency, in both accommodating the needs of a traumatised nation and making the curriculum both equitable *and* viable. It is in this context that we asked how Shakespeare would fare when exiled to a virtual landscape.

...to the winter of our discontent

What computers and the Internet can do is enhance communication and instruction in various ways by expediting access to messages and resources and presenting them in ways which are more vivid, interesting, animated, and organised than textbooks, an aspect explored on different applications by digital Drama pioneers Jennifer Nicholls and Robyn Phillip. But a computer or the internet[1] cannot teach any more than a filing cabinet can, so that seeing online learning as a solution to the lockdowns or constraints on campus attendance caused by the pandemic depends entirely on what we, as educators, set these mechanisms up to do. This requires not only expertise in curriculum and course development, but a recognition of what it is that online courses can and cannot do in instructional delivery, and finding work-arounds, if *possible*, for any deficits. The curriculum needs to take cognisance of not only the general givens and negotiables of instructional delivery on the Internet, but also the specific and unique nature of the discipline in question. This is where we feel that the field of Education has let us down, by paying lip-service to interactive learning and learner engagement but providing curricula which are little more than ‘words on a page’, delivered as such, and regurgitated (undigested) as such. The Education Department’s obsession with ‘saving time’, and the fact

1 We mean the internet as a techno-system, not the World Wide Web, or collective human denizens of virtual space, who can, of course, provide instruction.

that total online earning lacks physical presence (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006), exacerbates this problem, and leads to the 'writerly' type of education that, as Melrose (2003) points out, is completely at odds with the nature of the performing arts. In Drama Education, it leads to lack of integration of the competences needed for production as well as a focus on verbal analysis of dramatic texts, rather than interpretation by performance, or true theatre making:

> *Unlike in the more "scientific" disciplines, the content of performing arts subjects such as Drama is not content in the knowledge-content sense. The performing arts require knowledge of "how to" rather than knowledge 'about', except inasmuch as the latter might inform the former (Pratt, 2011a, p. 40). Knowledge of 'how to' perform or manage and produce performance(s) involves a highly complex, layered, and emergent set of competences which are sensed and lived rather than observed or measured. (Ngcongo-James & Pratt, 2021, p. 181)*

Melrose (2003, p. 14) terms this kind of expertise 'knowledge-practice', which is sensed rather than observed, and is typical of the arts (Melrose, 2003, p. 2). This type of knowledge-practice was catered for in the 2019 project before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic for the reasons given earlier. What we see as being problematic for a project such as this in a virtual landscape is as follows: the main obstacles are lack of *physical human presence* and face-to-face *interactivity*, which would mean that students could not *interact and bond* with each other as a theatre crew and cast do. Yes, we know that crews and casts of TV series have to some extent overcome this challenge, but they are professionals, have usually met at shoots and locations *before* the pandemic, and are to some extent used to bonding and emoting with cast members who are not physically present, as they are experienced screen performers rather than theatre folk (although some are expert in both fields). It is not just bonding which is the issue, or having a move demonstrated, but interacting with a co-actor who is not physically - or temporally - present, which requires not only specialised technology and filming techniques but also the

ability to carry out half of an interaction with the reciprocal half missing: *"work-from-home acting posed challenges, even for seasoned veterans"* (Stevens, 2021). We cannot expect this level of professionalism and experience from Drama Education students, who are prospective educators, not actors.

Next, the project used social constructivist pedagogy, where *knowledge is created in the interaction* (usually in small groups) *with immediate feedback* (Matola & Fomunyam, 2021). A constructivist approach is considered effective in breaking down social barriers while working towards decolonising (Bignall, 2010, p. 188). While WhatsApp is good for one-on-one or small group remote communication, and Moodle does have group discussion forums, these applications can in no way even approximate the excitement of live workshopping (Grainger, 2013; Kerr & Chifunyise, 2004). The interaction is not just in the mind, as in 'book learning' - it is visceral and 'felt' in the room as a palpable energy force. As Thurman (2015a, 2015b, 2016) has emphasised, Shakespeare is meant to be performed, not studied. Brook (1996, p. 9) has admitted how 'excruciatingly boring' a study of the written text is. As for group meetings on Microsoft Teams or Zoom, it is the *lack* of presence which is felt (tense silence, followed by: 'Hello – are you *there*?'). There is also the issue of *feedback*, which is very much dependent on *visual* prompts. Good teachers know how their words are being received and responded to by mainly *nonverbal feedback*; students also read a lot into the nonverbal messages of their lecturers: mood, intention, caring, *interest* (in the subject and in the class), leadership and control, and whether *the teacher is aware of them* and *listening* to them. This is why teacher presence is acknowledged to be a critical factor in teaching, more particularly so in teaching Drama (Lehtonena *et al.*, 2016). On the Internet, lecturers cannot see how students are responding to the lecture or their instructions, or if students are even *virtually* present; they cannot see their students' responses or reactions - just the end product in terms of work produced (or not produced), and can have no idea as to what difficulties their students might be experiencing along the way. The COVID-19 pandemic caused

widespread fear and anxiety amongst staff and students (Czerniewicz *et al.*, 2020, p. 946; Mthethwa & Land, 2022, p. 30).

COVID-19-Coping Strategies of Drama Educators

A look at some of the experiences of educators during the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that the term 'completely online' is a misnomer and exists only in the confused minds of certain senior university managers (Czerniewicz *et al.*, 2020, p. 960). The term 'multi-modal teaching and learning' (South Africa, 2020) is deceptive in suggesting that it might be advantageous to allow institutions to use any combination of delivery modes which could be seen to work. The reality is that most universities in South Africa do not have the expertise, experience, or infrastructure (including funds) to provide such a veritable cornucopia of diverse options for students, let alone any way of deciding which combinations of modes might work *in their specific context.* The reality as reflected in the literature both overseas and in South Africa, is that, so far, there has been a diverse interplay between Drama being learned in traditional face-to face interactions and though the use of digital media, the latter found to be prolific in resources but allegedly lacking in the immediacy given by the physical presence of participants, and in particular, a live audience.

In the accounts we consulted, mostly hybrid forms were used, ranging from predominantly live, with strict COVID-19 pandemic precautions being taken, to predominantly online or via digital applications. In the former case, precautions involved not only face masks and physical distancing, but ensuring that equipment was sanitised (or not shared) and spacing out the times that smaller groups worked together, as well as precautions against vocal trans in speech, singing and wind instruments. The latter option required access to specialist digital equipment or programmes which required training or prior knowledge, as well as computers (or tablets) and data for personal use and a suitably equipped venue (ie, home or studio) as well as Internet connectivity. The

wide range of work-arounds in Drama Education is noted by Mitchell (2020):

> *Convinced that the show must go on, schools have livestreamed shows via social media, hosted outdoor performances, staged socially distant plays in near-empty theatres, and are planning for radio renditions of Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol' and other holiday classics to keep Drama students and audiences engaged.*

However, Mitchell adds that, because of the precautions needed for live productions, much of the 'magic' had gone: *"Classrooms that once thrived on interaction have become sterile and rigid, according to high school Drama teachers"* (2020, p. 1).

Responses by Drama educators to the exigencies of operating during the COVID-19 pandemic all touch on the same themes, as follows:

- The physical and emotional safety of students and educators.
- That face-to-face and Internet delivery can complement each other but do not work so well in isolation.
- The nature of teaching and learning both in general and in specific disciplines (in particular, that the performing arts do not lend themselves to 'book learning').
- The importance of 'presence' in theatre as well as in teaching and learning.
- The fact that physical presence has important attributes for education in the performing arts, including visual and nonverbal communication cues, which do not appear as yet to be virtually replicable.

Rather than trying to categorise Drama educators by any one theme or mode, as responses show that actual practices are varied and multi-modal, we have instead grouped them as follows: *Super Troupers*, *Virtual Space Troopers*, *Earthlings*, and *Those Who Madly Teach*,[2] and the strategies used will be

2 The 'madly teach' label is a pun on Chaucer's description of the Monk: "And gladly wolde he lern and gladly teche". It was used in the title of a Science Fiction story by Loyd Biggle

discussed under those headings. It must be noted that the authors are not making value judgements about these ways of thinking, and that we have occupied all of these positions at one time or another ourselves.

Super Troupers (apologies to ABBA)

According to these staunch supporters of live theatre, 'the show must go on', and they virtually 'break a leg' to make this happen. Of the accounts provided by Drama educators, that given by Brian Cyr (2021), a member of the National Association for Music Education, demands special attention, if not vociferous applause. His background in music no doubt helped him to orchestrate a musical production of *Little Women* at Maloney High School in the face of the pandemic; the state and community provided support and co-operation. Realising that 'normal' theatre was no longer an option, Cyr decided that the students instead had to make a movie. However, this was planned and rehearsed live, taking all COVID-19 pandemic precautions: physical distancing, face masks (using special microphones for voice clarity), wider physical distancing for a live orchestra, and use of 'in-ear monitoring' for rehearsals, to work towards a high-quality sound recording. Set construction, as well as costuming, set dressing, and technical work all took place at night in small groups at separate times, with physical distancing, face masks, and attendance logs for contact tracing. A local recording studio provided audio software connecting the cast with musicians at home for rehearsals in real-time (ie, synchronous). Final taping took two nights, and lead actors were allowed to remove face masks (but stay physically distanced). Filming was conducted by three camera operators at a safe distance (30 feet) and the film was edited and produced with the help of the recording studio. A premiere viewing was held in the school theatre with

(1966), who showed how a shrewd, elderly 'schoolmarm' transformed remote learning by introducing live students into her transmission studio, thereby making what had been total online learning more interactive and interesting to learners, and motivating online attendance.

cast only invited (with face masks and physical distancing), and the production was then made available for viewing online. Cyr concludes: *"it became clear that we succeeded in giving our students an authentic, gratifying, and unique theatrical experience"* (2021, p. 6). We agree and celebrate his dedication in doing so!

Virtual Space Troopers (apologies to *Starship Troopers* and *Star Trek*)

These brave souls have *"boldly gone where no one has gone before"*, that is, into the depths of virtual space, simulating virtual presence online ('Beam me up, Scotty!'). It is not so much the use of new technology, but the innovative use of existing technology in order to meet the specific needs of Drama Education, in particular, the need for physical presence:

> *Our field requires live action, and participants need to co-create socially in a shared space. From one day to another, we found ourselves in a situation where we had to create theatre and drama from an isolated room, where we were sitting on our own and seeing others only through a screen. Space was not shared any more, and all activities were reduced to two-dimensional images on our laptops. Many thought that doing drama in such circumstances was impossible (Cziboly & Bethlenfalvy, 2020, p. 645).*

A solution offered by Cziboly and Bethlenfalvy (2020) was the use of process Drama, building on the work of O'Neill (1995) and its online application in Davis (2009). As neither had access to technology or design teams and had to respond quickly to teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, their research focus was *"to identify work forms that do not require too much technical preparation. In other words, we sought easily accessible ways of working together that would trigger the imagination of our participants"* (Cziboly & Bethlenfalvy, 2020, p. 646). They therefore set up imaginary online scenarios in which students could participate and interact with each other in various real-life roles with different forms of interaction involved. Scenario one involved a case based on the alleged vandalising of a Statue of Liberty in a small (fictitious) Italian

town, with roles ranging from the mayor, the perpetrator, and journalists to townsfolk. 'Out of role' discussions took place, with the project culminating in the composition of a poem out of the resulting newspaper headlines. The next scenario "*tested out a Drama lesson that allowed the participants to reflect directly on the lockdown situation within a fictional frame*" (Cziboly & Bethlenfalvy, 2020, p. 646). In Scenario two, participants role-played university lecturers, teacher-trainees, and students during lockdown, while the facilitator played the part of director of a lockdown helpline group as well as switching to the lecture group. The scenario involved the need to respond to a confused video (to decide whether help was required) as well as fabricating various help messages, creating situations for subsequent interviews with the troubled writers, and concluded with participants having to write responses to any of the help messages they had made up.

Apart from the focus on people distressed by the COVID-19 pandemic (which included the participants), the distanced and verbal nature of many of the interactions in Scenario two is typical of real-world helpline work, as well as being a problem in online Drama Education. This research shows not only a concern for staff and students, but a focus on the appropriateness and relevance of course content as well as delivery modes, *given the context in which teaching and learning was taking place*. The researcher-educators have carefully thought through the concept of teaching in a global pandemic. It is not necessarily advanced technology which is the answer, but the creative use of existing technology in ways which transcend the problems. As Davis (2020) comments: "*teaching performing arts online is feasible when learning objectives drive decisions, but the mediating technologies must be utilised intelligently.*"

There *are*, in fact, innovative projects using technological advances intelligently for theatre-making:

> *One innovative programme to emerge in the initial fallout of stay-at-home orders was the NYU Tisch School of Drama's launch of a course, the Brendan Bradley Integrative*

> *Technology Lab, integrating virtual reality (VR) technology for students to use in practice and producing a play for a tele-audience in a social virtual reality space. (Toczauer, n.d.)*

The technology laboratory was used by one group of students to create a performance to be carried out in virtual reality for a tele-audience, using avatars to interact with each other in digital space. Another group was directed via Zoom to plan a play which was streamed online. This 'hybrid education model combining acting and technology' shows how the performing arts could work online, but whether it could be used elsewhere is another matter. Use of this model brings into focus the question of whether live theatre is morphing into filmmaking, which some Drama educators see as perhaps an inevitable transition in terms of the pause in the theatre industry caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A caveat is given by Timplalexi (2020, p. 45), who comments that online showing can turn theatre into bland, consumer media content instead of art. However, he concedes that: *"these hybrid intermedial forms may actually be works of art awaiting to be received and evaluated with new criteria"* (Timplalexi, 2020, p. 53).

The sheer scope of projects mentioned so far is, however, beggared by the scope of the hybrid learning pedagogy used at Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) as described by Li, Li and Han (2021). The pedagogy does not use any technology which was not already known, but it is the formidable organisational expertise in blending the multi-modal mix into a 'hybrid pedagogy' which is truly impressive, as shown in Figure 3.3 below, and which gives this project its stellar rating. As Li, Li and Han conclude: *"this study shows that a good use of information technologies leads to rich and meaningful teaching and learning experiences"* (2021, p. 7652).

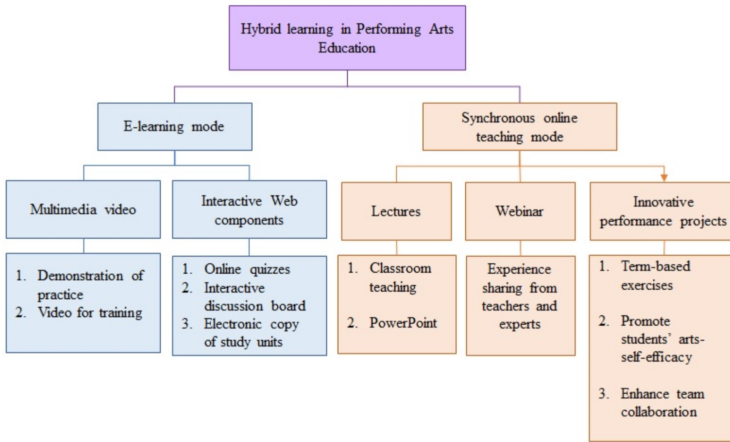

Figure 3.3: Framework of the Hybrid Pedagogy Used at HKAPA (Fig. 1 Framework of the Hybrid Learning in Performance Arts Education, in Li, Li and Han, 2021, p. 7640)

Earthlings

For these folk, it is 'same old, same old': they have been using digital apps and the Internet all along; these devices worked then, and they are working now (what is the problem?). The strategies in this category are not innovations per se, although they may now be used for reasons not thought of (eg, during a pandemic) when they were first introduced. For example, Harvard's hybrid lecture room (Rosenburg, 2022) is a synchronous blend of live lecture room and online participation, which has been a possible option for over ten years. However, it needed to be developed into a working model in anticipation of its future usefulness by acquisition of the necessary technology; it was not just convenient but actually *necessary* during the COVID-19 pandemic; that is to say, for use by First World academics and students. It would not work in South Africa, where is it is difficult to find a working (and Internet-connected) computer laboratory, *supposing* that a power cut were not occurring on campus during the lecture time, as well as at random times around the country, and

note that power cuts affect Internet provision as well, and resourceful thieves are now stealing the cables while the power is off. Harvard's hybrid option is a technical solution, highly desirable, but, like a Lamborghini, way beyond our means. Moreover, it is more suited to a wordy, 'writerly' kind of book-education (Melrose, 2003), and would not accommodate the 'whole body involvement' necessary for Drama Education (T. C. Davis, 2020). This inconvenient truth was already noted by Phillips and Nichols in their extensive pioneering research work on digital learning in Drama Education (Nicholls & Philip, 2001, 2012; Philip & Nicholls, 2007, 2009).

In Simamora's study in performing arts education, communication between participants involved synchronous communication via 'video conferencing, Zoom, Google Meet, and WebEx' as well as asynchronous communication such as 'email, Google Forms, streaming video content, posting lecture notes, and social media platforms' (Simamora, August, 2020, p. 86). However, Simamora was aware of the problems, not only in the operation of these media, but also in the response of students to their use. He notes the need for physical presence when students are learning processes such as dance moves, and concludes:

> *This paper has shown so many responses about the challenges experienced by the students while studying online, such as positive and negative impact of online learning, economic conditions, anxiety during online learning ...the risk of user data security, face-to-face class to online learning, ability, finding effective online learning media, and expectations (Simamora, August, 2020, p. 86).*

The curriculum designer then needs to think not only about 'multi-modal' content and delivery, but also how tuition will be experienced by the students. The devices he mentions are not new; neither is the way in which they are used here. However, since they were a standard way of operating during the COVID-19 pandemic and not interesting new methods, resistance to use was starting to build up. This is also not new, and it was already well documented in Oblinger and

Oblinger (2005) that technology-savvy millennials craved live interaction with faculty and peers, and did not want to be fobbed off onto machine learning and being abandoned by teachers (Bhorat, 2014, p. 26). A series of international surveys carried out by Davis and Phillips revealed that "the changes demanded an extensive increase in workload, and teachers expressed concerns for students for whom the digital divide was an unavoidable reality"; and they emphasise the importance of the "embodied, social, and relational aspects of learning… the 'invisibles' of education" (Davis & Phillips, 2021, p. 67).

Those Who Madly Teach

This refers to a band of dedicated Drama educators who, having travelled to the outer regions of virtual space and back, have posted resources online, and even educational videos offering guidance on online learning. There is nothing new about posting resources online. However, these have taken a new twist in terms of educators providing not only online learning resources, but advice and guidance on teaching Drama online during the pandemic. According to Barack (2020, p. 1):

> *The Folger Shakespeare Library, for example, offers online resources on how to teach theatre during Covid-19, including lesson plans it built around specific plays including "Othello" and "Romeo and Juliet".*
>
> *The Educational Theatre Association offers tips for those schools that have reopened, such as having students continue to maintain six feet of distance, having them wear masks during all rehearsals, and even washing all costumes and sanitising wigs after each rehearsal.*

Cziboly and Bethlenfalvy (2020, p. 645) found *"many different great examples of Drama games, role plays, improvisation games and other similar activities".* Not only resources and safety tips, but also instructional videos for Drama educators have been made available online. The 'DIVAS' group (Bucs *et al.*, 2020,

p. unpaged) went the extra parsec and produced and uploaded online videos on the following topics:

1. Process and Accountability: Addressing Exercises in a COVID-19-Conscious Classroom or Studio.
2. Teaching Voice or Movement Courses Virtually.
3. Face-to-Face Studio or Rehearsal Practices in the Time of physical Distancing.
4. Virtual Scene Work and Rehearsing Online: Designing Instruction for Virtual Acting (unpaged).

Not only did the 'DIVAS' apply their minds to solving the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, *but they shared these with other educators*, as only dedicated teachers will, as has Dr Daphne Sicre (2020), the originator of a comprehensive guide to online theatre of over 50 well-organised pages, to which viewers are invited to contribute. Sicre has posted a wealth of information, guidance, and examples of theatre-craft: a living legacy. The guide offers advice to educators on 'Students and accessibility' which South African University administrators would do well to heed. In this category, one final accolade is given to a group of young students who 'paid it forward' closer to home, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Durban. A group of Drama and Performance students (it was their idea) made a three-and-a-half-minute video showing fellow students how to take precautions against COVID-19 infection, using rhythmic dance movements to soften the sinister import of their message; the video encouraged other people to make similar short videos about COVID-19 pandemic awareness and precautions (Mungroo, 2020). The filming was completed in the teeth of the pandemic, a week before lockdown. Their action parallels in digital form the live theatre of a young Ugandan group which gave weekly performances at markets, schools, and places of worship to assist adolescents with life skills (Mbonye, 2020). However, apart from live performances and meetings, their public-spirited instruction was limited to radio talk shows and songs. The UKZN group had the benefit of using technology which could disseminate their message more widely *and* safely.

Coming down to earth with a jolt ...

While we celebrate the attempts of Drama educators to deal with running courses during the pandemic, as well as some highly creative COVID-19-coping strategies, we reiterate our contention that virtual learning is definitely not a panacea, in view of the above accounts, which suggest that the nature of theatre-making needs to be re-examined, as well as how it is learned, and the means needed to achieve this. In other words, the Drama Education curriculum needs a re-think, particularly on how contextual factors, including the pandemic and the switch to online learning, might impact on teaching and learning in the performing arts.

A Framework for Analysis

The problem with communication in a virtual world (as in a written text) is not posed so much by asynchronicity per se, although this does cause problems, but by distancing (see Pratt, 2007a, pp. 710-711). What is lost or diminished in distanced communication and, therefore, in the virtual landscape, are those elements we have characterised above as critical: they are not just ‘nice to have’, but essential prerequisites for learning. The framework for analysis in this chapter is derived from systemic modelling of the communication process (Pratt, 2007b), which was used in formulating an applied model of written communication, but was subsequently found to provide a model of course design (Pratt, 2005, 2007a, 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2014; Pratt & Gutteridge, 2006; Pratt & Peppas, 2008). In this chapter it is proposed as a framework for analysing the specific problems caused by contextual factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic which impact on course delivery and need to be catered for in course design. The benefit of using a systemic model is that it has potential relevance for *any* context in which courses are delivered, as it generalises on the functions which must be carried out for teaching or learning to take place

effectively.[3] A disadvantage of systemic models is that they are by their generalised nature vague, and need to be focused on the specific situations in which they are used. This can, however, be achieved by means of an input option. The model discussed in our previous chapter was a personal construct developed from experience and teaching insight (Ngcongo-James & Pratt, 2021, p. 184), and was specifically geared to Drama Education in particular and the liberal arts in general. However, the model used as a framework here has more general application to course design and is based on a system of communicative functions necessary for communication to take place effectively, if at all. As the COVID-19 pandemic put constraints on communication in particular, it is thought that this framework will not only be of use in identifying problems caused by the pandemic, but also in homing in on the specific nature of the constraints on communication and how they might be catered for not only in course design, but also in curriculum design.

The 'system of functions' which was proposed (in research and publications) as being essential for teaching and learning to take place is as follows:

1. Contextual: This function relates to the social context in which knowledge is constructed and requires the course designer to decide how learning is to be contextualised.
2. Ideational: This function relates to the source of the knowledge to be constructed, or the process whereby knowledge actually comes into being (it also raises the question of course content).
3. Interactive: As knowledge is constructed in learning interactions (including interactions with resources), the course designer needs to anticipate how participants will interact in constructing knowledge.
4. Social: The social parameters, conventions, or constraints operating in a given learning situation need to be identified

3 'Effectively' being dependent on the extent to which the course achieves the desired outcomes.

and made explicit to learners, particularly in respect of local assessment criteria.[4]

5. Reflexive: This relates to how participants will reflect on and assess their performance in constructing knowledge, and includes the issue of formal assessment (if any) and how it will be carried out, as well as course assessment. (Pratt, 2005, p. 138; 2011b, pp. 10-11).

The way in which the functions are fulfilled is thought to be a key factor not only in course but also curriculum design, especially in higher degree courses where students are (or are supposed to be) actively involved in constructing knowledge as independent scholars (Clarke, 2002; Conceicao-Runlee & Daley, 1998; Jonassen, 1999). At the time of its formulation, references to the functions could be found in works on online course design: they are echoed in a tutorial by Jonassen in the terms 'active', 'constructive', 'collaborative', 'contextual', and 'reflective' (Jonassen, n.d.), but they had not at the time been identified as the functions necessary for constructing knowledge. Using a framework formed of the system of functions for analysis does not categorise courses in terms of how knowledge is constructed, as with Mason's three models of online courses (Mason, 1998), but focuses rather on establishing exactly how knowledge *is* constructed in any given course: the system of functions is descriptive rather than prescriptive. It is therefore not biased in favour of any paradigm or pedagogy. The reason for this is that the functions were identified within a critical realist approach (Bhaskar, 1998, 2008) which attempted to establish the essence of human communication as it *occurs*, as opposed to how it *should be*. This is not to say that the investigation was value-free, merely that the value was to transcend, as far as possible, socially constructed views of communication to arrive at

4 The term 'social' is used in the linguistic and not the convivial sense and refers to the social constraints operating at institutions. Moreover, what is viewed as 'learning' or 'research' may well not only differ in different universities, but also in different faculties or academic departments of the same university.

what the reality might be, based on, but not *formed by*, human cognition and experience. A detailed account of the systemic modelling process used can be found in Pratt (2011a).

Applying this framework to the 2019 Curriculum Project to identify problems running the course *after* the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown provides the picture given in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 contains the problems already recognised intuitively, but the framework provided by the course design model allows one to see how the learning process is not just damaged but pretty much destroyed in the given context. On the positive side, by showing the functions essential for learning to take place, the model gives us the option of seeing whether the knowledge-practice we wish students to acquire might be developed in a different kind of course, rather than tossing Drama Education in the bin or running a 'COVID-19-safe' course which is such a travesty that it will put our students off 'live' theatre for life.

Building on the model of course design, we suggest that such a systemic framework based on the necessary functions might prove helpful in showing whether a curriculum will achieve the desired outcomes in any given context, including a context ravaged by a worldwide pandemic such as COVID-19. This framework might also be helpful in explaining the relationship between theory and practice in this particular case. In the process of systemic modelling described by Franck (2011), a theoretical model is formulated comprising the 'system of necessary functions' which, it is concluded, is essential for a phenomenon to occur. The theoretical model is then validated (or modified) by comparing it with an empirical (or applied) model describing how the phenomenon can be observed to occur in actual real-world instances. Figure 3.4 illustrates the relationship between the theoretical model (the system of communicative functions), and the empirical model (in this case, the system of stages in curriculum design: note that these stages are algorithmic functions, not a narrative sequence). An overview of the systemic modelling process

Table 3.1: Problems with Course Delivery During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Essential Functions	Problem
Contextual	Recruitment pre-pandemic relied on a personal approach (not viable during the pandemic). PPE and distancing would be needed if in a lab or studio (extra cost and monitoring). If run in mixed mode, we note that students dislike the LMS Moodle (the only free option), and that they do not have connectivity and mobile data for this, if not on campus. Synchronous theatre performances are not possible in a Teams or Zoom setting, only recorded ones (again, recording a live performance would require PPE and distancing). Groups rehearsing or performing at homes are not an option (travelling, PPE, no studio space).
Ideational	Knowledge (i.e., of Drama and theatre-making working from a Shakespearean text) is created in the interaction, and interactivity is limited.
Interactive	Theatre workshopping requires face-to-face, simultaneous group interactions, which are not safe, or easy (or economical) to organise safely, if this is decided, and has agreement of participants, as well as parental consent and university permission.
Social	The nuances of Drama cannot be acquired from the lecturer or more experienced peers because of the lack of face-to-face interactivity and lack of visual cues. The result is that students do not truly understand the social practices and traditions which govern the field or which are appropriate in different contexts.

Essential Functions	Problem
Reflexive	Performance relies on peer and audience feedback, which is lacking because of the lack of face-to-face interactivity and physical presence. Assessment would have to be online, as performance is not safe, and the production could be assessed by the lecturer only, with no audience reaction or even any idea if the performers are watching so that they can understand the assessment. Participants are unlikely to give spontaneous feedback in writing as to what the experience was like for them and what they learned. The students would not see the lecturer's response to see how they were doing as the project took place. Course assessment by faculty or examiners would rely on tick-box written assessment only.

(as well as the nature of the theory involved, the relationship between theory and practice, and the relationship between theory and models).

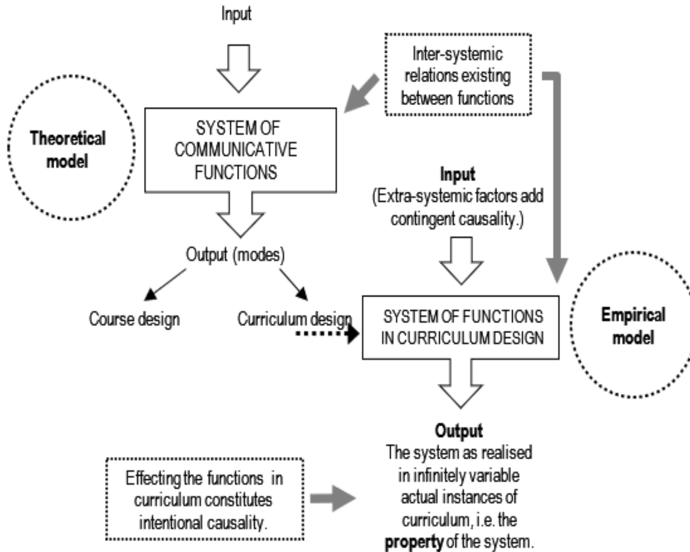

Figure 3.4: The Complex Layers of Systems Involved in the Systemic Model of Curriculum Design (in Pratt (2011a, pp. 37-48)

The system of functions has the advantage of not being limited to any one instructional approach or curriculum theory, but is thought to be generalisable across paradigms, in other words, it offers a generalisable principle of curriculum design. The framework in Table 3.1 is therefore suggested as a possible means of analysing curriculum in terms of how events such as the COVID-19 pandemic might impact on teaching and learning, when viewed as input into the system of functions. The proposed framework can be used to show where and how input (ie, from changed real-life settings) impacts on teaching and learning, and, while all of the above examples relate to the context in which Drama Education is situated, we suggest

that the framework could be relevant in terms of how input impacts on curriculum in other disciplines. It must be noted that some of the solutions or work-arounds provided by our Drama educators reveal that they are working in very different socio-cultural contexts. In the South African context, there are serious problems with totally online learning. Czerniewicz *et al.* (2020) give an account of the inequalities university students and staff experienced in switching to the Emergency Remote Online Teaching and Learning (ERTL) system. They point out that these inequalities existed before the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown but have been highlighted by it, and relate to life expectancy, access to resources and the right to dignity and autonomy. Expecting our students and staff to engage in emergency online learning may well lead to exclusion of the disadvantaged and, at best, mediocre programme delivery for the supposedly more fortunate. Moreover, the 'multipronged, multimodal strategies' announced by the government (South Africa, 2020) have meant that nobody actually knows what they are supposed to be doing. Students do not want to stay at home as this is not conducive to learning and deprives them of the very means whereby they might engage in online learning, namely 'electricity, equipment, connectivity' (Czerniewicz *et al.*, 2020, p. 955). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the authors wanted to interact face-to-face with students, but DUT and UKZN were opening and closing like accordions all year round, so most staff (including the authors) stayed at home as directed.

The knock-on effects on how the curriculum operates (according to the model) were as follows:

1. **Contextual:** Learning was not contextualised in terms of what should happen and how it would happen, and implementation of online learning was patchy, to say the least, with students and staff relying heavily on cell phone connectivity, which supports neither print literacy nor theatre-making (ie, as the sole medium).
2. **Ideational:** As face-to-face interactions were badly constrained and online interactions lacked control, it was unlikely that much learning was taking place. Concerns

about 'saving time' led to syllabus items being left out, and there was a sense that plagiarism was running out of control. Students needed much more attention from staff, who were becoming exhausted as a result.

3. **Interactive:** Learning interactions were negatively affected by lockdowns and recourse to online learning. Internet learning requires more reading and writing, which is particularly exhausting for English second language students and staff.
4. **Social**: How staff and students should behave in an academic context and their obligations came under increasing pressure. As staff were not physically present to model academic behaviour and procedures, students literally did not know what it was that they were expected to do or how to do it. As rules and procedures tend not to be written so that students can actually understand them, and staff were not on campus or responding to phone calls and emails, students were at risk of failing a degree in terms of not conforming to university criteria for graduating. One mature doctoral student, a Mathematics teacher, assumed (understandably) that the university had closed down for two years, and was told he could not graduate as he had exceeded the maximum duration of study.
5. **Reflexive:** Online assessment has loopholes which had to be identified rapidly and blocked, while feedback forms tended to omit the very things students and staff found wanting. In a context where people are present, resentments or misunderstandings can be recognised and sorted out quickly. In a distance situation, things tended to simmer and get ugly, leading to violent protests and vandalism, so that court orders were obtained, and police were called in.

To sum up, the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for what is virtually distance learning put huge stress on students and staff, as well as 'dumbing down' the academic programmes of supposedly tertiary institutions. On the plus side, looking at the problem areas in terms of the necessary functions has suggested ways of remedying the situation. To start

with, it was clear that a lot more effort needed to be put into communicating key information in writing to students and staff, as they were no longer together in a physical context to see what was going on. This meant more use of the press, social networks, radio, and television. Drama Education students and staff could have played a much more prominent role in this if they were networked properly. They could also have played a key role in making online resources and lectures more attractive and interesting. Most importantly, the model of curriculum design could have been applied to interrogate the nature of Drama Education and how the curriculum could have been modified so that it could have been best learned as well as served the community in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic or other factors which might have impacted on the learning context, knowledge content, delivery, operating constraints, or assessment.

Conclusion

As we undertook to do, in this chapter we critiqued the approach described in our earlier chapter from the point of view of its feasibility in the virtual landscape into which we had been thrown by the exigencies of the COVID-19 pandemic and noted that the transition would not be a comfortable one for us or our students (or Shakespeare). The Drama curriculum situation as reflected in the experiences of those Drama educators who lived through the pandemic showed how creative practice could transcend the forbidding aspect of this virtual landscape, and reach the peaks of creativity, but those were heights to which we and our students ('the Durban view') could not aspire. Interactivity and presence (actual and virtual) have been shown to be key factors in performing arts education, as well as the value of the 'invisibles', that is, the social and relationship aspects of teaching and learning. We suggested that a framework provided by a systemic model of teaching and learning might assist with curriculum design in terms of how input in the form of contextual factors can affect the carrying out of various activities, as well as the overall effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

The modelling process has indicated how theory and practice in education are related, and has shown that the model of curriculum design differs from other curriculum theories in generalising about the 'givens' of teaching and learning in terms of functionality rather than educational paradigms or value systems; it is the practitioners who infuse the performance of the functions with their beliefs and values, which we think is a 'good thing', as educators have very personal concepts of what good teaching and learning is. The models of virtual learning currently available and how they are expressed in practice were shown in the practices of the Drama educators whose COVID-19-coping strategies we described.

In writing this chapter, we became aware of some of the key changes in the field of curriculum during the COVID-19 pandemic. The curriculum matters which were currently being prioritised in curriculum conversations were focused on coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. The main change was in hastily gearing education in the various disciplines to cope with the constraints imposed by the pandemic, *either* by changing or adapting the curriculum, *or* by changing instructional delivery. Delivery could be changed in numerous ways, in 'multipronged, multimodal strategies' (South Africa, 2020); a variety of these options has been shown in the strategies used by Drama educators. These concerns about delivery are changing the curriculum experience in that educators are questioning the nature of teaching and learning, what should be taught, why it should be taught, and how it should be taught; also, whether it *can* be taught, given the current context. Theatre educators are grappling with the problem of whether theatre-making is still relevant and viable, or whether it needs to morph to a form more likely to be amenable to both delivery and current and future needs, namely filmmaking. Finally, in terms of the curriculum encounters which are emerging within these times, it has become clear that not just educators and students, but also communities and businesses will need to be engaged, as theatre, like other creative industries, has been hit hard by the pandemic and this has had economic consequences with long-

lasting effects. According to world-renowned epidemiologist, Professor Abdool Karim, the COVID-19 pandemic is not going to go away in a hurry, if ever (Dipa, 2022). So, what can *we* do about it? What Professor Karim says of the pandemic could well be applied to curriculum: "Nobody knows for sure what will happen next but *we can all still be responsible for our own behaviour and there is still much room for improvement*" (Dipa, 2022, our emphasis).

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Chapter 4

The Curriculum Implementation Dilemma Imposed by the Covid-19 Pandemic: Reengineering the Curriculum through Self-Directed Learning Approaches

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Abstract

In responding to the curriculum challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, most schools face certain resource constraints. Online platforms such as WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, YouTube and Blackboard present opportunities and challenges for curriculum implementers. The total collapse of online teaching following the COVID-19 pandemic (eg, students' inadequate autonomous learning and the lack of effective online instruction) forced many schools to revert to traditional face-to-face teaching strategies. Studies reveal massive investment in multimodal teachings, such as hyperflex classes, to allow for the integration of Microsoft Teams and Zoom into teaching and learning. These learning management platforms offer learners various opportunities to improve their self-directed learning strategies, skills and values. To this end, ground-breaking theories were explored, and curriculum theorising took place to understand how the required curriculum reforms in Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. This descriptive

study draws from the partial implementation of the multimodal blended learning introduced in 2020 and 2021 as a critical intervention approach to curriculum implementation. The chapter concludes that introducing new subjects such as robotics, automation and coding is a necessary curriculum change that may improve the quality of education and enhance students' prospects for creating entrepreneurial opportunities, thus alleviating dependence on job creation. The current study has important implications for curriculum theory in terms of how to design improved curricula capable of enhancing students' creative-thinking abilities and problem-solving skills.

Keywords: *curriculum, implementation, experience, pandemic, theory*

Introduction

The emergence of the digital revolution led to the birth of a digital education curriculum, a knowledge economy and 21st-century skills, which present both challenges and opportunities for South Africa. As part of its theorising approach, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) aims to stimulate active learning, encourage personal interpretations, develop independent thinking, and nurture inquisitiveness (Jacobs *et al.*, 2012). Both higher and basic education institutions embark on curriculum theorising to provide a scientific approach and alternative solutions to societal problems (Maistry, 2021). The main objective is to integrate innovative teaching methods, modern lesson designs and presentations to provide meaningful learning experiences. In the post-COVID-19 pandemic environment, South Africa needs to accelerate the momentum of infusing a digital-based curriculum underpinned by equality and quality education to achieve socio-economic freedom. For example, I argue that to hone learners' problem-solving skills, schools must prioritise Self-Directed Learning (SDL) strategies for learners while introducing 21st-century cutting-edge technology and

skill sets in line with knowledge economy driven by robotics, automation and programming in our schools.

This chapter explores curriculum theorising and implementation dilemmas encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic and how teachers reengineered alternative curriculum pathways that led to the trimming and reorganisation of the curriculum while promoting digital literacy. The urgent need to infuse digital literacy within the curriculum opens new possibilities for the development of SDL skills for learners. Therefore, it is necessary to underscore the importance of theorising curriculum content and the pedagogical skills required to handle curriculum change during the pandemic. The pandemic forced schools to embark on a curriculum alignment strategy driven by trimming the school curriculum content (Maree, 2021). This process involved nuances of curriculum implementation that changed the course of history in the entire education system in South Africa (Hoadley, 2018).

Theorising curriculum change

Both higher and basic education institutions prioritised curriculum theorising to craft scientific-driven interventions and propose alternative solutions to societal problems (Maistry, 2021). Scholars in the field of curriculum development have presented several approaches that inspire seamless curriculum change (Fomunyam, 2015; Fomunyam, 2021; Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021). One of these approaches includes structural theorising, which is concerned with the interrelationships of curriculum elements. The focus of this interrelationship is on the students, their learning abilities and habits. This approach calls for the integration of SDL skills to promote learning independently of others in a socially isolated situation; that is, during the COVID-19 pandemic, learners must continue to learn under the lockdown environment. Digital learning is the best example of SDL in a sociological sense characterised by autonomous, independent individuals capable of undertaking learning without outside pressure from

teachers (Hoadley, 2018). Students equipped with SDL skills have the ultimate power and responsibility to make decisions that would change the course of action based on choices presented to them by the teacher and relevant authority (Deng, 2018). Based on this assertion, policymakers must embark on scientific facts so that scholars can be engaged in a research process that allows them to be neutral and objective. Further, it assesses the process of implementing and evaluating the curriculum, as well as the social and cultural values inherent in education (Fomunyam, 2021). These social norms and values shape thinking about how to influence curriculum for the better.

The second approach to theorising concerns the outcomes of the curriculum instead of curriculum-making (Fomunyam, 2021). The conceptualisation of the curriculum must be done such that any individual must feel the overall impact of the school. Whether the curriculum is narrow or broad, the attainment of educational experience must change their character and outlook. The priority placed on curriculum outcomes implies that the entire pedagogical milieu is the responsibility of the learners. The learning process must be driven by SDL based on the degree of freedom learners have in setting up their learning goals, planning, and implementation in order to achieve desired learning outcomes. These theorisers argue that self-direction can be learned, developed, and considered a goal (Fomunyam, 2021; Fumanyam & Khoza, 2021; Wallin, 2011). Much of the emphasis is placed on assumptions, beliefs and perceived truths underlying any alternative decisions of what to teach is the highest priority. In other words, by using information generated outside education, these theories obtain insight into the process guiding educational processes. They are critical of the present and past formations of curriculum that impose limitations on education discourse and implementation within the classroom and society. Contemporary curriculum theorising has started to overlook curriculum development based on the empirical reality of schooling (Deng, 2018); instead, it now shines a spotlight on developing a heightened, sophisticated

understanding or interpretation of educational experiences informed by wide-ranging theoretical sources.

Analysis of a Schwabian perspective reveals that curriculum theory and theorising should be concerned with practice and the inner work of schooling, defined by specific curriculum content or material, specific students and specific teachers within a specific instructional context (Wallin, 2011; Fomunyam, 2021). In this conception, curriculum practice is mainly underpinned by a deliberate decision-making process. At the centre, the main goal is to enhance the quality and integrity of the curriculum enactment to address specific issues and problems arising from the interface between theory and practice based on the desire for improvement. This process is driven by deliberate decision-making, which involves critical thinking and reflection, reinterpreting, reengineering, positing, imagining, and envisaging (Wallin, 2011). In essence, for a theory to be relevant for practice, it needs to be guided by a practice–context–theory nexus in curriculum theorising. This approach further advocates for the identification of problematic issues and problem areas hampering practice as a point of departure for any curriculum inquiry and theory development. The analysis of the local relevant context and culture situates the issues facing education institutions, in turn proposing solution-driven outcomes, also known as 'significant frames' for understanding issues and solutions (Fumunyam, 2021). Most solutions to curriculum inquiry and theory development come from external sources aligned with best practices to produce new practical solutions and new theories (Deng, 2018).

The literature proposes that curriculum theorising should be driven by investigating the daily realities of any complex education institution characterised by unique complex social and cultural milieus (Hoadley, 2018). Deng (2018) and Fumanyam and Khoza (2021) suggest that any theory should be guided by scientific evidence based on research problems troubling any school as an institution and should be based on a comprehensive analysis of a set of theoretical categories for understanding the culture and the

institutional character surrounding the practice. To illustrate this, Teo (2012, p. 663) used the phrase 'the Potemkin school' to demonstrate how an image of a school was created based on missions, visions, goals, and achievements with the sole purpose of branding and attracting outsiders. Teo reveals how a good-looking school was characterised by 'conflicting ideas and actions', 'layers of ideologies', 'diverse expectations', and 'multiple kinds of facades created by various stakeholders'. It is interesting to note that these sets of categories succinctly explain the complex nature of the relationship that shapes a school's character and teachers' enactment of the reformed curriculum.

Decolonisation of Curriculum and Digital Integration of Technology

Education reform in South Africa is more urgent to address severe economic, social, and political threats, and hence plausible solutions have been suggested, for example, the decolonisation of the curriculum and the integration of digital technology into the curriculum (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021). Decolonial pedagogy is a recent major shift in educational theory and is closely linked to free quality education (Jaramillo, 2012). It seeks to question the normalised exclusion embedded in established curriculum structures and raise awareness of the enduring logic of the coloniality of power in schools. This has been the longest crisis to have influenced the curriculum trajectory in every aspect of educational endeavour.

In decolonial thought, Western conceptions of curriculum implementation are challenged by espousing individualistic and non-profit aims and objectives (Jaramillo, 2012). As Li *et al.* (2021) put it, education, from curriculum to pedagogy, from teacher to learner, from learning to assessment, and from location to time, can and should be radically transformed by infusing SDL approaches. Loeng (2020) argues that SDL entails individuals taking initiative and responsibility for their learning. In the quest to decolonise education, studies recommend integrating SDL values into

education principles both inside and outside formal education institutions. Teachers, as agents of change, are responsible for championing knowledge and technology found within the local environment to facilitate learning, not transmitters. Most researchers agree that any curriculum theorising must elevate SDL to a level ready to empower learners to take control over either or both the planning (goals) and the management (support) of learning experiences to achieve quality learning outcomes (Loeng, 2020). As such, changes in the curriculum may be driven by a variety of reasons, such as learning goals and objectives. The sudden changes in the education system driven by the COVID-19 pandemic opened a dialogue with suppressed knowledge(s) and voices to advance educational practice in support of diversity (Maree, 2021). Infusing SDL philosophy in support of diversity is not entirely dependent on the opportunity but also on the ability to make learning decisions beneficial to suppressed groups in order to address the imbalance of the past. The intention is to introduce national and local curriculum reforms that benefit formal learning situations underpinned by collaborative processes between teachers and learners known to policymakers for centuries (Maree, 2021). It has become common knowledge to Africans in general and South Africans in particular that decolonial pedagogy wields social difference in support of collective humanity (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021).

Jaramillo (2012) warns governments against perpetuating curricula that continue to espouse indoctrination into singular worldviews and epistemologies. However, the entire higher and basic education system needs to transform its institutions which continue to inflict colonialist models on aggrieved populations. The main reason is that curriculum changes deliver profound educational changes over time and space, and the real impact can be felt over time (Li *et al.*, 2021). Evidence from the literature suggests that many countries have rushed the decolonisation of curriculum reform processes only to receive a backlash from teachers, school principals and other stakeholders, yet the sudden curriculum reforms or theorising introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic

received a positive response from the majority of stakeholders (Mpungose, 2020; Maistry, 2021; Chimbude & Kgari-Masondo, 2021). Such reforms are necessary and prove that policymakers can expedite the reform process to respond to emergencies as opposed to their long-held assumptions about curriculum reforms and implementation.

Dynamic changes resulting from curriculum interventions

The National State of Disaster declared by the president in March 2020 created a unique situation which demanded urgent intervention by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The DBE initiated curriculum reorganisation against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic to reengineer curriculum implementation (DBE, 2020a). Two government spheres, the DBE and the Provincial Education Department (PEDs) responsible for curriculum delivery, were mandated to formulate a plausible framework for curriculum recovery plans post the COVID-19 pandemic. The outcome of curriculum reorganisation was categorised into two approaches: the first being streamlining the content delivered, and the second being curriculum trimming and implementing catch-up programmes.

Streamlining the content delivery

These approaches to curriculum reorganisation were developed through consultation with schools, policymakers, school governing bodies and other important stakeholders in re-packaging and integrating subjects or topics, embedding knowledge and skills foci and balancing depth as a key strategy to reduce content overload. It is clear that educational institutions in South Africa face myriad challenges that require urgent attention to be placed on managing content by re-packaging and integrating subjects to reduce content overload (Amin & Mahabeer, 2021). Schools were at the heart of curriculum implementation, and the context was about

merging fragmented and compartmentalised discipline-based content from related sub-topics into integrated topics of learning. This approach to curriculum theorisation was best explained by Booi and Khuzwayo (2019) and Luckett (2009) as an approach responsible for the hybridisation of content and knowledge in both knowledge construction and pedagogy.

The purpose of curriculum reorganisation according to the DBE (2020a, pp. 15-16) is summarised as follows:

- Reduce the envisaged curriculum to manageable core content, including skills, knowledge, attitude and values, so that schools have ample room for deep and meaningful learning.
- Define the core knowledge, skills, and attitude to be taught and assessed more specifically so that it provides guidance and support to teachers.
- Align curriculum content and assessment to the available teaching time.
- Maintain alignment in the learning trajectory for learners without compromising learners' transition between grades; and
- Present a planning tool to inform instruction during the remaining school terms,

The idea of framing a new curriculum strategy under the guise of curriculum reorganisation and reducing content overload feeds into the idea of curriculum theorising philosophy. The product of this paradox demands new insight from curriculum developers and implementers alike to methodically combine content, the breadth and depth to be intertwined, which in my view, feeds into the complexity of curriculum theorising (Amin & Mahabeer, 2021). In essence, the reengineering of the curriculum is necessary, but it requires highly skilled teachers with the foresight and professionalism to respond to curriculum design, selection and implementation. However, resource constraints ranging from human resources predicated by high teacher absenteeism and online resource constraints compounded the slow process of effective curriculum reform in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, one can deduce

that teachers need sufficient practice and professional training first to understand the rationale behind curriculum reorganisation and trimming to respond confidently to the curriculum policy demands of the 21st century and beyond. Post the COVID-19 pandemic, curriculum responsiveness continues to pose challenges for school management teams and teachers in many schools to achieve intended educational outcomes.

Curriculum trimming

According to the DBE (2020a), curriculum trimming involves removing less important content that is deemed irrelevant for enhancing learning. In this chapter, curriculum trimming remains at the heart of curriculum reorganisation and theorising. Policymakers develop a blueprint that guides the development of curriculum trimming in line with the prescripts of the laws guiding the education framework in South Africa. This approach presents a plan for identifying redundant and outdated content, identifying core and extended parts of the curriculum and flexible modes of reorganising study content. These changes trigger important critical debates regarding curriculum reorientation and theorising. Most studies have pointed out curriculum overload as a serious impediment shaped by curriculum, textbooks, tests, and teacher expectations. In theory, curriculum trimming allows teachers to interrogate the curriculum thoroughly and point out discrepancies overburdening an industry of superficiality.

The education system in South Africa is complex, given the nature of secrecy and top-down approach syndrome. For instance, no matter how much teachers voice their frustration with certain curriculum content included in the annual teaching plan (ATP) and how little their learners understand and are learning, the system remains untransformed, rendering the concept of curriculum theorising and reorganising irrelevant. In other words, the nature of bureaucracy or red tape discourages teachers, in particular, from having a say in how the system should be transformed. In practice, curriculum trimming relieves the already

overburdened curriculum system, affording teachers a grand opportunity to have a say in deciding what topics to keep and what to give up, ensuring that the load is manageable with the time available (DBE, 2020a).

Catch-up programmes

Ramrathan (2021) recognises the closure of schools and the catch-up programme as a normal phenomenon in South Africa. In the past, these closures were precipitated by industrial action undertaken by teacher unions, service delivery protests by the community, student protests and other volatile political situations. These disturbances called for an urgent review of the curriculum, which involved lining up catch-up programmes implemented during school holidays. The provincial Departments of Basic Education (DBE) adopted these catch-up programmes to coerce teachers to teach outside their official timetables, that is, before school starts and after school hours. These practices have been normalised during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, putting more pressure on teachers and the already constrained resources. Some of the most notable curriculum changes include tampering with the ATP to improve curriculum coverage, support assessment changes and reduced professional support programmes (Maree, 2021).

It should be noted that these cosmetic changes have a fundamentally negative impact on curriculum delivery; however, their normal acceptance affects both teachers and learners. Currently, Grade 12 learners attend ATP programmes every weekend, pointing to a significant change in curriculum implementation (Maphalala *et al.*, 2021). The literature identifies curriculum overload for many grades under the CAPS, which has a direct impact on curriculum coverage and teaching and learning. This has led to a generalisation in education circles that current curriculum planning is ambitious and not realistic for delivery based on the current ATP. Therefore, streamlining the curriculum by tampering with the ATP arises from the emerging needs imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Usher and Barak (2020) argue that

policymakers have a responsibility to try and accommodate the demands of various sectors or interest groups, thereby creating unintended curriculum overload, particularly when very little consideration is given at the curriculum design stage to what is to be included, what should be removed, and why.

The overload phenomenon in the CAPS curriculum may lead to narrow, fragmented or distorted ways of implementing the curriculum, resulting in poor-quality experiences for student learning (Mafugu & Abel, 2021). Changes in the ATP negatively impact the psychological well-being of both teachers and learners. Too much pressure on teachers and learners to achieve ambitious outcomes heightens stress levels and burnout as they are expected to work and study outside official school hours to catch up and meet new curriculum requirements. In 1884, Spence (cited in Ramrathan, 2021) conceded that addressing fundamental socioeconomic and cultural dynamics in society should be the focus of our attention. This has particular relevance for streamlining the curriculum to address the emerging needs of the COVID-19 pandemic. The question of whose knowledge is worthwhile and why this knowledge is worthwhile for learners remains relevant post the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

The process of curriculum theorisation through experience with the active involvement of educators and students reveals that the decolonisation of the curriculum faces numerous barriers (Mafugu & Abel, 2021). These barriers include a lack of content and pedagogical knowledge, poor infrastructure, and a lack of political consensus to debunk and reconfigure curricula free from colonial propaganda. To adequately address these issues, those who develop the curriculum at the policy level, adopters at the stakeholder level, and implementers at the school level should always be alert to possible distractors and be prepared to address them adequately to minimise the impediments to curriculum implementation.

Protocol adopted minimised curriculum disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic

Studies suggest that many South African schools adopted relevant technologies, prepared to learn and staff resources, set systems and infrastructure to establish new teaching protocols and adjust their curricula (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020; Mpungose, 2021). Although the transition was smooth for some schools, it was difficult for others, particularly those schools based in rural and semi-urban environments, which were greatly affected by limited technological infrastructure (Pham & Nguyen, 2020; Simbulan, 2020). Inevitably, the majority of schools were forced to reorganise their learning spaces to migrate partially to online learning modalities as the country continued the battle to control the vicious spread of the COVID-19 virus. This recommendation, with all its intention and purpose, did not serve well for schools with limited space and no access to Internet connectivity and modern technological devices. These schools were vulnerable to the virus, and learners who lost valuable time were left behind, leading to the highest dropout rate in the history of this country (Maree, 2021; Ramrathan, 2021).

Three scenarios were running concurrently in the DBE system. The first was well-resourced schools with enough space to implement social distancing as well as running online classes for curriculum coverage. The second was schools with access to a few resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as mobile classes and personal protective equipment (PPE), but which had no technological devices to assist with curriculum implementation. The third encompassed those schools with no space or infrastructure existing to implement either physical distancing or online classes owing to a lack of providing infrastructure and remote locations.

Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on curriculum implementation and delivery in many schools irrespective of their socioeconomic background. Still, unequal distribution of educational resources has negatively impacted many schools following the pandemic. When the restrictions

were in full force to minimise the spread of the COVID-19 virus, online learning became a temporal solution. Online learning refers to a learning environment that uses the Internet and other technological devices, tools and platforms for the synchronous and asynchronous instructional delivery and management of academic programmes (Jansen, 1999; Fullan, 2015; Phaeton & Stears, 2017; Huang, 2019; Usher & Barak, 2020). The distinction between the two online learning approaches had to be explored to better understand curriculum implementation during and after the pandemic phase. Synchronous online learning involves real-time interactions between the teacher and the students, while asynchronous online learning occurs without a strict schedule for different students (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

Several issues arose within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: online learning replaced face-to-face teaching in the form of interim remote teaching, which served as a response to an exigency. Varea and González-Calvo (2020) identify several socioeconomic and political concerns that emerged during curriculum delivery that are worth noting to guide education following the pandemic. The migration process from an old learning space to a new one never took place smoothly. This transition raised several major policies, pedagogy, logistics, socioeconomic, technology, and psychosocial concerns (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020). This was a period of introspection for the DBE and government education agencies, as many schools were left scrambling to create foolproof policies on school governance structures and teacher and student management. Teachers in a few selected schools where technology was commonplace were called to embrace conventional teaching delivery and were also obliged to embrace technology despite their lack of advanced technological literacy. To address this problem, online learning webinars and peer support systems were created. On the part of the students, dropout rates increased for economic, psychological, and academic reasons. Academically, although students can learn anything online, learning may perhaps

have been less than optimal, especially in courses that require face-to-face contact and direct interactions (Franchi, 2020).

Challenges of and opportunities for integrating digital education

The COVID-19 pandemic seriously threatened multimodal curriculum implementation and the entire education sector in ways never imagined. To counter this threat, the DBE proposed many intervention programmes to address the challenges posed by the rapid integration of digital technologies in curriculum implementation. It was evident that the integration of digital technologies and various online platforms suggested an incredible potential for achieving much-needed access to education for all. However, lack of funding has been identified as one of the main challenges affecting the successful implementation of digital education in South Africa. This is despite a notable increase in the budget for education over the past few years, with the COVID-19 pandemic eroding prospects of technological integration into the mainstream education sector.

Research conducted by Zhao and Witterston (2021) accuses the government of negotiating in bad faith with the Internet Service Providers' Association (ISPA) of South Africa. An application for zero-rating must be approved by the DBE, the Department of Higher Education and Training and the Department of Health. The lack of laws governing the availability of free mobile data in schools or zero-rated online education platforms remains an impediment to a smooth transition to online or multimodal learning. In certain schools, new mobile data-based technologies are beginning to transform curriculum implementation, teaching methods, practices, structures, and even education cultures. Fomunyam and Khoza (2021) have spent their time specialising in teaching and learning strategies and have discovered that introducing technology in rural schools can change the learning culture and improve innovation over many years to come. Schools must be capacitated first before they are declared institutions

capable of providing solutions to curriculum problems. Indeed, schools empowered with self-directed learning approaches have the potential to transform and reengineer the curriculum system so that students can achieve valuable skills and better learning outcomes (Vandeyar, 2017). The time for taking teachers for granted is over, and they should be acknowledged as skilled technicians who dutifully realise a given way of teaching set by the directives of management (Zhao & Witterston, 2021). Therefore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers took conscious decisions to be active participants in the creation of new realities, with some actions within the context of their beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of relevant teaching situations.

Maree (2021) acknowledges that private schools and schools in more affluent areas have adapted their curriculum reasonably well and have successfully used a combination of in-person, hybrid online and digital teaching and learning formats. Greyling (2023) and Mpungose (2020) argue that affluent schools enjoyed access to various messaging apps, and digital communication platforms, as well as conferencing services such as WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, YouTube and Blackboard, which were used to communicate with learners and share information (teaching and learning support material, etc) with them. Virtual platforms used (and which continue to be used) are zero-rated (meaning they require a relatively small amount of mobile data) and have recently gained popularity. In addition, teachers in well-resourced schools received training to use these platforms for effective teaching and learning (Maree, 2021).

The opposite is true for rural and marginalised schools. Studies reveal that even though the majority of learners have had unlimited access to education since 1994, the gross participation rate of black South Africans continues to decline considerably more than for white South Africans (Badat, 2020; Kayembe & Nel, 2019). Poor Internet connectivity, absence of human connections, lack of opportunities for collaborative learning, lack of teacher supervision, a decline in hands-on

learning and poor assessment during examinations are some of the challenges online education platforms face. This does not remove the fact that the quick implementation of online learning has been a saviour. South Africa remains an unequal society; therefore, the majority of schools in disadvantaged, impoverished and resource-scarce regions continue to be marginalised from participating in the new modern technology. This is due in part to poorly resourced schools that have struggled to adopt the transition from an exclusively in-person format to teaching and learning success in an online format (Maree, 2021). It is worth underscoring the sad reality experienced by learners attending affluent schools who either did not have smartphones or access to the Internet or Wi-Fi or did not have the necessary skills needed to navigate the available online resources. The parents and guardians of these learners were not ready to support their children to instantly switch to online platforms or to pay private tutors to assist their children to gain confidence in using these platforms.

Rebooting, reimagining, and reengineering the curriculum through self-directed learning (SDL) approaches

Many studies have given higher education reform more attention during the COVID-19 pandemic than the general education sector (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021; Maree, 2021; Mpungose, 2021; UNESCO, 2020). As such, many schools in South Africa and on the African continent need to rethink and reengineer education implementation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). The implementation of creative, innovative teaching and learning strategies demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic should be promoted in all facets of education. Many institutions and government agencies are grappling to save the soul of education following the COVID-19 pandemic by rethinking and reengineering curriculum discourse and implementation (Naidu, 2022). Some obvious questions for researchers, policymakers and stakeholders are which part of the curriculum needs urgent transformation, where to start,

and how. One of the obvious submissions to address these questions is the realisation that going back to where we were before the pandemic is neither possible nor desirable.

The first process for reimagining the curriculum is engaging key stakeholders to put their hands on deck both during the reform process to help mitigate resistance to change and during the implementation process (OECD, 2020). Inculcating the principles of a participative approach to curriculum change may enhance the quality of outcomes. Such an approach is based on consensus and the professional expertise of teachers, policymakers, and the political heads of institutions. The same approach to curriculum reform both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic required knowledge of what had to be reformed and how and gave a voice to stakeholders to help represent the interests of the masses of people on the ground.

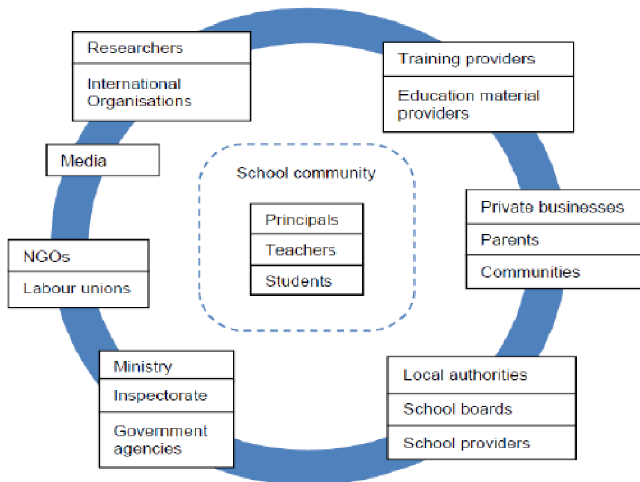

Figure 4.1: Potential stakeholders in education (Burns & Köster, 2016)

Figure 4.1 demonstrates the complex and tedious process of engaging stakeholders, where the process might take forever to finalise before a consensus is reached (Burns & Köster, 2016). For the effective implementation of the curriculum with minor

changes, the DBE must learn how to engage with stakeholders through the principles of involvement, transparency, and communication, as well as respect for stakeholders so that they will support curriculum change. The DBE has learnt that in the future, this process cannot be subverted or overlooked to the detriment of expediting curriculum implementation resulting from emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Zhao and Witterston (2021) argue that unnecessary shortcuts were taken, and the DBE missed a golden opportunity to persuade key stakeholders to embrace multimodal teaching or blended learning. Similarly, teachers and learners rejected the integration of online teaching and learning and opted instead for a rotation system for curriculum delivery (Mpungose, 2021; Naidu, 2022).

The changes brought by the Fourth Industrial Revolution are serious enough to scare the government and the DBE in South Africa into implementing regular changes in the curriculum. Initially, the curriculum was shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic for two years, leaving huge gaps in learner knowledge attainment owing to the excessive reduction of content considered no longer essential or useful by subject field experts. The first issue that needed urgent attention brought on by the State of Disaster was trimming subject content on various levels and grades to streamline the curriculum (Zhao & Witterston, 2021). The study by Maree (2021) revealed that teachers rejected the idea of a limited trimming programme (LTP) by using the original ATP to ensure a solid foundation for subsequent grades. The irony in South Africa is that the essential skills required by the Fourth Industrial Revolution have not been introduced into the mainstream curriculum. The reengineering of the curriculum would propose that new subjects be developed and included in the current curriculum to replace those subjects considered redundant and less impactful (Naidu, 2022). There is room for the introduction of subjects such as robotics, automation, and coding to this cohort of learners to ensure these subjects start benefiting learners' occupational future. Previous studies have provided enough empirical evidence of the effectiveness

of a robotics curriculum for knowledge acquisition, high-order cognitive ability, attitudes, and hands-on operation (Chen & Cheng, 2018). Maree (2021) and Dawson, Fouksman and Monteith (2021) hold strong sentiments about future education at all levels, particularly amongst young people who have never done waged or salaried work before.

Studies conducted in the field of computer science including coding and artificial intelligence by Angeli *et al.* (2016) interrogated the idea of integrating coding and robotics. The first framework developed introduced learners (aged 6 to 12) to computational thinking concepts, a blueprint for the development of algorithms and programming language. The outcome of this framework was to introduce five critical and scarce skills (abstraction, generalisation, decomposition, algorithmic thinking, and debugging) (Nardelli, 2019) to be developed across different subject areas. The demand brought by the knowledge economy and robotics necessitated the development of an innovative curriculum framework. This shift in approach brings nuance in developing thinking skills such as abstraction, generalisation, decomposition, algorithmic thinking, and debugging (Chalmers, 2018; Shute *et al.*, 2017). In a nutshell, changes introduced to CAPS focus on promoting the use of algorithmic thinking to devise sequences of actions to be executed and develop the skills of abstraction and generalisation from one solution to another by identifying familiar patterns. In the final analysis, Chalmers (2018) saw this framework as a benchmark for an iterative problem-solving process which allows learners to explore new skills such as debugging skills as they identify and fix issues and errors.

Current studies show that programming knowledge fits the 21st-century description of digital innovation, and problem-solving systematically (Ching *et al.*, 2018; Geldenhuys & Fataar, 2021). Learners who are exposed to computational thinking through programming, develop algorithmic thinking, problem-solving, logic, and debugging skills (Buitrago Flórez *et al.*, 2017). Based on findings, the view that teaching programming is the best approach to teaching

computational thinking has become accepted. This is only the case, however, if curricula are centred around the development of computational thinking skills and not solely focused on teaching children coding languages (Buitrago Flórez *et al.*, 2017). The ability to write lines of code according to Geldenhuys and Fataar (2021) is regarded simply as the vehicle through which the learners can create stories, animations, objects, mobile apps or games and solve problems. It is during teachers' planning, execution and improvement of these activities that computational thinking is developed in young learners (Geldenhuys & Fataar, 2021).

Summary

A curriculum is an interrelated set of plans and experiences learners encounter during the enactment of programmes in a school environment. The role of policymakers is to conceptualise and develop a curriculum framework that responds to changes in the socioeconomic and political dynamics of the country. The CAPS curriculum was tested during the COVID-19 pandemic when experts considered trimming the curriculum by partially removing certain content regarded as redundant and less important. This intervention followed a top-down approach whereby teachers were instructed to revise the ATP, focusing on specific subjects targeted by this curriculum reform process. Like all other responsible agencies of the state, the DBE developed a guiding protocol to minimise curriculum disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most schools were forced to infuse multimodal teaching while others could switch completely from face-to-face teaching to an online mode. However, the majority of schools were underprepared for several reasons, such as a lack of resources, poor connectivity and a lack of infrastructure to implement physical distancing. This was a golden opportunity for the DBE and government in general to address these shortcomings, but instead of seizing the opportunity, the DBE started tampering with the curriculum by trimming certain content as a result of a lack of funding from the national government. The CAPS in part focuses on

the content of individual subjects and how they should be taught and assessed. Owing to this focus, teachers are used to teaching these subjects by following the ATP and very specific guidelines of assessment. Any deviation from the planned ATP means that teachers have to start from scratch to develop new lesson plans and assessment activities in line with the proposed changes by the DBE.

It can, therefore, be concluded that the changes in CAPS documents were rushed so that the DBE has bought more time to address curriculum issues sensibly. These changes have not given teachers a chance to understand how to implement them, let alone engage learners in meaningful learning experiences such as the participative approach suggested by the CAPS.

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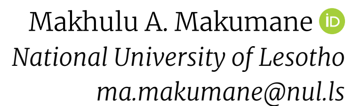
Chapter 5

Implementation or Enactment Principles Underpinning the Digitalised Curriculum During the COVID-19 Era in one Lesotho Higher Education Institution



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Abstract

The education sector, as with other developmental sectors, was adversely affected by the unprecedented emergence of the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), famously known as the COVID-19 pandemic. This novelty introduced a hasty paradigm shift in higher education institutions (HEIs), with most having to move from traditional to digitalised curriculum (DC), which is a plan of or for teaching and learning using educational technologies. DC was adopted in order to continue the process of knowledge-building. It is against this background that in this chapter, I sought to explore implementation or enactment principles underpinning DC during the COVID-19 era at one university in Lesotho, as a hasty shift perpetuated by the uncertainty suggested an inclination to performance-based DC, which favours lecturers over students, or competence-based DC, which favours students over lecturers. This chapter draws from the connectivism theory and the natural identity framework to undergird and provide solutions for effectively using DC. In this chapter, I argue that DC should display balanced principles

of both the performance-based curriculum (implementation) and competence-based curriculum (enactment), without inclination to either, lest there be an imbalance of knowledge-building. Knowledge-building is promoted by an equilibrated combination of factual and social knowledge-building to produce pragmatic knowledge-building. The current status quo, through analysis of two conveniently sampled published studies in Lesotho on the use of DC during the pandemic, is that lecturers, with most being digital refugees who learned to use digital technologies through gunpoint measures by their HEIs due to the uncertainty, prioritised prescribed factual or structured content over future or unstructured content. The implication of this latter assertion is that students are denied an opportunity to actively interact with knowledge to address their specific needs in order to mould their unique identities. In this chapter, thus, I argue for the adoption of a pragmatic DC, which encourages lecturers to reflect on their experiences with educational technologies and which enables them to address the tension between performance- and competence-based digitalised curricula by establishing a balance amongst factual, social, and habitual perceptions to promote self-actualised individuals through equilibrated knowledge-building. I argue that natural identity, a framework developed by an African curriculum theorist, be adopted by lecturers to help them re-reflect and re-critique their actions in their use of educational technologies in view of handling uncertainties or novelties such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: *connectivism, educational technologies, pragmatic, HEI, knowledge-building*

Introduction

The education sector, as with other sectors, was adversely affected by the unprecedented emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Butler-Adam (2018); Sintema, 2020). This pandemic introduced a hasty paradigm shift, especially in higher education institutions (HEIs), whereby teaching and learning modes had to be adjusted to

accommodate the recommendations put forth by the World Health Organization (WHO) in view of curbing the rampant spread of the contagious and deadly virus (Makumane, 2021a; Sokhulu, 2020). This paradigm shift included HEIs, most of which were operating on the face-to-face mode of teaching and learning, having to opt for online teaching and learning in order to continue the process of knowledge-building (Khoza, 2020). This was a result of national lockdowns that were implemented in different stages in order to limit physical contact and to encourage physical distancing as the virus is believed to spread through human droplets generated by coughing, sneezing or speaking (Stadnytskyi *et al.*, 2020).

These lockdowns had an adverse impact on the teaching and learning processes, with a hasty shift from face-to-face to online teaching mode (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Mashinini, 2020). According to Adedoyin and Soykan (2020), this shift to online platforms requires effective and efficient instructors who possess a comprehensive understanding of the demands embedded within the use of educational technologies. Following, Khoza (2021a) asserts that this comprehensive understanding is reliant on lecturers' perceptions, which are shaped by professional knowledge, social skills, or personal values through exposure to specific digital environments that inform new actions. Khoza (2021a) further avers that perceptions are categorised into factual perceptions, which are framed by linear, structured, or prescribed content and schooled (factual) knowledge; social perceptions, shaped by nonlinear or unstructured information informed by societal opinions and horizontal knowledge; and pragmatic perceptions, which are framed by unique experiences and beliefs that inform actions and form personal or habitual perceptions. Perceptions in this chapter are categorised into these three propositions, which are seen to influence implementation (factual perceptions) or enactment (social) depending on an individual's unique experiences with educational technologies (Ed-Techs) that mould habitual perceptions towards DC.

The two terms, 'implementation' and 'enactment', which are usually used interchangeably, are distinctly different, especially with regard to the expectations they deploy on prescribed curriculum. The gap that this chapter aims to fill is through differentiating between the two concepts to determine if DC is implemented or enacted, as a hasty shift perpetuated by the uncertainty or novelty suggested an inclination to either performance-based DC (which favours lecturers over students) or competence-based DC (which favours students over lecturers). In this chapter, I argue for the adoption of a pragmatic DC by lecturers, which encourages them (lecturers) to reflect on their experiences with educational technologies in order to mould their unique perceptions with regard to DC. Pragmatic DC is seen to address the tension between performance- and competence-based digitalised curricula in order to effectively develop knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes ideally driven by education (Khoza, 2021b; Makumane, 2021a). However, Fomunyam and Khoza (2021) purport that curriculum, being a pre-planned document, gives little room to the changing state of knowledge. Notably, the COVID-19 uncertainty changed the landscape and demanded a hasty adoption of DC, thereby forcing change in the knowledge-building process, demanding a change in the state of knowledge. This resulted in the forceful use of Ed-Tech, which required a paradigm shift as lecturers and students had to use platforms that were somewhat peculiar to them in the teaching and learning process. This latter affirmation applies in one HEI in Lesotho, where the gunpoint use of Ed-Tech seemingly destabilised digital immigrants, causing technostress and anxiety as they were used to the traditional face-to-face mode of teaching and learning (Khoza, 2020; Makumane, 2021a). This chapter, thus, aims at exploring how the uncertainty informed a change in the state of knowledge, either through implementation and/or enactment principles.

Conceptualising Curriculum and Digitalised Curriculum (DC)

The word curriculum is derived from the Latin word, *currere*, which means to run (Le Grange, 2017; Le Grange & Reddy, 2017; Pinar, 2012). The notion of *currere* in curriculum studies was introduced by Pinar in the 1970s (Le Grange, 2017). This notion, according to Pinar (2012), favours student experience as one of the important aspects in education. In other words, the concept of *currere* aims at understanding the impact that education has on students' understandings of their lives and that of society (Le Grange, 2017; Pinar, 2012). Pinar proclaims that *currere "reconceptualises curriculum from course objectives to complicated conversation"* (2012, p. 47). This suggests that Pinar sees curriculum as a complex conversation between lecturers and students, with the lecturer having a task to afford students meaningful learning experiences, thus summoning social perceptions. Le Grange (2017) is in accordance with Pinar's affirmation (Makumane, 2023) and adds that for lecturers, curriculum could denote a group of courses taught to students, as well as the teaching and learning activities proposed. The activities proposed should correspondingly be aligned to the prescribed objectives.

To explicate this further, curriculum as a concept is defined as *"what is planned and prescribed to be taught to students or what is intended"* (factual perceptions) (Hoadley & Jansen, 2013, p. 29). Kelly (2009) and Sowell and Stollenwerk (2000) support this claim and purport that a curriculum outlines *what* should be taught and instructed to students and the objectives that are to be attained. Following, Hewitt (2006) avers that curriculum is the knowledge that is to be acquired by students through their interaction with content. This denotes that a document is prescribed by HEI, to be taught and learned in the classroom. Lecturers then use different perceptions to ensure that what is prescribed is effectively attained. Additionally, some studies consider curriculum as a series of planned learning or of educational experiences envisaged for students (Berkvens *et al.*, 2014; Braslavsky, 2002; Glatthorn, 2005; Pinar, 2004; Van den Akker *et al.*, 2009). Berkvens *et al.*

(2014) and Van den Akker *et al.* (2009), from one perspective, view curriculum as a plan for teaching or learning that outlines desired goals.

Hoadley and Jansen (2013) and Pinar (2012) identify this as ‘curriculum-as-plan’. This term was earlier coined by Aoki (1999) to refer to a prescribed curriculum that is expected to be rigidly followed by lecturers. In other words, the intended curriculum presents goals that are to be attained as well as content, teaching or learning methods, and materials to be used, as prescribed by the curriculum developers. However, Fomunyam and Khoza (2021) assert that curriculum as a plan is liable to be interpreted differently by lecturers, and thus its implementation or enactment will vary. This latter assertion suggests that the use of a curriculum is influenced, to a greater extent, by lecturers’ perceptions (factual, social, and habitual). In principle, curriculum-as-plan seemingly creates tension for lecturers as they are tasked with ensuring that they adhere to the requirements of the prescribed curriculum (implementation-factual), whilst also having to promote knowledge-building that addresses the needs and experiences of their students (enactment-social) (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021; Le Grange, 2017). Moreover, Le Grange (2017) notes that lecturers are seemingly overwhelmed by the tension presented by this conundrum. This denotes that habitual perceptions are essential in ensuring that a balance is established between addressing the needs of the students and those of the discipline through the application of schooled knowledge (Makumane, 2018; 2021a). Anderson-Levitt (2008) posits that there is no guarantee that what has been prescribed in the intended curriculum is how it is actually implemented or enacted in the actual classroom. Therefore, this gives rise to the enacted curriculum and the attained curriculum, which both outline a different angle from the intended curriculum.

From this viewpoint, Pinar (2004) sees curriculum as a plan **of** teaching or learning that encompasses students’ real life experiences. Also known as curriculum-in-practice, this is where lecturers use the curriculum as per their interpretation or perceptions. Curriculum-in-practice therefore permits

lecturers to apply habitual perceptions as well as social perceptions. This is because lecturers deduce their own interpretation of the curriculum through their personal understanding(s), which is influenced by their habitual background and their unique interpretation of the current context. In addition, the lecturer is influenced by society, in this instance the students, in deciding how to teach, depending on the actual environment and needs of the students. Curriculum in this chapter can thus be defined as a plan **of** and **for** learning that outlines what should be learned (prescribed), how it should be taught (intended) and the outcome(s) that should be achieved (assessed). In this regard, a curriculum should afford both the lecturer and the student a stimulating experience by promoting free and independent thought along with social and individual empowerment.

The above definition is extended to digitalised curriculum, which, according to Khoza and Mpungose (2020), may have principles of both the performance-based curriculum (implementation) or those of the competence-based curriculum (enactment). This suggests that lecturers using DC are liable to be inclined more to either type of curriculum, while still adopting the principles of the other. Digitalised curriculum in this chapter is thus defined as a plan for or of teaching, learning, and research that relies on Ed-Tech resources (Khoza & Mpungose, 2020). This latter statement denotes that DC addresses the notion of 'what' (plan for) and 'how' (plan of) in education. Furthermore, the adoption of Ed-Tech resources indicates that DC introduces the use of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies and resources that were demanded by the uncertainty that was experienced by the emergence of COVID-19 in order to ensure continuation of the teaching and learning process. According to Agumba *et al.* (2019), the 4IR demands a change in traditional conception of teaching and learning, requiring a comprehension of knowledge-building strategies through the use of Ed-Tech. As with other HEIs around the globe, one HEI in Lesotho was forced to adopt the use of DC, which evidenced the concepts of implementation or enactment as influenced

by the hasty adoption of Ed-Tech resources by both digital natives and digital immigrants.

Contextualising DC in One HEI in Lesotho

The forceful imposition of educational technologies, especially in the era of the uncertainty or novelty, has glaringly evidenced the existence of two types of technology users: digital natives and digital immigrants or refugees. Khoza and Biyela (2020), in support of Prensky (2001), posit that digital natives are technology users who were born during the digital era. In other words, digital natives are conversant with Ed-Tech resources and have interest, to some extent, in digitalised information that is referred to as future content, which is displayed on screen (Prensky, 2001). Conversely, digital immigrants are seen as refugees who learn to use Ed-Tech resources, usually through forced measures, by their HEIs in view of disseminating prescribed 'what' content (Khoza, 2021a; Prensky, 2001). Seemingly, the emergence of COVID-19 caused technostress that was particularly perceptible with digital immigrants, who were forced to neglect their legacy content (print media) to move to digital platforms that display information on screen (Khoza, 2020; Makumane, 2021b; Mpungose, 2019).

The forceful move to educational technologies during the uncertainty unearthed the need to fully embrace the 4IR. The 4IR, which encompasses the use of Ed-Tech resource to alter individual engagement in activities, including pedagogical activities, represents an upgrade from the Third Industrial Revolution, which introduced the use of the Internet and personal computing (Schwab, 2017; Sokhulu, 2020). Butler-Adam (2018) puts forth that the 4IR in education is essential as it helps blur the lines between future content and legacy content and facilitates understanding of how the world operates. Butler-Adam (2018, p.1) further notes that embracing the 4IR requires individuals to have *"skills required to implement, manage, and work with the new technology, and with one another"*.

Consequently, lecturers at one HEI in Lesotho, the National University of Lesotho (NUL), had to embrace the 4IR in order to effectively use the DC that was initiated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, this HEI already had a learning management system (LMS) in existence prior to the pandemic, but it was seldom used by both lecturers and students as they preferred the face-to-face mode of teaching and learning (Makumane, 2021a; 2023; Mashinini, 2020). Makumane *et al.* (2022) attest that most HEIs have been experiencing resistance to LMSs by lecturers, and NUL was no exception. Makumane (2021a) earlier posited that the LMS was hardly used after its launch in 2010, as it was viewed as impractical and ineffective, especially in terms of interactivity and socialisation with content. In addition, the LMS was introduced without a clear exposition of the underpinning theory and implementation framework, therefore attempts to use it, especially by digital immigrants, created confusion, frustration, and resistance (Makumane, 2021a). In other words, before the pandemic, digital immigrants were content in using the traditional face-to-face mode of teaching and learning as it represented their objective reality. Khoza (2022) asserts that objective reality is a result of perpetual actions by an individual or a society that are eventually regarded as natural and end up being a user-interface in a given context. Therefore, the objective reality of digital immigrants, in this instance, was that the face-to-face mode of teaching and learning was effective and that the LMS was unnecessary (Mashinini, 2020). Thus, even though there was an LMS at their disposal, these immigrants considered it a 'disruptive tool' that seemingly added no value to their user-interface.

However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic initiated a national lockdown that introduced a 'gunpoint' use of the LMS by both the digital immigrants (refugees who learn to use educational technologies) and natives (technology users born during the digital era) as this HEI had to adopt an online teaching and learning mode to continue the educational process (Mashinini, 2020). This hasty adoption of Ed-Tech resources proved favourable to digital natives, who, according

to Mpungose (2020), are mostly students who have amassed experience and knowledge of technologies through their constant informal use of social media sites (SMSs). This latter assertion implies that the gunpoint use of Ed-Tech resources favoured the objective reality of digital natives, seemingly at the expense of digital immigrants, whose user-interface was the traditional face-to-face mode. This objective reality contestation between digital immigrants and digital natives warranted an exploration of the type of digitalised curriculum adopted as a result of the forceful migration to Ed-Tech resources during the uncertainty. The digitalised curriculum is defined as a plan for or of teaching and learning using educational technologies (Khoza & Mpungose, 2020). This suggests that DC may be dominated by performance-based (plan for- 'what') or competence-based (plan of- 'how') curricula (Khoza, 2019; Khoza & Mpungose, 2020). On the one hand, performance curriculum is dependent on facts and schooled knowledge (legacy content) (Bernstein, 1999; 3). This denotes that when utilising this curriculum, lecturers are informed by facts relating to their discipline in order to effectively attain set objectives and to answer the 'what' question in education.

The principles of performance curriculum include prescribed content, objectives, time for instructions, resources, and summative assessment. On the other hand, competence-based curriculum addresses the 'how' question in education, addressing students' socialisation needs, with lecturers seen as facilitators who give students an opportunity to interact with content. This type of curriculum is socially influenced and it is driven by learning activities, facilitation, learning community, distance learning, and outcomes (Khoza & Mpungose, 2020; Mpungose & Khoza, 2020). These two types of curricula influence lecturers' practice, suggesting either implementation (performance-based) or enactment (competence-based). In other words, a lecturer's practice could be considered either as implementation or enactment, depending on the type of curriculum at hand and

on the strategies exerted in using the curriculum. These two processes are elaborated in the proceeding section.

Implementation Versus Enactment Through Perceptions

Implementation and enactment are usually presented as synonymous terms that allude to the same stage of the curriculum (practised); therefore they are often used interchangeably. However, this may be misleading as there are nuances between these two processes owing to their reliance on the intentions within which a curriculum was conceived. Implementation, on the one hand, subscribes to the positivist conception as it hints at the idea of using the curriculum precisely as envisaged by its developers (Cho, 1998; Sowell & Stollenwerk 2000). This denotes that lecturers are expected to apply the principles of a performance curriculum, which include prescribed content, objectives, time for instruction, resources, and summative assessment (Mpungose & Khoza, 2020). The exigency in implementing a curriculum is to put it into practice without any modifications, thereby following prescribed steps accordingly. This, according to Cho (1998), is also known as the fidelity strategy. Penuel *et al.* (2014) posit that, in the fidelity strategy, lecturers faithfully adhere to stipulated curriculum materials and objective(s). "*Fidelity of implementation can be defined as the degree to which [lecturers] or stakeholders abide by a curriculum's original design when implementing it*" (Bümen *et al.*, 2014, p. 220). In other words, the implementation process depicts translation of an idea from its conceptual realms into practice, precisely as it was intended.

In accordance, Fullan (2018, p. 113) argues that implementation "*is a process consisting of materials, skills and behaviour, and beliefs and understanding.*" This indicates that in order for users to effectively implement a curriculum, they need to have the requisite skills and competences (social perceptions) as well as in-depth cognitive understanding (factual perceptions) of an intended curriculum in order to

efficiently implement the curriculum at hand. Fomunyam and Khoza (2021) posit that a curriculum that supports this latter assertion is a discipline-based curriculum, which encourages specialisation and depth of knowledge of content that induce relevant concepts, techniques, and practices requisite in the discipline in question. This alludes to a performance-based (technical) curriculum, which requires lecturers to engage students' cognitive domain hierarchically, while adhering to facts as presented by the discipline (Bernstein, 1999; Tyler, 2013). In other words, implementation requires linear, structured, or prescribed legacy content in order to help students acquire school or vertical knowledge (Hoadley, 2018; Hoadley & Jansen, 2013). Khoza (2021a) avers that teaching and learning in this regard address the 'what' question in education (what content, resources, assessment?).

In the use of DC, learning management systems (LMSs) are used to teach legacy or prescribed content and "*prescribed teaching structure, with their principles, are strictly followed by [lecturers], in order to instruct students according to what is mandated by their institutions*" (Khoza, 2021a, p. 4). Implementation, thus, seemingly inhibits the use of social and habitual skills (habitual perceptions) that render lecturers capable of addressing the needs of the students (social perceptions) and the use of their unique identities (pragmatic or habitual perceptions) in varying contexts. This rigidity may hinder an effective teaching or learning environment that is usually the end product of lecturers' deliberate adaptation of context to address societal or students' needs as influenced by their unique experiences within their contextual environment. Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) submit that curriculum implementation often fails for two reasons: the distorted understanding of how information and policy idea(s) fit into real life context; and the lack of understanding of the relationship between curricula and the social-institutional contexts. The emergent transition from face-to-face to online learning and the swift transition from traditional to DC seem to perpetuate the distorted understanding of implementation in the digital realm, especially since some LMSs, due to the

pandemic and its exigencies, were hastily adopted without clear implementation frameworks (Makumane, 2021a; 2023). Khoza (2021a) highlights the importance of lecturers understanding the use of educational technologies in order to help students master prescribed content to qualify in their respective disciplines.

Enactment, on the other hand, subscribes to the constructivist view, discarding the rigidity that is seen in implementation and allowing flexibility, interaction, and adaptation of the curriculum to the teaching and learning context(s) and to prior experiences. Hoadley and Jansen (2013) conceive that the enacted curriculum represents the stage of what happens to the intended curriculum in the contexts of institutions and, more specifically, during the process of teaching. This implies that the enacted curriculum depicts decisions made by the lecturer, as influenced by their pragmatic or habitual perceptions, which are reflected in what takes place in an actual classroom as per the interpretation, or sometimes the subversion, of the intended curriculum. This calls for a pedagogically responsive curriculum, which is designed to address students' diverse needs and to allow for meaningful learning to take place (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021). Enactment of curriculum favours competence-based curriculum, which addresses the 'how' questions of learning (Khoza & Mpungose, 2020). In this regard, a lecturer identifies resources to be used by students in order to facilitate effective learning that encompasses students' learning needs. The principles of competence-based curriculum include facilitation, learning activities, learning community, distance or online learning, and outcomes. This requires lecturers to use their social perceptions, which are informed by society and promote collaboration, interactivity, and group work in order to achieve learning outcomes (Khoza, 2021a).

Khoza (2021a) asserts that enactment is informed by non-linear or unstructured information from opinions of different societies to create future content, every day, or horizontal knowledge. Additionally, Khoza (2021a) attests that future content is created through the use of social media

sites (SMSs) such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, inter alia, which connect lecturers with students for interaction and socialisation. According to Khoza and Biyela (2020), SMS can be used as teaching and learning resources to communicate future content. However, such content is usually not aligned with prescribed or legacy content by HEIs, which in turn results in students being *"unable to align their knowledge and skills of generating unstructured or future content from various sources with HEI structured, prescribed or legacy content"* (Khoza & Biyela, 2020, p. 2). This assertion seems to implicitly imply that the use of LMSs, which favours structured, legacy content, and SMSs, which promote unstructured, future content, could be merged in order to address HEIs lecturers' and students' needs. In other words, DC should be seen as a merger of implementation, through the structured use of LMS, and enactment, through the unstructured use of SMS, in order to effectively attain outcomes.

In sum, the process of implementation and enactment, at face value, seem deceptively similar. However, these two processes are greatly determined by perceptions held by lecturers using DC, which may be dominated by performance-based or competence-based curricula, but which has principles of both curricula (Khoza & Mpungose, 2020; Makumane, 2023). Mustafa (2011) argues that a competence-based curriculum advocates for the use of problem-centred activities, which implicates students actively in their construction of knowledge. Such activities allow lecturers to adapt the curriculum to the prevailing context as per students' needs. This assertion implies that lecturers, while using the competence-based curriculum, engage in the process of enactment, as they are afforded the flexibility to apply their social perceptions based on their interpretation of the digital context through the use of SMSs.

A performance-based curriculum is vertical in nature as it follows a hierarchical organisation of knowledge from the lowest to the highest point (Hoadley & Jansen, 2014). This suggests that both the already-existing knowledge and the new knowledge must be vertically aligned in view of

displaying a logical, consistent order of introducing content (Khoza, 2016). In other words, lecturers using performance-based curriculum are informed by their factual perceptions. The flexibility of altering the curriculum to suit the context is thereby limited, lest the curriculum becomes misconstrued, misinterpreting the facts. Thus, this form of curriculum is implemented as the lecturer rigidly adheres to its use the way it was intended, in view of effectively attaining the set goals. Perceptions in this chapter are categorised into factual, social, and habitual perceptions. These perceptions, it would seem, are influenced by the two processes of practised curriculum: implementation or enactment. This chapter is premised on the assumption that a balanced DC promotes both legacy or structured and future or unstructured content, which equally contribute to self-actualised individuals through their exposure to what Biesta (2015) terms to be good education. Good education can be supported through the use of theories of learning that are able to balance the three propositions (factual, social and habitual), and these theories are connectivism and natural identity framework.

Theorising DC for Implementation or Enactment

Connectivism as a learning theory was introduced by Siemens (2004), seemingly as an extension to the three existing learning theories that were introduced prior to the digital era where technology had impacted learning. Siemens (2005) affirms that the three broad learning theories - behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism - are used to scrutinise instructional environments. These three theories are hinged on the assumption that learning occurs 'inside a person' (Siemens, 2005, p. 3). However, these theories do not consider learning that happens outside of people as influenced by technology. Connectivism, thus, is seen as a learning theory that embraces technology whilst looking into learning social environments in a networked world. According to Şahin and Safieh (2012), connectivism is a 21st century learning theory that supports the use of digital technologies and permits spontaneous and exponential knowledge exchange through

digital platforms. In other words, knowledge production through the connectivism lens is mostly social, with new information being continually acquired through interactions with what Siemens (2004) terms nodes, which are individuals or groups or networks or computers that help in the acquisition of knowledge. Mpungose (2020) posits that connectivism as a theory acts as a lens that helps conceptualise learning in the digital age, creating connections or relationships through the Internet and technological resources. This suggests that in connectivism, students depend on both prescribed legacy content (implementation) and future content (enactment) to effectively attain set outcomes. Therefore, lecturers are seen as both discipline experts and facilitators who help students consume and also construct knowledge through exploration within and outside their contexts (Anderson, 2016; Mpungose, 2020).

Downes (2010) argues that the use of DC should encourage active participation with lecturers engaging students and promoting socialisation to encourage professional and social knowledge-building. Connectivism thus suggests active participation from students, thereby discarding passive learning that inhibits networking and creating a knowledge community through SMS and online platform usage. Siemens (2005) avers that it is essential to establish a balance between prescribed or structured formal education (implementation) and informal learning (enactment) as both forms contribute significantly to knowledge-building, especially in the digital age. Therefore, connectivism requires knowledge management through "the sharing of cognitive tasks between people and technology" (Bell, 2011, p. 102). In other words, using nodes, connectivism ideally promotes factual perceptions through acquisition of schooled knowledge transmitted from lecturer to students (the 'what' question of education); social perceptions through socialisation with content and creation of networks to promote collaborative learning through digital platforms (the 'how' question of education); as well as habitual perceptions, whereby students are able to make informed learning choices

through skills acquired from legacy and future content to mould their unique identities (the 'who' question of education) (Khoza, 2021a; Makumane & Khoza, 2020). Downes (2010) characterises these propositions into three perspectives: knowledge (factual), learning (habitual) and community (social), and these three perspectives influence each other.

Table 5.1 presents principles of connectivism as outlined by Downes (2009).

Connectivism in this chapter is complemented by the natural identity framework in Figure 5.1.

Table 5.1: Connectivism Learning Framework by Downes (2009)

Connectivism principles
1. Learning and knowledge rest in the diversity of opinions.
2. Learning is a process of connecting specialised nodes or information sources.
3. Learning may reside in non-human appliances.
4. The capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known.
5. Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning.
6. The ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.
7. Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities.
8. Decision-making is itself a learning process. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. Although there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow because of alterations in the information climate, affecting the decision.

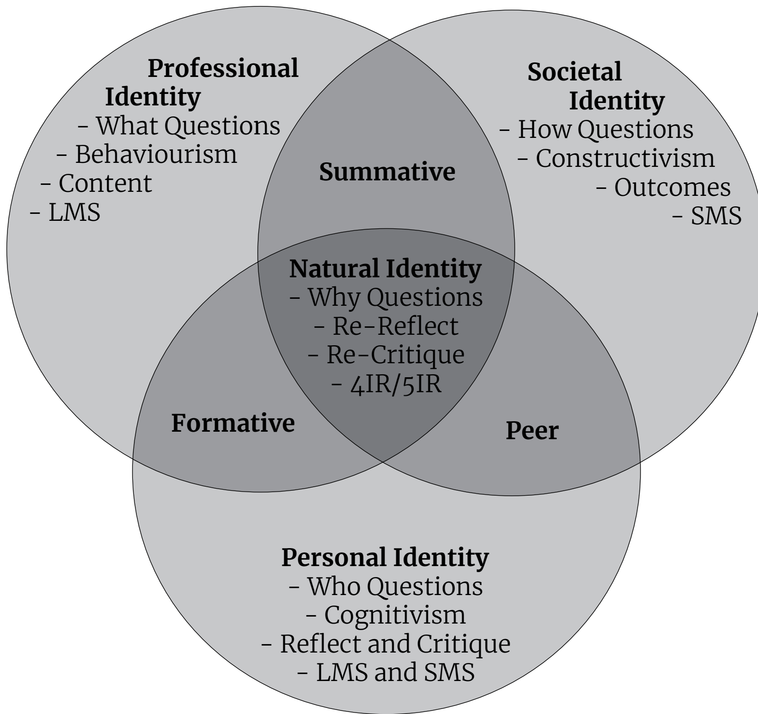

Figure 5.1: Natural Identity Framework Adapted from Khoza (2021a)

This framework, which was conceived by Khoza (2021a) in response to the COVID-19 crisis to theorise DC, addresses the 'what', 'how' and 'who' questions in education, and extends to address the philosophical 'why' question in education. In other words, natural identity combines the three perceptions (factual, social, and habitual), and helps lecturers to re-reflect and re-critique their actions, guided by their experiences, in the knowledge-building process (Khoza, 2021a; Makumane, Khoza & Piliso, 2022). The 'why' question in education addresses challenges regarding the 4IR and the COVID-19 revolution, which prematurely introduced the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR). Makumane et al. (2022) posit that the gunpoint use of Ed-Tech pertaining to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic demanded a new revolution as it required HEIs to adopt a hasty paradigm shift. Thus, through

natural identity, lecturers re-reflected on their conscious, subconscious, and unconscious cognitive processes in order to engage their future actions to help them effectively attain set outcomes in their use of 5IR. Khoza (2021a) posits that when lecturers are aware of their natural identity, *"they can adapt to any uncertainty or novelty because they accept the natural actions and work with them, even if the professional [factual], societal [social], and personal [habitual] actions fail"* (p. 17). This assertion suggests that natural identity, in addition to the three perceptions, helps lecturers re-orient the process of knowledge-building in the advent of a novelty.

The two theories, connectivism and natural identity, frame this chapter and provide solutions for effective use of DC. Seemingly, the use of both theories suggests that DC should ideally constitute a balance amongst factual, social, and habitual perceptions to promote self-actualised individuals through equilibrated knowledge-building. In addition, natural identity as a phenomenon should be embraced in HEIs in order to handle unforeseen novelties or uncertainties that might disrupt the 'norm' in the teaching and learning process. In other words, in using DC, the principles of performance-based DC and competence-based DC need to be equilibrated in the use of 4IR or 5IR in order to help lecturers re-reflect and re-critique their actions for effective attainment of educational goals. The proceeding section looks into the perceptions of DC as indicated in conducted studies during the pandemic to determine the principles evident in the use of DC.

Implications of Actual Perceptions in Using DC in Lesotho During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Several studies were conducted amidst the COVID-19 pandemic on the hasty adoption of DC by the HEI in question, and the implications thereof (Makumane, 2021; Mashinini, 2020). These two studies were conveniently sampled and are scrutinised in this chapter to establish whether the principles of performance-based or competence-based curricula are present in the use of DC during uncertainty.

Mashinini (2020) conducted a study in view of exploring successes and challenges of using online modes of teaching and learning in one HEI in Lesotho. Secondary data from the Internet and primary data from 50 purposively sampled participants was used, with questionnaires used to collect data. The findings indicate that lecturers and students were resistant towards the adoption of educational technologies and seldom used the HEI's LMS. The participants cited technological illiteracy and their unfamiliarity with the LMS. In addition, the findings articulate that the LMS had limitations as it did not allow for interactions between lecturers and students and amongst students themselves.

> *"The [LMS] does not offer the actual teaching facilities like Blackboard and so on for live online teaching and learning. Instead, it allows lecturers to mostly post their lecture notes and feedback, and students to access the materials and post their academic work back to lecturers for assessment" (Mashinini, 2020, p. 173).*

The above findings are two-fold: the latter part of the findings suggest inclination of DC to the principles of performance-based DC, which include prescribed content that lecturers post on the LMS, objectives that drive the content being taught, and resources (LMS), while neglecting those of competence-based DC as students were not able to socialise with content. This assertion suggests that DC in this instance favoured lecturers over students as the curriculum was being implemented, promoting factual perceptions at the expense of social and habitual perceptions. The former part of the findings implies that lecturers did not embrace natural identity, which would have helped them handle the uncertainty. This denotes that knowledge-building with 4IR or 5IR was compromised, as factual knowledge-building was favoured over social knowledge-building, which further malformed habitual knowledge-building.

Makumane (2021a) conducted an interpretive case study with the express intent to explore students' perceptions on the use of an LMS at one Lesotho HEI amidst the COVID-19

pandemic. Ten participants were conveniently sampled from 21 purposively sampled students and data was generated through email-conducted reflective activities and LMS focus group discussions. The findings demonstrate that the LMS did not permit flexible communication between students and lecturers, thereby inhibiting socialisation with prescribed content to effectively achieve stipulated outcomes. In addition, the findings suggest that the LMS promotes professionalisation (factual perceptions) as content is presented hierarchically but lacks the promotion of technological knowledge (social perceptions). This had a bearing on habitual perceptions, as students could not use their unique experiences with educational technologies to find suitable learning approaches.

> *"Participants' statements on the appreciation of [LMS] and their recommendation for adoption of SMSs that they are accustomed to implicitly imply their need to use their unique experiences with digital technologies proved to have a bearing on the content acquired and on the efficiency of technological knowledge in the attainment of goals" (Makumane, 2021, p. 12).*

This latter assertion suggests that participants deemed it essential to professionalise and socialise with content in order to effectively manage their learning using 4IR or 5IR. The implication of these findings is that DC was ineffectively used as it lacked some principles of both connectivism and natural identity framework. In other words, DC is seemingly inclined towards factual perceptions by promoting acquisition of schooled knowledge, thereby addressing the 'what' question in education. However, collaborative learning (the 'how' question), creation of unique identities (the 'who' question), and the natural identity (the 'why' question) are disregarded, and this seemingly hinders effective learning during uncertainty.

Concluding and Initiating the Beginning

The use of DC has become an inevitable necessity in HEIs owing to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The uncertainty forced HEIs to embrace educational technologies to forge ahead with the process of knowledge-building. This hasty paradigm shift compelled curriculum scholars to respond to the pandemic through curriculum theorising and theories. Natural identity framework by Khoza (2021a) is such a theory that emerged to address the 'why' question in education, whereby individuals become aware of their natural identity in order to adapt to any uncertainty or novelty. This chapter was hinged on this theory, scrutinising DC used in one HEI in Lesotho to determine whether it is implemented (performance-based DC) or enacted (competence-based DC). It further sought to explore the presence of the principles of a pragmatic DC, which addresses the tension between performance-based DC and competence-based DC to equilibrate the process of knowledge-building for effective attainment of outcomes through the use of 4IR or 5IR. This chapter discovered that DC used in one HEI in Lesotho tended towards principles of performance-based DC and abandoned those of competence-based and pragmatic DC.

The implication of the negligence of these principles is that the quality of the DC is greatly compromised. The seemingly unintentional oversight of these principles evidences lack of preparation by HEIs in using educational technologies due to a hasty migration from the traditional face-to-face to online mode of teaching and learning in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The inclination to a performance-based DC (implementation) in this HEI translates into capacitating students with cognitive knowledge that qualifies them in their respective disciplines. It is noteworthy that failure to enact the DC had an adverse impact on the incorporation of unique interactions and experiences with the digital environment, as implementation necessitates rigidity in following a systematic approach in the teaching and learning process. In sum, the DC is not equilibrated to produce what Biesta (2015) terms 'good education', which

is a breed of a balance amongst implementation (factual), enactment (social), and pragmatic (habitual) skills. Thus, through the theory of connectivism, it became apparent that it is essentially to ensure a balance between prescribed or structured formal education (implementation) and informal learning (enactment) as both forms contribute significantly to knowledge-building, especially in the digital age (Siemens, 2005; Makumane, 2023). In this way, pragmatic DC would ensue to help nodes make informed teaching and learning choices through skills acquired from legacy and future content to mould their unique identities. To take it further, the natural identity framework provides an undergird for lecturers, and students, to re-reflect and re-evaluate their actions as influenced by the three propositions of DC (factual, social, and habitual) and to handle any aftermath of their actions in the teaching and learning process. This natural identity, it would seem, may help them adapt to any uncertainty, and should therefore be seen as a safeguard against unanticipated novelties or natural forces that might threaten the education sector, as was the case with the emergence of COVID-19. Thus, HEIs, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, where 4IR or 5IR technologies are scarce and seen as a realm of speculation (Ayentimi & Burgess, 2018), should create a platform where academics naturally find their identities to help them address their factual, social, habitual, and natural needs in order to support effective use of DC to promote equilibrated knowledge-building.

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Chapter 6

Theorising the Politics of Curriculum Responsiveness in a Cameroonian University

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Abstract

Content is the epicentre of the educational experience without which no meaningful learning can take place. Curriculum is what gives direction to teaching and learning in higher education and helps in the shaping of academic life for all students, the direction their future would take as well as the society they live in. As such, it is critical to explore the curriculum of higher education courses to ascertain whether what is being taught and why it is being taught contribute to the overall goal or purpose of responsiveness. Under such circumstances, this research was designed as a qualitative case study of three literature modules. Data was generated using semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observation. Two major themes emerged from the data generated: resistance to change through praise singing; and advocates of change in leadership. The analysis of these themes reveal that lecturers selected content based on their ideological and political stance in society. While the one resisted change through what they teach, the other advocated

for change in the same manner. The paper concludes with three key thoughts: first, curricula charges like educational integrity and moral commitment are vital for the continuous blossoming of the higher education; secondly, those in the higher education sector must distinguish between their moral and intellectual responsibility to train students who possess the right kind of knowledge and skill to lead the nation in the way it should go; thirdly, curriculum developers, content selectors, lecturers, researchers, university management, higher education governing bodies and quality assurance entities must work hand in hand for the sustainability of the higher education system.

Keywords: *curriculum, Cameroonian university, responsiveness, lecturers, literature*

Introduction

Curriculum content is a pathway for teaching and learning situated in space and time. This is why researchers have situated content within the borders of curriculum theory in particular and the educational discourse in general. To this effect, the nature of curriculum content would determine the level of responsiveness it generates or produces in society. Curriculum studies often tackle issues related to education, but whose implications transcend educational inquiry to impact the design and implementation of educational programmes. The result is that this field of study is open to various scholars to theorise on the nature of education. Such theorising has led to curriculum having no universally accepted definition, since different scholars advance different definitions for the term 'daily'. While some theorisers are busy trying to delimit the term, others are doing all they can to give new meaning to the term. Pinar *et al.* (1995) argue that curriculum is "*what the older generation chooses to tell the younger generation … [it] is intensely historical, political, racial, gendered, phenomenological, autobiographical, aesthetic, theological and international*". Curriculum therefore becomes the *"site on which the generations struggle to define themselves and the world*

in which they live". (pp. 847–848). This means that curriculum is essentially about content and its impact in society. Marsh and Willis (2006) provide alternative definitions of curriculum by defining it as such 'permanent' subjects like grammar, reading, literature, logic, rhetoric, mathematics, those books of the Western world that best embody essential knowledge, and as all the experiences that learners have in the course of living or schooling. March and Willis equate curriculum to content by considering it as subjects and since what distinguishes one subject from another is the body of knowledge within that subject, content becomes the ultimate meaning of curriculum. Furthermore, Marsh (2009) provides an opposing definition of curriculum by considering it as the totality of all learning experiences provided to students or learners so they can attain general skills and knowledge at a variety of learning sites. This definition takes curriculum beyond the scope of content to all learning experiences that lead to the attainment of different skills at different levels. This definition encompasses the different kinds of curriculum, namely: the written, planned or intended, received or learnt, societal, concomitant, null, rhetorical, and hidden curriculum. Curriculum, therefore, can be seen as both content (Smith, 1996; Marsh & Willis, 2006) and earning experiences (Marsh, 2009).

Within this paper, curriculum is theorised and understood as the subject matter or content of subjects like mathematics, English, literature, history, or everything inherent in a particular subject (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). As such, curriculum would be used interchangeably with content. This is due to the gap identified in the body of knowledge discussing curriculum as content. Many studies and research papers have discussed curriculum as learning experiences (Fomunyam 2014; Fomunyam, 2016; Khoza, 2013; Cross & Taruvinga, 2012; van den Akker, 2009), but relatively few have articulated curriculum as content within the context of this paper. Concurring with this, SLO (2009) identifies different levels of curriculum: supra; macro; meso; micro; and nano. The curriculum at the supra level deals with

international trends of education such as a common European framework of reference for languages as well as standardised international tests like Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). On the other hand, curriculum at the macro level deals with a curriculum designed or tailored for an entire country. It deals with the formulation of generic curricular frameworks such as core objectives, examination guidelines and content. Developing the curriculum at this level is often a challenge since various stakeholders and researchers join hands to develop a curriculum which will be implemented nationwide. Inculcating the voices of various lobby groups like parents, religious groups, trade unions and social organisations amongst others, is the major challenge which often leads to crisis. This was the case with the development of Curriculum 2005 in South Africa (Cross & Taruvinga, 2012). Furthermore, the curriculum at the meso level deals with designing the curriculum at an institutional level where the specific needs of the school are taken into consideration and an educational programme is designed which suits the school (van den Akker, 2009). The curriculum at the micro level, is designed by a lecturer to ensure fitness for purpose. At this level, the focus is on what would be taught in the classroom and why it would be taught, thereby making the curriculum equivalent to content (van den Akker, 2009). Finally, the curriculum at the nano level deals with the individual's plan for learning. In other words, the manner in which students plan their learning including personal reading, performing tasks and attending classes amongst other things constitutes the nano curriculum.

Pinar (2012) defines content as what is or will be studied in schools and adds that key questions relating to content or curriculum (as established before) include the following: What should be taught in schools? and, Why should it be taught? Since the process of decision-making is often a long and complicated one, selecting content that meets the needs of the course and the expectations of society is often a challenging one. Lecturers, therefore, have to battle with keeping content relevant (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). Kelly (2009) points out

that content should be fashioned after the direction in which society goes; but who determines the right direction for society is often a question begging an answer. The government, in most cases, determines the future direction of a particular society which acts as a guideline for the development of the curriculum at all levels (Cross & Taruvinga, 2012). Within this framework this study seeks to explore what is studied in literature modules in a university in Cameroon and why such is studied.

Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) argue that there are several ways of selecting content depending on what the individual intends to achieve. These models can be grouped according to their stages: the six-stage model advocated by Tyler *et al.*, Wiles and Bondt; the seven-stage model advocated by Hunkins; the eleven-stage model advocated by Doll (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). The Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) (2009) adding to this, opines that there are four major approaches to selecting curriculum content and these are anchored on five important questions: Which objectives should drive education? What learning experiences are most suitable to obtain the desired objectives? How can these learning experiences be organised effectively? How would the objectives be measured to know if they have been achieved or not? and finally, What is the best approach for schools or curriculum developers to conduct this process? Marsh and Willis (2006) and Fomunyam (2014) argue that curriculum development (or content selection in this case) is a political process involving different kinds of power at play both in choosing what approach to use when selecting content, as well as the content itself. However, the nature of these politics is not well defined. As such, different researchers have different views of politics in content selection. Watony (2012) argues that the decision-making power of education in Cameroon has been taken away from lecturers and school administrators and this has caused conflicts in content of university modules because the lecturers want the content of their modules to speak about and represent the state of things, while university 'Dons' or the government want the students

to have a different worldview. Watony further argues that the division between the Anglophones and the Francophones makes this conflict and differences unavoidable in matters of education. Selecting content in a landscape where one is marginalised and relegated to the background becomes a difficult challenge when coming up against those perpetuating the marginalisation. An important question to ask therefore is, what content is accepted to be studied in literature modules and why? This paper seeks to answer this question. To do this effectively, it is vital to discuss how the data for this paper was generated.

Research Design and Methodology

The research design for this article is aimed at answering the following questions.

1. What content is taught in literature modules?
2. Why is this content taught?

This paper is a qualitative case study of literature modules taught in a Cameroonian university. Neumann (2006), defines case study as "an in-depth study of one particular case in which the case may be a person, a school, a group of people or things, an organization, a community, an event, a movement, or geographical unit" (p. 40). This means that for case studies to explore effectively a variety of data generation methods like photos, interviews, observations, maps, documents, newspapers, and records should be used. On the other hand, Cohen *et al.* (2011) argue that qualitative research provides intricate details and distinct understanding of meaning and observable as well as non-observable situations, phenomena, attitudes, intentions, and behaviours. The qualitative case study therefore opens a world of opportunities for the engagement of complicated issues which otherwise cannot be engaged by other research designs. Therefore, this study is justifiably a qualitative case study. The case being explored is a Cameroonian university and the unit of exploration is three literature modules taught in the university. The decision for three was derived from the three broad genres of literature

namely, prose, drama, poetry and the fact that the degree is offered over a three-year period. The qualitative data for this paper was generated using three methods: semi structured interviews, observation, and document analyses.

According to Cohen et al, (2011) semi-structured interview makes it easy to extract insight about what an individual (a lecturer in this case) knows or has experienced and what they think. The semi-structured interview provides the researcher with the opportunity of probing deeper, asking clarifying questions and discussing with participants their understanding of the phenomenon. In this paper, four questions were asked during the semi-structured interview, which are;

- How long have you been teaching literature?
- Which literature modules do you teach?
- What content do you teach in these modules?
- Why did you choose these modules?

Each interview was conducted in the English language, digitally recorded and transcribed afterwards. The non-participant observation method was utilised as participants were pre-informed in order to make them aware, and gain permission to be an observer. During the interview, emerging issues were further probed in order to ensure a detailed discussion.

The participants for the study were selected using purposive sampling. This method of sampling enables the researcher to hand pick participants based on prior knowledge or recognition and with the understanding that it doesn’t represent the entire population. Three lecturers teaching these modules were selected. Ethical standards were upheld by ensuring that participants knew their rights and they signed consent forms. The participants were code named using the NATO phonetic alphabet; Alpha, Omega and Bravo to maintain anonymity. Actual teaching sessions of the modules were observed to establish correlation between the documents (literary text) and the reasons advanced by the lecturers for selecting and teaching them. Twelve sessions were observed,

wherein each lecturer was observed in the lecture room four times. Creswell (2008) argues that observation offers the researcher the opportunity of generating first-hand information about the phenomenon. Document analysis was another method used to generate data. The documents were analysed with the aim of answering the first question. The literary books that make up the content of these modules were analysed. Creswell (2008) argues that using diverse sources of data enhances credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability in a study. The data generated was made sense of using Pateman's theory of ideology, since content is shaped by ideology.

Findings and discussion

The data generated from observation, documents and semi-structured interviews was coded and categorised. These categorised artifacts were further merged to form themes. Two major themes emerged in the data: resistance to change through literary praise singing; and advocates of change in leadership. These themes: resistance to change through praising; and advocates of change in leadership are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Resistance to Change through Literary Praise Singing

It is often said that change is the only constant thing in life, and the very nature of change makes it (change) the only thing which changes and any other thing constant. What we experience as change therefore, is simple: the effects of the change on all other things which are constant in life. Change is a natural process but every now and then human beings become stumbling blocks in the path of change. Since change in itself is nothing and only becomes useful when it comes in contact with something, many people find themselves resistant to change in certain areas of life, often building mechanisms that enable them to mitigate change. Bellettini *et al.* (2014) define resistance to change as actions taken by an individual when they is contented with where they are or with

what is happening around them, or when they perceive that change at that particular point in time would be a threat to them. They add that such a threat might not necessarily be real for resistance to occur. People resist change in different ways depending on the reason for their resistance; the drive to resist change in society expresses itself in the selection of different kinds of content.

Metcalf (2015) defines literary praise singing as the art of loading an individual or certain parts of society with praises for what they have done or what they appear to be doing. In essence, literary praise singing is all about celebrating the people in society for a job well done in order to maintain the status quo. Literature lecturers, who are highly skilled individuals both in the arts and intellectually, are therefore highly suited to be praise singers if and when they choose to. Their mental abilities give them the ability to choose content which lavishes praise on the government, as well as celebrates the few successes of the government in power. This way, they are also producing a brood of praise singers who could follow in their footsteps (supporting in regime and power, thereby resisting change) and ensure that the status quo is maintained. Literature being a very vast subject with no limitations for those writing literary works, as well as those choosing to teach them (as long as they are praise singing in this case), makes praise singing easier for the lecturers who want to indulge in it.

This has been the case with several lecturers in Cameroonian universities. Many of them celebrate the president, Mr Paul Biya, who has been the president for the past 35 years, by choosing to teach content which celebrates the successes of the government, no matter how few they are. Even when they choose books that, in their entirety, are neither complacent nor praise singing, they pick on the few instances in them where the government responds positively in a particular situation and capitalise on it. This was the case with Bravo, one of the lecturers teaching Shadrach Ambanasom's 'Son of the Native Soil' (Ambanasom, 2009). Bravo spent time in the classroom emphasising the fact that government forces were able to arrest Achamba's killers

(the protagonist in the novel) and links this to the numerous arrests of top political figures in Cameroon who have recently been arrested and imprisoned for embezzlement and other crimes. The focus on the arrest of Achamba's killers and the intervention of the Senior Divisional Officer was highlighted over the conflicts going on in Dudum, brought about by the failures of the government. Some of these failures include inconsistent political administration, lack of social amenities, political neglect, divide and rule, and sabotage, amongst others. When Bravo was asked about his choice of Ambanasom (2009) as well as what to focus on, he stated that:

> *Many Cameroonians claim that the regime in power is not doing anything good. But it is our duty as intellectuals to unravel to the younger generation the efforts of the government to maintain peace in the nation. Literature has two main objectives to entertain and to educate and it is our duty to use it to educate society about the efforts of the government. Recently his excellency the president has been doing a lot to ensure development. Several people have been arrested and imprisoned for embezzling state funds. Many others have also been brought to justice for corruption and many other charges. Bamenda now has a state university amongst other things. We must therefore take time to educate the people such that these young ones can realise what the government is doing for them and show their support.*

Olutola (2013) argue that the African literalist must reject, repudiate, and negate their roots in the native bourgeoisie, and its spokespersons, and find their creative links with the pan-African masses in alliance with all the socialistic forces of the world. The literalist must teach or write with the vibrations and tremors of the struggles of all the working people in Africa, America, Asia, and Europe behind them. Their engagement with literary materials must actively reflect the struggle of the African working class and its peasant class allies for total liberation, and not abstract notions of justice and peace. The participant quoted above departs from this perspective of literature on the African continent and rather than engage with the material to aid the process of social transformation, the lecturer engages with the immaterial with the intention

of singing the praises of those in power. Cameroonian leaders see the writer as inimical to its agenda, which in most cases is the subjugation and extortion of the masses. To this effect, the government and its cohorts seek to crush both the literary writer and their works in whatever way possible. Shifting the focus of a literary text, therefore, from its focus to praise singing becomes one of the ways of thwarting the efforts of the writer to inspire change in their society. This emphasised the gap between the intended curriculum and the enacted curriculum since the lecturer on the course outline highlighted the text as part of the content to be studied but neglected some aspects of it during the actual lesson. The gap between the intended and enacted curriculum in most parts of the world has accounted for the inability of education to transform society or the transformation of the education system itself (Fomunyam, 2014).

Furthermore, resisting change through praise singing in the teaching of literature modules is expressed through a critique of the writer rather than their writing. Bravo focused on the person of the writers and their standard of living, forgetting their writing. This focus on the person, rather than what they are writing about, is an attempt to not only discredit the author but to demonstrate to students that the government is not as bad as the picture painted by the writer. Teaching Ngoran Tardzenyuy's 'Victims of Circumstances' (2002) Bravo focused on the fact that writers constantly criticise the government and the way the nation is being governed, and forget to listen to what other writers are trying to tell them. This idea was easily substantiated with a passage from Ngoran (2002) to support the fact that Cameroonian writers fail to practice what they preach and turn to blame the government for their failures. Bravo, reading to the students pointed out that:

> *Let's not, like Old Testament Pharisees preach virtue and practice vice; let's not always employ profanities at the expense of actions that ought to sanction the validity of our utterances. Theory without practice is nonsense but practice without theory is sense. Therefore, we better be pragmatics,*

> *field workers and not bookish theorists. Do you know that our development stalemate is the capital consequence of the empty verbosity of the majority of our leaders? (Ngoran, 2002, p. 32)*

Politics and all its misdemeanours seem to be encroaching into all walks of life and those in these fields seem to find that there is nothing they can do about it. Fomunyam's (2014) assertion that the curriculum is a political document means that lecturers, such as Bravo, are doing all they can to remain politically loyal to those in power. Butake (2008, p. 5) points out that a writer or a literature lecturer very often cannot survive on the income coming from their books or profession. In other to survive, the individual must strategise, either by "*transforming himself into a praise singer for the ruling class or by joining them in order to gain favours and pull himself above the poverty line or go into exile where he is likely to find more sympathy in the North either in some university or as a political refugee".* To this effect, necessity forces the literalist to become a praise singer and to ensure that the favours they have been receiving keep flowing; they must ensure that the status quo remains the same and what better way is there to ensure this than education? By bypassing the failures of the government and either focusing on the person of the writer or how the people are supposed to behave in society, the participant highlights not only the role education or literature in this case can play in transforming or not transforming society but also the political nature of education.

Furthermore, praise singing goes beyond what the participants say, to their choice of content. Ngoran (2002, p. 23) makes an excellent case for this when the writer articulates that *"the best knowledge is not necessarily that acquired through laborious years of bench sitting and certificate-pilling. King Solomon and Shakespeare as they were hadn't as many certificates as the countless number of dunces, we find today carrying baskets of unjustified doctorates and permanently inculcating nonsensical stuff into the baby brains of our future leaders".* The literalist who supposedly is a highly skilled and educated individual is passed here for an educated 'fool' who cannot claim to be

a principal source of knowledge as far as governance and the welfare of the people is concerned. The literalist is supposedly inculcating nonsensical information into future leaders (Besong, 2004). The closer the lecturer is to the government or the regime in power, the more likely they are to resist change. Bravo is a peculiar example who has been in the corridors of power for over a decade (be it power within the university or power at the level of the region or the ruling party) and the favours he has enjoyed, according to Ambe (2007), guarantees he remains a praise singer, who would use all the tools at his disposal including literature to ensure that the status quo does not change.

Quality control experts, curriculum specialists, educational experts and other relevant stakeholders must step in to ensure the autonomy of education from politics, as well as the demarcation between professionalism and autonomy in teaching and learning. Regardless of the fact that the curriculum is a political document describing what the ruling party wants to see in society (Fomunyam 2014; Marsh & Willis, 2006), a democratic nation, or a supposedly democratic nation like Cameroon must be able to create a safe and neutral space wherein academics can interact intellectually without political infiltrations and lobbying encroaching into the set space. Unless this is done, education cannot achieve its goals in society, because effective educational engagement, which takes into consideration the needs of society and the future direction of the nation, needs to be introduced.

Advocates of Change in Leadership

As already pointed out, change is constant, therefore individuals can advocate for change in different fields. Sachs (2009, p. 313) pointed out that most educational problems *"are solvable, but as we try to solve them, we will hear a million noes. No, we need not change; no, we cannot change; yet after that final no will come a yes".* Change must therefore be championed by the individuals who want to see it in society regardless of what public opinion is at the time. Watony (2012) avers that education is supposed to bring transformation in

society. As such, lecturers who are facilitators of knowledge in the university are supposed to pioneer the cause of change through their students, and since change is a process, teaching and learning are the best ways to champion it. Edokat (2011) articulates that university education in Cameroon gears towards transformation, not only for the nation, but for transformation to become universities with international reputation for higher standards of achievements and innovations in all areas of professionalism, such as arts, sciences, and technology. If innovation, skills, knowledge, and life-changing experiences are the expectations of the higher education sector, then such education must be firmly rooted not only in the practical realities of society, but also in the lives of the people. This means that contextual factors must be taken into consideration to open up the educational discussion to a brand-new horizon which does not only engage critical reality in society, but also theorises a way forward for it.

Doh (2003) points out that Cameroonian literature in English shows ideological commitment to prevailing socio-political realities of the Anglophone people in particular, and the Cameroonian people in general. This literature doesn't stop at criticism, but goes further to demand change in leadership owing to the fact that the current president has been in power for the past 35 years. This literature is therefore focused on the liberation of the masses from tyranny and oppression. Doh (2003) further argues that Cameroonian Anglophone literary writers seem to be focused on two main subjects: change or secession (though addressed from different perspectives and in different ways). In plays like *Beast of no Nation* by Bate Besong, *"Anglophones are presented as night-soil men and women in charge of the city's fetid trash, the evacuation of which is their livelihood. This play is an anthology of Cameroonian unpatriotic and diabolic selfish mechanisms of those in control and this is because one man is the law and the rest a helpless lot of fawning citizens"* (Doh, 2003, p. 40). Cameroonian literary writers are therefore committed to seeing a change in leadership. These writers protest the derogatory way Anglophone Cameroonians are treated by the Francophones,

and write prophetically of the day Cameroonians will be free from tyranny and oppression.

Ambe (2007) points out that Anglophone Cameroonians have finally come to the full realisation of their capacity and ability to cause change and the intellectuals are championing this course in the classroom. It is from this backdrop that that Omega and Alpha champion the fight for change in leadership. To Omega, *"change is a must, and it is the intellectual's responsibility to champion it since he or she is conscious of the happenings in his society. If we cannot get the government in power to change its ways, we can as well get them out of power".* To enhance this course in his classroom, he selects *And Palm Wine Will Flow* (Butake, 1999) a play in which change, and more particularly, change in leadership, is strongly articulated. This play is set in the fictitious nation of Ewawa wherein according to Shey Ngong, *"[it] has become a palm wine republic ruled by an alcoholic Fon, because 'the Fon has lost vision' and the elders of the land now 'listen only to the inner voice of greed'"* (p. 89). In the wake of the deadlock in society, the Earth-goddess possesses Kwengong and uses her power to wreak havoc in the Fon's palace. The Kibaranko (Tapper) emerges and storms the Fon's palace as a way of revolting and calling for change. The final part of the play that brings an end to the fight for change, thereby ending the reign of the tyrant and introducing some form of democracy, is the women's society. After meeting and performing certain rituals, the women assign Kwengong the task of delivering to the palace a pot filled with their urine and the Fon who finds this repulsive, then faces the consequences of his actions as Kwengong breaks the pot over his head. The people take charge of their society and decide that the era of Fons (tyranny) is over. As Kwengong firmly declares towards the end of the play:

> *The women have spoken. And they don't not want Fons... He cannot be the Fon. The women have decided. No more Fons in the land! ...the people will rule through the council of elders led by Shey here. The Day that he takes the wrong decision, that same day the people shall meet in the marketplace and put another at the head of the council of elders (pp. 112-113).*

The play ends up with Tapper announcing to the people that the battle for change is over and there has been a change in leadership in Ewawa. This play is a metaphorical representation of the Cameroonian society which in itself is molested by tyranny, greed, corruption, tribalism and propagandist discourses that is *"employed by ruling classes to validate their monopoly over state power and their cynical manipulation of traditional, cultural and symbolic codes to authenticate their social status"* (Eyoh, 1998, p. 118). Omega uses this text as a categorical example which explains how tyrants should be dealt with. In his hands, it becomes a cry for change, a worthy example which his students are supposed to follow if they want equality or any form of democracy in society. It is therefore not surprising that for the past eight months (since November 2016) the higher education sector, basic education, courts and other sectors in Anglophone Cameroon (North-West and South-West Regions) have barely been operational, with the whole economy in this region experiencing total shutdown on several days of the week in what has come to be known as 'Operation Ghost Town'. The change inspired in the classroom is gradually manifesting itself in society.

Habib (2015) points out that in the drive towards societal transformation there must be serious deliberation and critical engagement around the tactics, procedures and strategies that must be used to achieve the end result. Omega therefore sees the strategies employed by Butake (1999) as worthy of emulation as it brings together all facets of society, be it the traditional, represented by Kibaranko, the spiritual represented by the Earth-goddess, the women emphatically directed by Kwengong, the men organised by Shey Ngong and the radical (displayed by the Kwengong breaking a pot of female urine over the Fon's head). The Fon, who is symbolic of the president or ruling government, is ousted and democracy is brought into place where the people decide who will rule and how they want to rule. The people's rejection of tyranny is Omega's call upon the students to reject the carnivorous nature of Cameroonian society and demand change in the leadership of the country.

Alpha, on the other hand, chose *People Be Not Fooled* (Takwi, 2004) as part of the content to teach as she advances the course of change in her classroom. Takwi (2004) is a collection of 50 poems about the happenings in Anglophone Cameroon in particular, and the African continent in general. The poems cut across a variety of subjects like bribery, corruption, democracy, education and change amongst others. Takwi, in the introduction to these poems, argues that the desire to make a difference in society should be the goal of the scholar. As such, African scholars should separate themselves from the politicians and their business and through their scholarly works seek to create change and make right that which is wrong. Takwi (2004) becomes the perfect choice if change in leadership is what one aspires for. In one of the poems titled "If I were to meet the President" Takwi points out the recklessness of Cameroonian leaders and how they incessantly squander the resources of their nation. They ride in 'sparkling polished limousines' while 'depravity cuts through the people'. The place of equality in society has disappeared and the masses (Anglophone Cameroonians) have been relegated to the background. Takwi concludes this poem by pointing out that he strives to meet the president to 'hit his glittering glass table' which has been bought with the taxpayers' sweat and reveal to him how miserable the masses are and how they embrace the messes of the leaders.

Takwi continues his lampooning of such leadership and calls for change in "A Play With Life". The masses have been reduced to beggars who are daily beguiled by their leaders with food and money (that has previously been stolen from them by their leaders) to support their stay in power. The people live in dilapidated houses where "*the moon's finger pierces through their hollow roof…and stringy fathers blink at hearing their daughter's flat tummy rumble in one dark corner*". The masses lack basic necessities and live in deplorable conditions while the leaders ensure that the masses continuously live in a state of disrepair (Ambanasom, 2009). Most Cameroonians live in terrible conditions such that they daily 'wave their heads and mutter: oh! What a price for our services to this land'. In the

wake of such hardship and misery, Alpha pointed out to her students that the only way forward is to demand a change in leadership using any means possible, especially since Cameroon has proven to be a land where people never have enough power. This explains why, since independence in 1960, or 1961 as the case might be, Cameroon has been ruled by two presidents, with one ruling for 22 years and the other for 35 years and counting. In this case, waiting for change becomes a futile process. Cameroonians must become Marxist and strive to dominate the superstructure and transform their society; otherwise, they will be waiting for their proverbial Godot.

Alpha sums up this cry for change by engaging with "My People Be Not Fooled" (Takwi, 2004). In this poem, Takwi discusses the tactics of the Cameroonian leaders who use deception to canvass votes from the masses. They move around in 'motorcars-of-motorcars' while the masses crisscross the land with their 'leggedise bends' (tattered legs). These leaders flash *"glittering bank notes of low mettle and sprinkle cheap insect-infected grains of rice and maize, flat grade kitchen oil and soap cakes to the gleeful poor enticing their votes for eccentric goals only to dump shortly after"*. Takwi continues that the *"sudden shrill voices of vote hunters quiver aloud on splendid rostrums and sweet bitter songs of pseudo promises vibrate and reverberate quaking a ropy jobless vomiting varsity graduate to last breath while tearful wrinkled parents pull ragged wrapper over his head"*. Alpha therefore paints a picture of this ropy jobless graduate that awaits the students if they don't wake up and demand a change in leadership. Alpha responding to why she chose such content to teach in her module stated that:

> *When we were in the university about twenty-five years ago, we were told we are the leaders of tomorrow. 25 years down the line, those who were in power then are still in power now. The youths of today are also being deceived the same way we were and since we are no longer vibrant enough to champion the course of change, we must guide them to do so otherwise 25 years from now the same people would still be in power telling youths they are leaders of tomorrow. The future is now, and they most make the most of it.*

Vincent (2010) maintains that ideology aims at enforcing or legitimising certain activities and arrangements for some individuals, which would ultimately intergrade and enable the others to adhere to it. To this end, ideology is action-oriented and gears towards instigating a particular action or validating it for society to follow. Change is what the ruling class doesn't want to see and to Alpha, adopting a radical personal ideology, which cannot be thwarted by the beliefs of others, is the only way forward. With the convoluted nature of Cameroonian society, made worse by the othering of Anglophone Cameroonians by their Francophone counterparts, change stands out as the only way forward for society. Lecturers assigned with the duty of grooming society have the potential to advocate for change and take steps to ensure that in the near future, transformation takes place. Literature becomes an important tool in the struggle for social transformation at all levels and in all societies, which, when utilised effectively, can bring about the desired change. Omega and Alpha, therefore, are strong advocates of change who use literature as a vehicle through which the call for change can be communicated and effectively carried out.

Conclusion

Curriculum content is an ideological battle ground for the politics of responsiveness in Cameroonian higher education institutions. Lecturers strive to reproduce their ideological standpoints in their students, thereby causing the curriculum to respond in a particular way. The hegemonic university structure and government stakeholders within the university (for all positions of power within the university including the Vice Chancellor are by presidential appointment) work hand-in-hand to ensure the continuation of the hegemony. This battle to establish cultural, political, and pedagogical responsiveness from a contextual perspective (though this perspective is different for all stakeholders) brings out the politics in the curriculum and establishes its true nature as political. Curriculum decisions of what to teach and why are endearingly political decisions with the power to shape the

future of the nation and lecturers utilise this tool to shape the nation in the direction they deem fit. It is therefore no surprise that since November 2016 the Cameroonian education system, (both basic and higher education in the English-speaking regions) have not been fully operational after experiencing total lockdown for more than an academic year by both students and lecturers demanding for a federated Cameroon or the establishment of the southern parts of Cameroon popularly referred to as Ambazonia.

The politics of responsiveness (whatever lecturers want the curriculum to be responding to) in Cameroonian universities is a brutal one with ideology being manifested and reproduced in students either to create change agents or complacent individuals who would celebrate the trials and testimonies of the government in power. From this perspective, this paper therefore makes three key recommendations. One, curricula changes like educational integrity and moral commitment are vital for the continuous blossoming of the higher education. Hegemonic practices will by and large create chaos, not only in inhibiting the university from fulfilling its mission, but also in ensuring value for money. Secondly, those in the higher education sector must distinguish between their moral and intellectual responsibility to train students who possess the right kind of knowledge and skill to lead the nation in the way it should go. Higher education is the core of the nation, for therein lies the future of the academia, medicine, the economy, the judiciary and the administration. Denying students vital skills and know-how for personal benefit is an act of terror. Finally, curriculum developers, content selectors, lecturers, researchers, university management, higher education governing bodies and quality assurance entities must work hand in hand for the sustainability of the higher education system. Greed, personal desires and political affiliations should become secondary to the needs of students and society, for greed, personal desires and political affiliations have become sources of epistemic and epistemological violence in society. The integrity of the

academia must be maintained through rigorous educational procedures and practices which offer hope in times of crisis.

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Theorising Decolonisation in Contested Spaces

Chapter 7

Pre-Service Science Teachers' Perceptions Towards Developing Isizulu Vocabulary for Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

This study investigates pre-service teachers' perceptions towards developing an isiZulu vocabulary for teaching and learning chemistry in three rural FET schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It contributes to the ongoing debates around curriculum decolonisation and code-switching in teaching and learning. The study adopts a qualitative interpretivist paradigm, utilizing individual interviews with six (6) isiZulu pre-service chemistry teachers who were purposively selected. The study found that pre-service teachers generally had a positive attitude towards curriculum decolonisation and code-switching for teaching and learning chemistry. This study also found that some pre-service teachers were not keen to develop isiZulu vocabulary, given the challenges and complexities of code-switching in real-life chemistry teaching and learning contexts.

Further, the findings indicate developing isiZulu vocabulary can enhance curriculum decolonisation and code-switching for effective teaching and learning of chemistry in this context. The study recommends the need for pre-service teachers to be conscientised about the value of developing isiZulu vocabulary for effective teaching and learning of chemistry lessons. Future

research must explore how to effectively empower pre-service teachers to manage code-switching in teaching chemistry in rural contexts.

Keywords: *decoloniality, Chemistry teaching, isiZulu, English, rural schools.*

Understanding curriculum decolonization in the African context

In the context of decolonisation struggles against colonial rule, curriculum decolonisation developed on the African continent in the 1950s and 1960s. Decolonisation is based on the renunciation of contemporary colonial education, which deprives the colonised of their humanity and potential while attempting to transform them into colonial subjects. According to Santos (2014), the suppression of the non-European and indigenous groups' knowledge resulted in a form of epistemicide from the canon of knowledge. Indigenous knowledge received little consideration from the (colonial) school of thought. The (colonial) school supported the Western canon, which was built on the idea that modern Western knowledge should be distinguished from its non-Western knowers and suggested that modern knowledge would aid in the instantiation of modern subjects.

Teaching modern subjects was the primary focus of colonial education, which sparked radical discussions amongst learners who demanded the decolonisation of education. They demanded that the Western canon of knowledge be revised and all formerly marginalised groups' sophisticated modes of knowing to be accepted. Intercultural education must consider all types of knowledge in order to encourage epistemic openness to the knowledge of all humans. Schools, colleges and universities are called to propagate respect for people and their cultural and knowledge systems. Different knowledge and science systems should be incorporated into university curricula to create dialogical platforms about the present and future. According to Fataar (2018), such incorporation must be discussed urgently by policymakers, designers of textbooks,

learning materials, and curriculum, but most importantly, by university lecturers and schoolteachers. In this light, this chapter reports on pre-service teachers' perceptions towards developing an isiZulu vocabulary for teaching and learning chemistry in three rural FET schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

The need for curriculum change in South African Higher Education

The chapter contributes to the ongoing debates on curriculum decolonisation and code-switching in teaching and learning. The conceptual strength of curriculum, which suggests novelty and creates a variety of opportunities for pedagogical lives to emerge, may be viewed as the cornerstone of decolonisation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). For more perspectives on curriculum (see Le Grange, 2016; Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021a; Maistry, 2021). The higher education system in South Africa is highly intricate. Classrooms are filled with learners who suffer great inequality in terms of basic education, race and class. These learners also lack financial resources and other materials. Consequently, a curriculum that caters to the needs of the learners is required, as opposed to the currently pre-planned curriculum.

A growing body of literature in the field suggest that a pre-planned curriculum is rigid (Fisher-Ari et. al., 2015). However, because of how rapidly the economic, global market, and technological worlds are changing and how they affect day-to-day life, curricula must change to meet a global society's needs and interests. This would create a task force that is well-trained and prepared to handle the modern day opportunities and challenges. To achieve this goal and create a unique learning environment, an open-ended curriculum that encourages learners to pursue knowledge relevant to their backgrounds is recommended. Fomunyam and Khoza (2021a) adopt the concept of curriculum as explained by Aoki (1993). Also, the curriculum designed by educators as opposed to non-educators is likely to be effectively implemented as

educators have the knowledge to adapt the curriculum in light of their classroom experiences to best meet the learners' educational needs and interests. This view is supported by Rispel et. al., (2023), Arbuckle (2020) and Mittelmeier et. al., (2018), who posit that decolonisation of curriculum design should be adapted to address the socioeconomic needs of the learners. This was also supported by Fomunyam and Khosa (2021a) who advocate for a student-centered open curriculum that is locally relevant, enhance critical thinking abilities and promote learning across a wide range of disciplines. Hence, developing chemistry IsiZulu vocabulary for teaching and learning may meet socio-cultural needs of rural KwaZulu Natal learners.

Centrality of language and code-switching in curriculum decolonisation in South Africa

The June 16, student uprising of 1976 in South Africa, introduced the centrality of language in curriculum decolonisation. Learners suggested that the curriculum be decolonised because they felt that the use of Afrikaans in teaching African languages was the main reason for their alienation from the educational system. Based on that consciousness, a plethora of propositions that support educational access through language decolonisation being accentuated (Open Stellenbosch Collective, 2015; Thesnaar, 2017; Woods et. al., 2022; De Vos et. al., 2023) became dominant. In this regard, the literature focus more on the need for the university, school and colleges to implement curriculum decolonisation through conceptual and descriptive use of language, including code-switching as a teaching and learning instrument (Brock-Utne, 2005). The context of decolonising struggles against colonial rule calling for curriculum decolonisation emerged in Africa during the 1950s and 1960s. Decolonisation aims to reject contemporary colonial education, which dehumanizes the colonised and stifles their potential by trying to transform them into colonial subjects (Fanon, 1967; Fomunyam & Khosa, 2021b; Grosfoguel, 2013; Maistry, 2021; Maldonado Torres, 2007;

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). The suppression of non-European and indigenous knowledge led to epistemicide, as Santos (2014) noted, with indigenous knowledge receiving little consideration in the colonial school of thought. This school supported the Western canon, promoting modern Western knowledge while disregarding its non-Western sources, sparking radical discussions among learners demanding a decolonised curriculum that respects all cultural knowledge systems and promotes intercultural education. Fataar (2018) emphasizes the need for policymakers, educators, and curriculum designers to incorporate different knowledge systems into university curricula, fostering respect for diverse cultures and creating dialogical platforms for discussing present and future educational needs. Developing isiZulu chemistry vocabulary for teaching and learning will create opportunities to incorporate other knowledge systems into the curriculum.

Decolonisation of curriculum change in higher education is essential due to the diverse and unequal backgrounds of learners, many of whom lack financial and material resources. A pre-planned and rigid curriculum that does not take account of the local learners' culture and language cannot meet the rapidly changing demands of the global economy and technology.

The benefits of the decolonised curriculum which foregrounds the local languages and the use of code-switching for teaching and learning develop learners' for better life opportunities, and academia transformation into a more inclusive space as well as lifelong learning opportunities. Against this backdrop, Le Grange (2016) explored the decolonisation of the university curriculum. Le Grange (2016) emphasised the need to explore the decolonisation of the university curriculum, particularly the teacher education curriculum. Le Grange (2016) suggests that curriculum decolonisation should include the redefinition of the value we ascribe to the indigenous people in local contexts in ways that combine the dominant western epistemologies and the indigenous epistemologies. In order to achieve this imperative,

the use of local languages and code-switching is central to the teacher education curriculum decolonisation endevours. Hence, this chapter sets out to investigate pre-service teachers' perceptions towards curriculum decolonisation and the use of code-switching in teaching and learning.

Use of code-switching in teaching and learning in rural context

Code-switching is a pedagogical tool by which the teacher strategically moves from English language as a medium of instruction to a local indigenous language and vice versa to explain concepts using examples that are relevant to the real-life experience of the learners (Brock-Utne, 2005; Myers-Scotton, 1993). During code-switching, in rural context, chemistry concepts are initially described in English, followed by an explanation in isiZulu language and vice versa to help learners to grasp the conceptual and utility meaning of chemistry concepts. However, due to insufficient resources and paucity research providing insights on how best to adapt the curriculum and implement code-switching effectively, pre-service teachers are not well equipped to apply this concept in real-life classroom context. Given the centrality of code-switching in rural schooling contexts, this study set out to bridge the gap in the literature by providing insights on pre-service teachers' perceptions towards developing isiZulu chemistry vocabulary for teaching and learning. Language is often a barrier to effective teaching and learning (Mthiyane, 2016), mainly when pre-service teachers' English proficiency is below the required standard for classroom instruction (Kellerman, Evans & Graham, 2021).

Another factor relates to complex nature of the chemistry concepts and rural learners' lack of proficiency to comprehend these complex concepts which legitimise the imperative to use code-switching. Therefore, code-switching is employed to enhance communication, understanding, and clarity, creating a conducive learning environment where English language mastery is lacking (Almutairi & Alqarni,

2024; Jacinda, 2024; Maluleke, 2019; Nkosi, 2020; Syahrin, Zulfariati & Permata, 2024; Songxaba *et al.*, 2017; Uys, 2010) or in the absence of English terminology for the concept (Van Laren & Goba, 2013), hence, the need to develop chemistry isiZulu vocabulary for teaching and learning. Boughey and McKenna (2021) emphasise the value of language proficiency, culture and use of language (Fanon, 2017; Crossman, 2004; Greenstein, 2007; Mkhize & Balfour, 2017; Rodrigues-Seeger *et al.*, 2021). Code-switching is particularly suitable for teaching Chemistry, a subject often perceived as abstract and complex to grasp (Sözbilir, 2004). Chemistry concepts, frequently seen as a collection of formulas (Afonso, 2009), can be made more comprehensible through the use of culture-related scenarios and mother tongue, which helps learners recall what they were taught (Golding, 2017; Mumba *et al.*, 1997).

Teaching in mother tongue also increases learners' participation (Mwinsheikhe, 2001) and aligns with UNESCO's (2016) commitment to incorporating indigenous languages in education (Knagg & Mcllwraith, 2013). Policies on code-switching may be adopted to avert the historical inconsistency of requiring learners to be educated in unfamiliar languages (UNESCO, 2016). Maluleke (2019) and Uys (2010) emphasize the need for such policies to ensure uniformity across classrooms. Despite UNESCO's (2016) proposal to use both international and local languages as mediums of instruction, currently school policies are often silent on this matter. While starting code-switching during early childhood can be beneficial (Heugh, 2006), in South Africa, primary school learners face challenges transitioning from mother tongue to English in science education, resulting in poor performance due to unfamiliar scientific terminology (Kazeni & Maleka, 2020). On the other hand, Makanda (2020) and Mzizi (2022) expand on efforts to incorporate indigenous languages in education, such as the 2020 matric exams in the Eastern Cape Province using indigenous languages, which have shown improved results with the incorporation of indigenous languages (Mndende, 2020). Promoting code-switching through education aligns with the Department of Education's

(2002) recommendations and the Department of Higher Education and Training's commitment to decolonial education and accessible academic programs in South Africa. Use of indigenous languages in teaching and learning would enhance learners' success if communities would learn in the language spoken at home. Cowling (2023) expounds that majority of South Africans speak isiZulu at home (25.3%), followed by isiXhosa (14.8%), then Afrikaans (12%) and English (8%).

Theoretical underpinnings for understanding curriculum decolonisation

The study is guided by Le Grange (2016) theory of decolonisation, Shulman (1986) domains of teacher knowledge and Gee's (2014) multilingual language. According to Le Grange (2016), the five stages of decolonization are the rediscovery and recovery of history and identity, mourning the ongoing oppression, dreaming of new possibilities based on Indigenous knowledge, demonstrating commitment through activism, and translating these dreams and commitments into actions for social transformation. Action provide the curriculum transformation into developing isiZulu vocabulary for chemistry. Shulman (1986) teacher knowledge theory emphasizes that effective teaching requires a blend of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge to understand how to teach specific subjects effectively. Shulman's (1986) theory helped us in understanding how chemistry curriculum may be decolonised through code-switching. Gee's (2014) multilingual theory posits that language learning is deeply rooted in social and cultural contexts, where individuals acquire multiple language practices through participation in various discourse communities. Through the use of an indigenous knowledge in the form of indigenous language, Gee's (2014) theory provided the basis for understanding a sense of belonging of the indigenous people to the curriculum decolonisation since language is located in a culture of indigenous people.

Le Grange's (2016) five stages of decolonisation firstly refer to: People who have been colonised rediscover and recover their history, culture, language, and identity. Secondly, mourning is the process of lamenting the ongoing assault on oppressed people's identities and social realities. Thirdly, dreaming is the process of invoking the history, worldviews, and indigenous knowledge systems of colonised people in order to theorise and imagine new alternative possibilities, such as a new curriculum. Fourthly, commitment is demonstrated when university students or academics become political activists in order to demonstrate their commitment to including the voices of the colonised, in this case, in the university curriculum. Finally, action occurs when dreams and commitment are translated into strategies for social transformation. I employ action, in this study. Action denotes developing chemistry isiZulu vocabulary for teaching and learning.

Shulman's (1986) theoretical framework consists of content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge. The amount and organisation of knowledge of the subject in the teacher's mind is called content knowledge. The knowledge that goes beyond knowledge of the subject matter, including the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching, is general pedagogical knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge refers to the topics taught in the subject, the vital depiction of the ideas, analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations that make the subject intelligible to others.

Pedagogical content knowledge incorporates understanding what makes learning specific topics easy or difficult and the misconceptions that learners experience within the subject matter (Shulman, 1986). In addition, it allows the teacher to be acquainted with the most appropriate strategies for imparting knowledge in various topics for learners at different levels of study. Additionally, the content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge receive amalgamation in pedagogical content knowledge to form the type of knowledge called knowledge of learners (Golding, 2017). This means that curriculum decoloniality and code-

switching should be made part of the formal plan in designing the pedagogical approach to teaching chemistry subjects. For instance, this must be fused in the learning designs, content knowledge and skills to the learners of chemistry subjects. Gee (2014) offers a different approach to discourse and describes the wield of language as incorporating information (saying), action (doing), and identity (being). In linguistics, 'discourse' names a part of the language that intimately relates to syntax. The structure of the language and the way the words and phrases combine into sentences is called 'syntax'. The context of language usage includes the operation of clues and cues (namely, syntax and discourse) to shape the interpretations and actions of listeners and readers. This means that in decolonising the curriculum, indigenous knowledge which are indigenous knowledge systems, which are mainly represented through language use bring inclusivity, sense of belonging and understanding; which are all essential elements of meaningful and effective learning and teaching of chemistry subjects.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative interpretivist research paradigm which explains the way people attribute meaning to their circumstances and develop rules that govern their behaviour (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Thanh and Thanh (2015) describe interpretivist as a methodical approach that seeks experiences, understanding and perceptions of individuals for their data to uncover reality. This paradigm was used in this research to seek pre-service teachers' experiences in teaching Chemistry in isiZulu and how an isiZulu Chemistry vocabulary may be developed. The interpretivist paradigm uses qualitative methods (Willis, 2007), such as case studies. Qualitative methods provide rich data necessary for interpretivists to fully understand contexts. A case study was adopted for this research. Teachers' perceptions are the phenomenon, and developing isiZulu vocabulary is the unit of analysis. The case study is located in the class of 2019 Chemistry III: with six Zulu pre-service teachers during work integrated learning (WIL)

in rural schools of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). This is a single case study where there is only one location.

In qualitative research, broad research questions are designed to explore, interpret, or understand the social context (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2006). The selection of participants is determined by individuals' acquisition of information vital to the research questions in non-random methods. Data collection techniques included interviewing participants. The qualitative approach used in this study uses one technique for gathering data for interviews of pre-service teachers who teach Chemistry in isiZulu. Pre-service teachers were interviewed in my office after school. For accurate information capture, interviews were recorded. Each interview took 45 minutes.

The participants were recruited via the 'Class' WhatsApp group, as we discussed teaching Chemistry through English and isiZulu code-switching on WhatsApp. All 50 level-three Chemistry pre-service teachers consented to participate in the study through the 'Subject' WhatsApp group. Participants who were willing to teach in this manner, and who were Zulu and who were to be placed in rural KZN schools for WIL, were purposively sampled. This is common in rural KZN schools where isiZulu predominates as a language. These participants were placed in KZN rural schools in one district. They were willing to be interviewed (one-on-one) to understand their experiences and benefits of code-switching between English and isiZulu and how an isiZulu vocabulary may be developed for Chemistry. The schools are comprised of exclusively isiZulu-speaking mother tongue learners.

To represent each phase in the Further Education and Training (FET) band matching pre-service teachers' specialisation, two pre-service teachers per FET phase level (10, 11, or 12) per school participated in this study. The two first language (L1) Zulu pre-service teachers taught Chemistry in one of the grades 10, 11 or 12. This was an appropriate sample size due to expense and time constraints (Cohen et. al., 2007). The interview questions required the

participants to indicate their experiences, advantages, and disadvantages of code-switching between English and isiZulu when teaching Chemistry and how an isiZulu vocabulary may advance for Chemistry. Face-to-face interviews were held with each participant for approximately 45 minutes. To ensure anonymity, the participants were labelled P1 to P6.

Data findings and discussion

This study set out to investigate pre-service teachers' perceptions towards curriculum decolonisation and use of code-switching in teaching and learning. It also investigated the ways in which a chemistry isiZulu vocabulary could be developed.

Data analysis involved recording and transcription of data, using an inductive approach. Through an interpretive analysis of transcribed data; the following conceptually informed themes emanated: curriculum decolonisation through Code-switching as a mechanism of curriculum decolonisation in teaching Chemistry subjects; optimising on code-switching from English to isiZulu in teaching Chemistry; the challenges of teaching Chemistry with code-switching between isiZulu and English; and the development of an isiZulu vocabulary for Chemistry.

Code-switching as a mechanism of curriculum decolonisation in teaching Chemistry subjects

Chemistry is an abstract subject (Sözbilir, 2004) that is taught in abstract ways and continues to be a problem for learners. According to Shulman (1986), teachers of a specific subject should possess special understanding and abilities that integrate their knowledge of the content of the subject that they are teaching as well as having knowledge of the learners who are learning the content. To resonate with Shulman's (1986) framework, pre-service teachers in this chapter use culture-related scenarios that the learners are familiar with to teach Chemistry. This is in line with the literature (Golding,

2017). Moreover, P3 noted the introduction of contextual examples simplifying chemistry abstract theoretical notions for the learner: *"I make scenarios that are culture-related to enable learners to remember what was taught."* This story was consistent with the experiences of other participants:

> *... as you teach Chemistry, you make simple examples that they can relate from their homes, what they usually do, and what they usually do in their daily life experiences and then you built up on that (P5).*

The above narratives allude to cultural inclusiveness in the teaching and learning environment, which encourages identification while discussing Chemistry ideas. This demonstrates how learning is consolidated within the context of learners' daily situations and examples. Each human language, according to Gee (2014), has a grammar that is used, recruited, adapted, and altered differently by different users to complete certain tasks. P3's efforts to ensure learners' learning and retention of abstract topics exemplifies this adaptability. This is explained by Le Grange's (2016) decolonisation theory's first stage termed rediscovery and recovery to exemplify pre-service teachers' bringing culture into teaching and learning of chemistry concepts for learner concepts' retention.

As alluded to by P5, language is a prerequisite to qualifying in the education system. This agrees with Boughey and McKenna (2021), who report that knowing the language is a requirement for success in the educational system. Further, academic literacies must be mastered by the learners (Boughey & McKenna, 2021). In line with this notion, learners must comprehend the disciplinary principles, values, and norms from which the specific language practices emerge, to produce an effective laboratory report in Chemistry. According to Fanon (2017), language is critical to cultural regeneration and agency growth. Because language and identity are so intertwined, he suggested that being denied one's language would severely impact one's mental health. When learners' identities are unknown, they are subjected to testimonial

injustice. This means that indigenous languages need to be included as languages of instruction as described by Gee (2014).

When revisiting Le Grange's (2016) five stages of decolonisation: rediscovery and recovery referred to pre-service teachers employing cultural models in the indigenous language isiZulu in teaching Chemistry as already discussed under curriculum decolonisation through teaching Chemistry with code-switching between isiZulu and English. The legacy of apartheid and the South African Education system lagging comes to the fore during the assessment, which is called mourning. This is revisited under decolonising curriculum through optimising on code-switching from English to isiZulu in teaching Chemistry. Dreaming comes to the fore as we theorise our own isiZulu Chemistry vocabulary. Commitment is demonstrated during the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall campaigns for the implementation of inclusive education. In the case of language transformation, commitment came from black staff and students at a University that continued to employ Afrikaans as a language of instruction (Open Stellenbosch, 2015). This study demonstrates the importance of action in developing isiZulu vocabulary for chemistry teaching and learning, leveraging resources for effective code-switching.

Optimising on code-switching from English to isiZulu in teaching Chemistry

Pre-service teachers were familiar with their learners, thus they realised that using the mother tongue would help with long-term memory retention, as shown in the excerpts below:

> *… teaching in isiZulu is more enjoyable. Learners can even make the class or the atmosphere conducive to learning, they can even come up with jokes because they understand what you are talking about. (P4).*

> *Well, it has helped learners concentrate, it has helped them learn to relate to the subject content, and it helps enhance*

> *the learning process. Learners do not have to work hard to memorise because it is already in their system. That is the biggest benefit of teaching learners in a language they can relate to. ...You can tell from their participation; you can tell from their very high concentration levels... (P5)*

As evident from the excerpts above, Shulman (1986) ascertains that a competent teacher uses the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations to help learners understand what they are learning. According to Mumba et. al. (1997), pre-service teachers use isiZulu, a mother tongue that allows learners to recall what they were taught. The mother tongue also realises UNESCO's (2016) commitment to including indigenous languages in learning and teaching (Knagg & Mcllwraith, 2013). The mother tongue also tackles a historical inconsistency in which nationals were required to learn in languages they could not understand (UNESCO, 2016).

Chemistry curriculum decolonisation may be achieved through the knowledge of the learner (Shulman, 1986) and the use of code-switching between an indigenous language and the English language. As shown from the excerpts from P4 and P5 above, pre-service teachers know their learners' historical backgrounds and use code-switching between English and isiZulu. They are aware that teaching exclusively in English will result in low learner participation, in line with a previous report (Mwinsheikhe, 2001). Pre-service teachers frequently believe that they are failing to meet the demands of the learners, as validated by P3: *"It becomes boring to teach in English only since only one or two learners will participate in class".*

The preceding narrative stresses class participation by the greater majority of learners; otherwise, communication will be limited to a select few. In addition, there is a desire to learn and teach Chemistry in isiZulu, since it involves the development of learner confidence and effective communication, as evidenced by the following: *"... upon code-switching between isiZulu and English, the learner develops confidence and understanding"* (P1).

The advantages of using code-switching are a preferred and powerful communication tool (Gee, 2014). P3 and P1 above suggested that code-switching promoted better communication between learner and teacher. This was also attested by Maluleke (2019), who demonstrated using code-switching as an empowerment strategy in teaching Mathematics to learners with limited proficiency in English in SA. Maluleke (2019) further insinuates that the DBE must have a policy on code-switching so that it is regulated. The usage could be uniform through different classrooms. Uys (2010) concurs with Maluleke (2019) on policy requisite and further ascertains that teachers code-switch mainly for academic, social, and classroom management purposes. In addition, teachers perceive code-switching as the best way to facilitate understanding (Songxaba et. al., 2017). While UNESCO (2016) has proposed using the international language and local language as the mediums of instruction, school policy is silent on the language policy.

Code-switching appears beneficial in teaching and learning, starting at a young age for the learners (Heugh, 2006). Kazeni and Maleka, (2020) point out that in SA, primary school learners debut with a Science subject and transition from learning, teaching, and assessment from mother tongue pedagogy to English at Grade four. Learners encounter challenges in line with decolonisation theory's (Le Grange, 2016) mourning stage during the assessments due to historic Afrikaans and English teaching and learning instruction, as these languages are second languages to majority of the learners in South Africa (Cowling, 2023). The challenges of learning a new subject in an unfamiliar language include the inability to understand the scientific terminology, resulting in poor performance in Science assessment as attested by P4: "*... the Matric learners fail Chemistry because they do not understand what is going on....*" Hence, code-switching is necessary to address this challenge. In addition, code-switching positively impacts the Grade 12 Physical Science examination results, as P3 and P5 remarked below.

> *Learners can answer what is asked if written in their mother tongue. An examination cannot determine what you know if you cannot write it down in English, which is a barrier for some learners. No learner has been found cheating when writing isiZulu composition. However, learners memorise chemistry concepts which is a problem when taught in English only (P3).*

> *... Even when you look at exam papers, they are asked in complex English; they fail to then decode the English (P5).*

Above, P3 and P5 note the obstacles in the examination process. In the next stage of the decolonisation theory, dreaming (Le Grange, 2016), an indigenous language is incorporated into teaching, learning and assessment by the DBE in South Africa in the 2020 matric exams in the Eastern Province (Makanda, 2020). The language policy is changing to incorporate indigenous languages (Mndende, 2020). Mother tongue in the examination was expected to produce the desired results. As expected, the outcomes of the 2020 and 2021 matric results improved due to the usage of indigenous languages (Mzizi, 2022). Perhaps such a pilot will offer the opportunity for isiZulu to be considered next in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, where this dialect predominates. In addition, the challenges of the language of learning and teaching start to emerge as learners cheat due to a language barrier, as P3 noted above. This points out to the need for the action stage of the decolonisation theory (Le Grange, 2016) to developing isiZulu chemistry vocabulary for teaching and learning, which are the objectives of this chapter.

The challenges of teaching Chemistry with code-switching between isiZulu and English

According to Greenstein (2007), the greatest challenge to the renewal of education in general, and curriculum policies in particular, is Africanisation. While this is true, it is crucial to recognise that the transformation of higher education institutions will not be complete unless the knowledge

generation and dissemination processes are congruent with the circumstances and cultural orientation of the people our universities serve. According to Crossman (2004), such a process would include changing external variables and internal principles and priorities that determine our universities' orientation, beliefs, and practices.

The language should be acknowledged as a right that needs to be practiced and a resource (Mkhize & Balfour, 2017) that needs to be developed and distributed for equality in participation. The issue of undervaluing indigenous languages is pertinent. P3 communicated on wider recognition and applicability as narrated below:

> *Great attention paid to an indigenous language like isiZulu will not be well received as other races undermine indigenous languages. Indigenous people must develop their businesses. This will enable them to learn in their indigenous languages, like isiZulu, without prejudice towards employability requiring English (P3).*

The broader ramifications of indigenous language devaluation are acknowledged by P3, who details the more comprehensive benefits of multilingualism. Other languages are not considered as important and worth investment, since English is valued as a prestigious language that offers international benefits for future studies and a sense of belonging into an international academic community (Rodrigues-Seeger *et al.*, 2021) - believing in the English language's superiority traces back to the coloniality era. Colonialism still prevails in South Africa since the country's emancipation from apartheid more than two decades ago. This occurs despite the Department of Education's (2002) suggestion to adopt language policies that encourage learning South African languages to promote unity. Further, the DHET recommended commitment to the practical implementation of the language policies that promote multilingualism for accessible academic programmes and decolonial education in SA. Multilingualism should thus be promoted through education.

Teaching formulas has always been a challenge, as alluded to by Afonso (2009). Participants describe difficulty in grasping Chemistry concepts. In this case, code-switching is necessary for describing chemical formulae, as P1 indicated: *"I use code-switching in teaching Chemistry for clarity purposes. Sometimes, language becomes a barrier for learner understanding".*

Clearly, from the narrative above, clarification is key to promoting understanding and comprehension of Chemistry formulae. as language hinders learning (Mthiyane , 2016). P1 demonstrated ambivalence about code-switching. Particular alerting to pertinent aspects of assessments and perhaps national examinations: *"For assessment and examinations, isiZulu is not used. That is why the usage of isiZulu should be limited".*

P1 is acutely aware of how the national examinations determine language use. The matric results of the Eastern Cape for 2020 and 2021 have been released, and school matric grades have improved dramatically in the last two years (Mzizi, 2022). Perhaps, examinations in isiZulu could be considered next. Pre-service teachers' challenges in teaching in a bilingual space stemmed from deciding what is to be taught because they cannot find an appropriate alternative to Chemistry in isiZulu as noted by P3: *"... Due to lack of isiZulu Chemistry vocabulary..."*. As already ascribed in this study, it may be critical to overcome these challenges by creating isiZulu vocabulary for Chemistry.

Development of an isiZulu vocabulary for Chemistry

Developing isiZulu vocabulary for teaching and learning Chemistry is essential to capitalise on the multiple benefits of code-switching fully. Developing an isiZulu Chemistry vocabulary will ensure that our curriculum is elevated to the same status as that of the Global North. Our Chemistry curriculum will be more nuanced, focused, and responsive, reflecting contextual relevance (Fomunyam & Khosa, 2021a). As P3 states below, it is critical to develop an isiZulu grammar

for Chemistry, in addition to English and Afrikaans, for equity in Chemistry examinations.

> *We will have to train our minds. It will be challenging to change from English to isiZulu with current learners. English and Afrikaans put some learners at a disadvantage. Learners from the English culture who are not good in Chemistry will perform better than an African learner who knows Chemistry better than English. IsiZulu-English code-switching will be important in isiZulu translation. We can hold workshops on how to impart information into isiZulu. Information can then be shared with teachers who will impart the information to learners. Department of Basic Education must fund this initiative (P3).*

From the above excerpt, P3 recognises the need to create an isiZulu grammar for Chemistry and focus on increasing capacity. Therefore, there is a necessity to write isiZulu workbooks, grammar, literature, etc, for Chemistry. The process will be strenuous, requiring time and resources. Further, township teachers would be capacitated to equip learners with accurate Chemistry concepts and rectify what Mumba et. al. (1997) described as 'incorrect Chemistry information conveyance' by those teachers.

Pre-service teachers in this study begin to consider developing enabling indigenous teaching resources. This is an example of pre-service teachers developing imaginative and problem-solving abilities through disciplinary responsiveness where pre-service teachers are elevated to the Chemistry discipline and community stakeholders (for more information, see Fomunyam & Khosa, 2021b). When applying one of Le Grange's (2016) five stages of decolonisation: Action is demonstrated towards developing isiZulu vocabulary, which is an indigenous enabling resources for teaching and learning.

The results suggest that code-switching allowed learners to recall what they had learned and felt more at ease and confident in class. During the class, the learners were motivated and actively participated due to this indigenous inclusion. There were no communication breakdowns amongst

the learners, as they followed what was being taught. Learners gained a sense of belonging to the educational system in this way. Furthermore, learners managed to identify with the education system when new knowledge and concepts were imparted in class due to pre-service teachers' structuring of culture-related situations and consolidation of new knowledge with learners' experiences. Grade 12 results may reveal the total impact of code-switching. Therefore, there is a pressing need to develop IsiZulu vocabulary for Chemistry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings point that pre-service teachers had dynamic and mixed perceptions about curriculum decoloniality and the use of code-switching in teaching and learning. Many of those who had a positive attitude towards curriculum decoloniality seemed to understand the value and imperative of the need to consider learners' cultures and code-switching in teaching of chemistry subjects. However, the paucity of knowledge in how curriculum decoloniality and code-switching could be applied in real-life classroom contexts seemed to act as a deterrent to buy-in, for the implementation of chemistry isiZulu vocabulary for teaching and learning. Hence this chapter, strongly recommends that curriculum specialists and further research should be dedicated on understanding the pedagogical imperatives and applications of curriculum decoloniality and code-switching in real-life classroom context of teaching chemistry subjects, particularly in rural contexts.

Additionally, the availability of IsiZulu chemistry vocabulary may encourage pre-service teachers to code-switch during chemistry instruction.

It should be noted that these findings are solely applicable to the sites where research was conducted or similar contexts.

Measures to be taken in developing an isiZulu Chemistry vocabulary

Teacher training programmes need to include code-switching in their curriculum in order to empower pre-service teachers with the skill to teach across more languages. More research may be required to determine the indigenous people of KZN's language requirements. However, because there are no isiZulu Chemistry workbooks or textbooks available - except UKZN's isiZulu dictionaries - it is necessary to code-switch between English and isiZulu for effective teaching and, for example, to improve Grade 12 results. The creation of isiZulu Chemistry textbooks and the reform of policies to incorporate isiZulu as a language of learning, teaching, and evaluation would be a significant step towards the recognition of indigenous languages.

To create isiZulu Chemistry learning and teaching materials: Pre-service instructors can begin to write Chemistry textbooks, workbooks, and other materials in isiZulu. Then, in workshops, engage local schoolteachers to contribute to the written resources. Other topic teachers may be drawn to the same concept as the participating schoolteachers piloting these teaching and learning materials. DBE and school governing bodies may be driven to adopt teaching, learning, and assessment policies that acknowledge this initiative once the process is expanded to other school disciplines. Universities are likely to follow suit.

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Chapter 8

Decolonising Teacher Education Curriculum in South Africa: The Realities and Challenges in Higher Education

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Abstract

In South Africa's context, the curriculum is critical to teacher education for the preparation of pre-service teachers who will be change agents in the country's education sector. There is a growing demand for the decolonising of the teacher education curriculum, as a paradigm shift from a Eurocentric-dominated curriculum which spans from the apartheid era to the present democratic period in South African society. As posited by various extant studies, education had been used as a tool for the segregation and oppression of black people during the apartheid era in South Africa. Studies affirm that institutional structures, curricula, and instructional delivery approaches in the present democratic South African society continue to disadvantage black students due to the education system's Eurocentric framework. Hence, the call for decolonising higher education gained prominence after a series of student protests in 2015 to 2016, which led to the wanton destruction of properties as well as the loss of lives. One of the demands of the protesting students was the decolonisation of higher education to address the social inequality that disadvantages many black students. The students condemned various learning contents or curricula that are largely Western-influenced. Using a

discursive approach, this discourse examines the decolonising of the teacher education curriculum in South Africa's HEIs, to provide deeper insights into the realities and challenges of decolonising the teacher education curriculum in a bid to add to the discourse on decolonisation of higher education. The chapter will examine the teacher education curriculum within a post-colonial context as it exists in South Africa. Utilising Jansen's (2017) conceptions of decolonising higher education for a true reflection of social justice in the teacher education discourse framework, the social tensions, prevailing challenges, and diverse complexities that envelope South Africa's teacher education curriculum will be explored. South Africa's HEIs are faced with different problems that are driven by Western cultures and practices, which call for recognition of diverse indigenous knowledge systems, indigenous languages, and African philosophy that exist in South Africa to be contextualised into the teacher education curriculum. Strategies for decolonising teacher education with South African knowledge and experiences will be proffered.

Keywords: *teacher education, curriculum, Eurocentric, decolonising, indigenous, social inequality*

Introduction

Learning continues to be challenging for students in various developing African countries where quality education is challenged with diverse impediments. Various extant studies argue for several factors that can enhance quality education, including indigenisation (Horsthemke, 2017), Africanisation, and decolonisation of the curriculum. South Africa's post-apartheid transformations aimed at promoting social justice, equity, and inclusivity in education. However, HEIs have continued to be Eurocentric and Western-knowledge-dominated (Heleta, 2016; Ajani, 2019; Makombe, 2021). Learning experiences in these HEIs have not only been Accordingly, Lebeloane (2017) reports that the student movements in various learning institutions have continued to resist or register their disagreement through protests

at various times. However, clamour for the decolonisation of higher education was ignited by the #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall, and a host of other student protests that rocked South Africa's universities in 2015 to 2016. Thus, decolonising the curriculum for the HEIs rethinks or reshapes learning experiences for tomorrow, with a shift from Eurocentric-driven experiences for the students. Meanwhile, teacher education is significant in driving decolonisation in South Africa's education system as a whole, as well as in teacher education, language policies, curriculum, and others.

Every nation's development is influenced by the quality of the education system that is offered to its citizens (Ajani, 2019). This implies that the empowerment of citizens for responsiveness and career-building is motivated by acquired skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes. Hence, the quest for decolonisation has been on the increase to transform the education system. Higher education provides spaces for the development of minds for diverse careers, with teacher education significantly the bedrock anchoring the whole nation's education system. The need for students to become lifelong learners has never been this essential, particularly in the field of teacher education. Lumadi (2021) asserts that education remains the key driver of socio-economic advancement and development to any nation. Therefore, decolonising the teacher education curriculum can be seen as a significant enhancement to teacher education, as a necessary transformation to the education system. This is critical to pre-service teachers' competencies adjusting to the prevailing changing knowledge society and new demands in the education system. In South Africa, teacher education is critical to teaching and learning in various educational institutions, where learners need to take responsibility for their learning and relate to the realities of their environment. We live in a dynamic world where appropriate learning is needed to relate and fit appropriately to the changing situations.

According to Sathorar and Geduld (2018:1), *"We live in a dynamic world, characterized by major economic, technological and social change"*, hence it is critical that teacher education

is embedded in a dynamic and critical approach, that can create counterhegemonic intellectual spaces, which adopt new worldviews that can enhance students' ability to embrace change of praxis. The transition of South Africa from apartheid to a democratic republic in 1994 came with much enthusiasm that massive transformation will be witnessed in all sectors, especially in the education field. However, the existing curriculum in South Africa has remained colonial and apartheid-like in nature, not only stereotyping students but its dominance makes it impossible for students to face realities in their environments (Mahabeer, 2020). Maistry (2021) submits that the current higher education curriculum is still largely reflecting the colonial and apartheid worldviews, which shifts away from African realities. Hence, theorising learning contents for pre-service teachers becomes critically inevitable, to prepare them as social change agents who can meaningfully impact and make learners responsive to the realities of their environments.

Jansen (2017) argues that the lived experiences of the majority of South Africans do not relate to the realities of their prevailing challenges. Learning experiences should be designed to relate and respond to dynamic life situations of students, to make them relevant and as social change agents. "*Most universities follow the hegemonic 'Eurocentric epistemic canon', that 'attributes truth only to the Western way of knowledge production'*" (Mbembe 2015:32). Hence, such a curriculum phantom on what Mbembe (2015) describes as 'Eurocentric episteme canon' does not develop students' critical and analytical skills to understand the prevailing challenges that exist in their realities, as well as move the country forward. Jansen (2017) asserts that since the democratic transition, South African universities have failed to adequately open students' horizons about transformative learning experiences.

Teacher education is designed to produce quality teachers, who can impart appropriate knowledge and skills into learners. Various student protests rocked South Africa's universities from 2015 to 2016, with agitation for the decolonisation of higher education (Mamdani, 1998; Pillay,

2015; Heleta, 2016; Le Grange, 2016). The agitation for the decolonisation of higher education has strengthened the call to address the students' demands, as well as restructure higher education for realities that exist in South Africa. Conferences and other academic engagements were organised to advance the concept of decolonisation by different stakeholders, however, the actualisation of decolonisation in higher education remains a complicated task. This indicates efforts made in proffering solutions through decolonisation. Thus, this chapter further advances the call for decolonisation in higher education, but with the teacher education curriculum as a focal point for a paradigm shift from a Eurocentric curriculum, which can portray the realities of transformed post-apartheid South Africa. This chapter explains decolonising teacher education as a complicated concept, as well as Africanisation and indigenisation as concepts of ideal curriculum based on Jansen's conceptions of decolonisation. The remaining part of the chapter is split into the conceptualisation of terms, theorising curriculum cum teacher education in South Africa, why decolonisation is a complicated concept, the decolonising curriculum in higher education, the realities in South Africa's higher education spaces, why Africanisation in teacher education, the ideal teacher education curriculum, and a conclusion.

Conceptualisation of Terms

Decolonisation and Africanisation entail the quest or practice of previously marginalised people, schools, and universities under apartheid or colonisation, choosing to recognise and embrace their own cultures, and run based on their values that are reflective of African culture, as opposed to Eurocentric models (Adefila *et al.*, 2022; Du Plessis, 2021). Similarly, "*Africanisation of curricula implies that education and training, as well as praxis, be informed by the reality of the South African context, the viewpoints of the people of South Africa, and their descriptions of what is needed to build a just society*" (van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2017, p. 1). In the context of this study, decolonisation and Africanisation are used to mean the quest

for the infusion of indigenous values into the curriculum of institutions of learning.

Theorising Curriculum Cum Teacher Education in South Africa

According to Fomunyam (2014), curriculum theorising entails the process of proffering solutions to complex challenges experienced in the school system and beyond. This is attributed to the failure and inability to design one unified theory capable of accommodating all schooling dimensions and learning activities (Fomunyam, 2014; Maistry, 2020). Decker (2002) had earlier stated that failure to design a universally acceptable and applicable curriculum capable of serving as a guide for curriculum theorisers, teachers, and learners has led to frustration. Fomunyam (2014) states that it has made curriculum theorising more suitable and in high demand, especially considering the sensitivity of emerging patterns and complications in the lives of learners within and outside the school. Thus, the postulation of Marsh and Willis (2007) on curriculum theorising is of relevance. According to Fomunyam and Khoza (2021), curriculum theorising is a practice that involves people in three precise activities which are: be sensitive to new trends in education in general and school experience in particular; identify similar trends and issues; and relate the trends to the teaching context of the individuals. Hence, in the context of South African teacher education, which is the focus of this study, the following are paramount:

1. The curriculum designers are to be sensitive to the new trends in education in general and school experiences in particular.
2. Identify similar possibly adaptable trends and issues of teacher education. This could be useful following benchmarking.
3. Relate the trends to the teaching context of the individuals: the teachers and learners inclusive.

The South African educational system has given considerable priority to the issue of curriculum responsiveness (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021). This is due to the negative impacts on the student, teacher, and society at large when the curriculum is unable to adapt economically, disciplinarily, pedagogically, or culturally. South African higher education institutions encounter a wide range of difficulties.

Numerous alternatives, such as decolonising the curriculum, have been proposed in an effort to improve curricular responsiveness (Fomunyam & Teferra, 2017). This chapter promotes curriculum deconstruction to increase its local, regional, national and global relevance. Theorising teacher education curriculum is a complicated process that situates and identifies appropriate learning content, methods and knowledge-building for pre-service teachers, according to the realities of their diverse classroom contexts in South Africa.

Why Decolonisation is a Complicated Concept

Several scholars have described decolonisation in different ways, as influenced by their schools of thought. The diverse descriptions or definitions of decolonisation argue that it is a complicated concept that is influenced by various institutional structures in South Africa. The concept is interpreted diversely to signify its prominence in South Africa's education system. Knowledge production in an African context is the focus of decolonisation in higher education, where students' minds should be decolonised (Fanon, 2008). Fanon (2008) continuous that the tenets of decolonisation should focus on African communities, recognising their indigenous life, beliefs, and epistemology. Seemingly, Matola *et al.* (2019) posit that decolonisation as a new praxis aims at sustaining African development. This indicates that Eurocentric practices have and continue to influence indigenous practices, even via the curriculum. Diverse indigenous knowledge systems can enhance students' production of new knowledge and skills, which can be applied to the realities of their environments.

Matola *et al.* (2019) further avow that decolonisation can proffer significant solutions to knit education with the host community. Thus, policies on decolonisation are envisaged to promote appropriate knowledge for better lives for students. The policies are expected to be designed to recognise the indigenous knowledge systems capable of assisting students' knowledge constructions.

Mbembe (2015) asserts that decolonisation in South Africa's higher education is to shift away from Eurocentric knowledge that harbours apartheid (decolonisation of knowledge), while Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) describes decolonisation as a process where learning experiences are restructured for students to unlearn to re-learn. Africa should be made the epistemic base for legitimate African views to understand the global world around them. Le Grange (2016), however, argues for a decolonised curriculum that can reflect indigenous knowledge in South Africa's higher education.

Some scholars consider decolonisation synonymous with Africanisation to integrate cultural beliefs, norms, and practices into formal education (Matola *et al.*, 2019). These scholars agree that African knowledge is critical to students and can be used to project Western education in African patterns. Furthermore, instead of decolonisation, some scholars opt for decoloniality and glocalisation (Bok-rae, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Ajani, 2019). Glocalisation is a concept that defines the mixture or integration of indigenous knowledge systems with Western counterparts, to arrive at new knowledge that can be applied to diverse contexts (Ajani, 2019). Conversely, glocalisation is therefore an integration of globalisation and localisation. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) describes decoloniality as the process of condemning colonial power disguised as apartheid, modernity, globalisation, and modernity, while glocalisation of the curriculum will adopt global standards that can address local community needs. Thus, glocalisation can be attained if the curriculum is designed and implemented to empower students to acquire appropriate knowledge and skills that relate to their immediate communities. Conversely, the attainment of various concepts

like 'decoloniality', 'Africanisation', 'glocalisation', and 'decolonisation' in the curriculum is subject to design and implementation.

The decolonising of the teacher education curriculum is to contextualise learning experiences to suit realities, diverse situations, and connect contextual learning contents and globally sensitive contexts. The domination of teacher education curriculum by Eurocentric knowledge provides students with limited-perspective worldviews. Hence, the structure of the teacher education curriculum calls for the decolonisation of learning experiences that can give dynamic knowledge and skills to students in the 21st century, with multi-faceted knowledge necessary for diverse situations.

Decolonising Curriculum in Higher Education

According to Le Grange (2017, p. 190), the curriculum is best described as *"the collective story we tell our children about our past, our present, and our future."* The curriculum is well-planned and well-taught to attain explicit, hidden, and null learning experiences in learners (Pinar, 2012). According to Le Grange (2016), learning experiences entail content, readings, presentations, assessments, and resources that are subject to decolonisation (Lebeloane, 2017). The 'hidden' aspects of the curriculum are what learners are not formally taught. In the case of colonisation, this includes the values and cultural traits of the colonisers, which can indoctrinate students and encourage actions of submissiveness (Lebeloane, 2017; Fomunyam, 2019). Smith and Smith (2018) assert that South Africa's higher education curriculum is Eurocentric and is pedagogically colonised and complex, which requires the integration of students' indigenous knowledge systems and languages. In Luckett *et al.*'s (2019) view, 'whiteness' as experienced by black students, features in the implicit or hidden curriculum and it influences the expected learning contents and assessments.

Grosfoguel (2019) agrees that higher education curriculum is Eurocentric-dominated both in contents and

pedagogies. Santos (2014, p. 92) describes the resultant Eurocentric curriculum in higher education as *an epistemic idea*. Badat (2008), as well as the Department of Higher Education and Training (2015) posit that lingering social inequalities are institutionally influenced. Hence, decolonising teacher education curriculum in higher education is significant to effect social change in education (Lebeloane, 2017). The social change addresses diverse socio-inequalities, racial marginalisation, and social injustices that frame South Africa's higher education (Mbembe, 2015; Heleta 2016). This implies that a decolonised teacher education curriculum, as highlighted by Lebeloane (2017), restructures the curriculum with learning experiences that are situated in equity, dignity, and social justice to give students critical reasoning and a life view different from the present Eurocentric South African HEIs. Andreotti, Ahenakew, and Cooper (2011) argue that decolonising the curriculum is not an attempt to replace one knowledge system with another, but to integrate necessary indigenous knowledge to strengthen the curriculum for realities. This is re-contextualisation, which is the appropriation of some discourses by others for the purpose of knowledge transmission and acquisition.

The curriculum as intellectual space is to engage students with past social inequalities and social injustices, addressing all these through the integration of 'cross-pollination' of ideas from indigenous knowledge systems to renegotiate Westernised and Eurocentric knowledge systems with indigenous values, thus leading to a refined, accommodating, and new curriculum (Andreotti *et al.*, 2011; Mbembe, 2015; Mahabeer, 2018). It is interpreted that the decolonised curriculum is not to discard Western theories or practices, but to recognise and make Africa the centre of learning experiences in higher education (Smith & Smith, 2018). Le Grange (2016) admits the '4Rs' from Chilisa's (2012) theory as key components of decolonisation: *reciprocal application*, *respectful representation*, *relational accountability*, and *rights and regulations*. **Reciprocal application** of the curriculum is an intellectual space that emphasises the need

for appropriate knowledge to benefit the immediate students' communities; **respectful representation** is the ability of the curriculum to recognise indigenous voices; **relational accountability** of the curriculum is to ensure the linkage of all the learning contents and accountability of the curriculum to all relations; while **rights and regulations** as a matter of ethics ensures the acknowledgment of a decolonised curriculum that incorporates indigenous knowledge appropriately (Le Grange, 2016).

The basis for decolonising teacher education curriculum is to ensure curriculum as an intellectual space, where students can critically think to construct knowledge, rather than rote learning Eurocentric knowledge, which students do not critique. In this way, it is *"a shift away from the 'I' towards 'we,' 'the active force of currere' constructed on the principles of Ubuntu (I am because we are) by the people, for the people"* (Le Grange, 2016, p. 9). Thus, the decolonising of teacher education curriculum can be seen as a process of integrating indigenous knowledge with Western knowledge to promote interculturality. Smith and Smith (2018) assert that curriculum as an intellectual space in higher education extricates indigenous knowledge from diverse political, intellectual, and social worldviews to restructure Western-dominated curriculum, through a self-reflective design or approach. Hence, responding to the 'epistemic violence' that rocked higher institutions, Chilisa (2012) argues for decolonised higher education through a self-reflective approach to (de) construct knowledge that addresses diverse contexts in South Africa's teacher education. This is further argued by Gamedze and Gamedze (2015), to embrace a self-reflective approach that will engage students in the critical challenge of Eurocentric-dominated knowledge in the decolonising curriculum. Similarly, Sayed *et al.* (2017) view a self-reflective approach as being capable of making students critical in knowledge constructs. Thus, the quest for in-depth knowledge to critique knowledge that enables students' appraisal of the imperial model marginalising spaces and to explore knowledge that accommodates students' indigenous knowledge systems is the

decolonisation of curriculum (Chilisa, 2012). This implies the need and reason for the demand for the decolonisation of the curriculum, especially in the South African context. Similarly, Smith (1999) calls for the provision of diverse opportunities that make students in higher education institutions critically reflect, reflectively deconstruct, and reconstruct different epistemological distortions of their lived experiences. Decolonising curriculum in the South African higher education landscape is a process that is complex (Webbstock, 2017). Care should therefore be taken to take account of this complexity in explaining the decisions that underlie the teacher education curriculum. Jansen (2017) argues for decolonisation in higher education with six conceptions, harmonising different curriculum scholars' perspectives to advance decolonisation in South Africa's higher education. The conceptions acknowledge realities that exist in South Africa's higher education contexts. These realities show the intricacies, complications, and situational analysis of positions in higher education.

The Realities in South Africa's Higher Education

Colonised knowledge and institutional structures continue to rock colonised people's higher education in many countries, with policies to entrench imperialism and white supremacy. The traditional school curricula which teach indigenous values, knowledge, and beliefs can critically engage Eurocentric knowledge to decolonise the curriculum, thereby recognising indigenous knowledge systems and dignity (Grande, 2004).

Eurocentric knowledge has continued to frame South Africa's higher education institutions as denigration and annihilation of diverse indigenous knowledge and epistemologies, with colonised people regurgitating the epistemologies of the white supremacists (Lebeloane, 2017; Le Grange, 2016). The idea of coloniality is demarcated into three ideas: 'coloniality of power,' 'coloniality of knowledge' and 'coloniality of being' (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Coloniality in higher education has led to the relegation of 'other forms of knowing' (Maldonado-Torres

2007). Hence, decoloniality is to denunciate the coloniality of ‘power,’ ‘knowledge,’ and ‘being’, to reconstruct the intellectual and production of knowledge in teacher education (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

The ‘coloniality of power’ is the reproduction of social, economic, and educational imbalances that linger on in post-apartheid South Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). *“This idea dares us to think about social change in a ‘non-reductionist’ manner”* (Grosfoguel, 2019, p. 13). The ‘coloniality of power’ focuses on the interplay that exists between domination and power, while the idea of ‘coloniality of knowledge’ is the influence colonisation has on different aspects of knowledge production; however, the idea of ‘coloniality of being’ significantly refers to the lived experiences of the colonised and its influence on their languages (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

Decolonisation is a complicated concept that is contested, expressed, or interpreted differently by different scholars. Decolonising teacher education is critically challenging the Eurocentric curriculum, which limits students with opportunities to challenge, engage, and construct knowledge critically (Le Grange, 2016). The decolonisation of teacher education, though complicated, is long overdue in South Africa, where higher education institutions are grounded in Westernised influences that have remained unchallenged (Pinar, 2012; Le Grange, 2016). Thus, post-Apartheid South Africa desires a decolonised teacher education curriculum that can situate Western epistemologies in African contexts. Hence, this study advances the calls for the pragmatic transformation of teacher education curriculum to enhance the classroom practices of pre-service teachers. Fanon (2008) avows that recognition of indigenous people in their education is essential to their ‘being’. Supremacy and inferiority are common indicators amongst races in South Africa, despite political independence; with decolonisation, the psychological consequences of the Eurocentric can be addressed. Thus, can the integration of Africanisation in

teacher education curriculum enhance knowledge production in higher education?

Why Africanisation in Teacher Education?

Decolonisation of teacher education is not a condemnation of Western epistemologies whole or partial; it is a call to accommodate the local knowledge of the indigenous people to present a balanced and globalised knowledge for pre-service teachers. Various scholars have faulted the Eurocentric knowledge on which South African teacher education anchors. Hence, decolonising teacher education curriculum is to integrate Western knowledge with Africanisation where necessary concepts of indigenisation are integrated for a desirable decolonised curriculum (Horsthemke, 2017). Horsthemke (2017) continuous that Africanisation alone cannot transmit African knowledge in diverse South African contexts. This explains why decolonising teacher education curriculum does not amount to rejection or condemnation of Western knowledge or structures, but accommodation of African philosophy into the higher education system. Furthermore, Horsthemke (2017) agrees that it is necessary to integrate nationalism, conventionalism, as well as African cultural values, into learning experiences to project global discourses of socio-cultural, economic, and political integrations.

Significantly, Africanisation and decolonisation differ in contexts and indicate different concepts (Mbembe, 2015; Mamdani, 2016). Though some scholars describe Africanisation as a rejection of Eurocentric knowledge, its culture, and political doctrines in entirety, other groups of scholars opine that it is recognition and integration of African contexts in the forms of skills, knowledge, and ideas to reflect postcolonialism (Horsthemke, 2017; Heleta, 2016). Seemingly, Africanisation is a wider and deeper philosophical worldview that reflects indigenous people's knowledge and socio-cultural capital that need to be incorporated into teaching and learning within higher education spaces, free from absolute

Eurocentric contexts (Jansen, 2017). Thus, the Africanisation of teacher education curriculum is to restructure the curriculum with indigenisation, and decolonise the African scholars from Eurocentric-dominated higher education.

Indigenisation and Africanisation's focus on teacher education curriculum is to identify and integrate key concepts of African philosophy into classroom teaching and learning for pre-service teachers; to familiarise them with the realities. Hence, indigenisation and Africanisation in decolonising teacher education curriculum enhances core values to be promoted for better societies. Indigenisation and Africanisation are drivers of *Ubuntu*, communism, and humanism. Diverse South African societies require a culture of interrelationships amongst community members for interdependence. *Ubuntu*, a key factor in communism, encourages pre-service teachers' teamwork rather than an individual working alone. Thus, indigenisation and Africanisation give prominent recognition to human service, cultural education, socio-economic education, as well as intellectual education in the context of South Africa.

Conversely, the inclusion of Africanisation enables African perspectives where pre-service teachers can see themselves in relationships with the global world. Therefore, Africanisation ensures the projection of an ideal teacher education curriculum that is capable of placing Africa at the centre of learning experiences. Thus, decolonising the teacher education curriculum is not really an endpoint, but the process of a new beginning for an ideal new curriculum that does not reject Western streams, but provides ideal learning content.

The Ideal Teacher Education Curriculum

The question remains: what is or should be the ideal teacher education curriculum, especially in the South African context?, which is the focus of this study. There are different reasons why ideal teacher education is required. For instance, South Africa is framed by many major landmark changes that cut across socio-economic, technological, and political spaces,

which require pre-service teachers' intellectual engagements to relate to hegemonic intellectual spaces as social change agent teachers (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). *"[D]ecolonisation [which] according to Sayed et al (2017) is characterised as a 'process of expanding imaginations' (p. 61) provides a way of enabling teacher education to prepare students for new world views".* This process involves rethinking and re-imagining learning contents or experiences that count as rigorous, relevant, and critical scholarship for more inclusive teacher education. Diouf and Mamdani (1994), as well as Tilley (2011), contend that it is important for South African students to develop their own capacity to theorise their own conditions or situations. Mafeje (1971) sees this as students' paying careful empirical attention to their diverse lived realities. Expanding intellectual spaces in South African HEIs for broader engagement with decolonisation enables students in HEIs to acquire intellectual horizons that accommodate diverse isolated and neglected contexts (Mamdani, 1998; Wa Thiong'o, 2005; Mama, 2015; Mbembe, 2015; Diagne, & Adjemian, 2016). Additionally, Leibowitz (2012) posits that the transformative responsibilities of teacher education in South Africa include the promotion of the public good through students' moral and ethical dispositions. Becker, De Wet, and Van Vollenhoven (2015) argue that education content should be transformative and caring, premised on freedom, dignity, and equality. Post-apartheid higher education in South Africa requires transformation to broaden the curriculum and create diverse social spaces in the South African context. Thus, it can be deduced from the foregoing that the ideal curriculum for teacher education will be capable of expanding intellectual spaces through decolonisation. The topical issues then become: how can such intellectual spaces be expanded through decolonisation? How can the curriculum of teacher education be successfully decolonised? Hence the reason for the next section, which presents the conception(s) of decolonisation in HEIs towards achieving the ideal teacher education curriculum following the steps presented by Jansen (2017).

This chapter adopts Jansen's (2017) six different conceptions of decolonisation in higher education as a conceptual framework for decolonising curriculum. The conceptions provide an understanding that can guide decolonising teacher education curriculum, to attain more inclusive teacher education in South Africa. Jansen's (2017) six conceptions of decolonisation in HEIs is as presented and explained below, especially in the context of this study.

Decolonising curriculum as the additive-inclusive knowledge

Oelofsen (2015) argues that there is a need for humanising pedagogy in higher education curricula to decolonise the African mind, by incorporating African concepts in various HEIs. Meanwhile, Adefila *et al.* (2022) posit that in a diverse country like South Africa, the teaching profession is quite challenging and demanding as teachers need to teach in multicultural and complicated classrooms. For instance, South Africa is multilingual and the adoption of all 11 official languages as languages of instruction in HEIs poses a challenge to the accommodation of indigenous languages in educational institutions. Also, institutional structures in most HEIs are rigidly structured in Western designs that exclude or do not recognise African contexts (Sayed *et al.*, 2017). Hence, additive-inclusive knowledge, which is social justice-driven, is what students should be exposed to in teacher education. Additive-inclusive knowledge aims at recognising and accommodating African indigenous knowledge in the curricula content, by using the curricula content-driven additive approach to decolonising teacher education. Jansen (2017) calls for additive-inclusive knowledge that will fuse the existing Western knowledge that dominates teacher education curriculum with African knowledge together as knowledge canons for the institutions. Thus, Sayed *et al.* (2017) aver that various existing modules or courses need to be revised to accommodate new contents that recognise appropriate African knowledge that can address the realities that exist in additive-inclusive knowledge for pre-service teachers. The new additive-inclusive knowledge provides students with varied

opportunities to critique, and not just to receive, learning experiences. The foregoing implies that to ensure additive-inclusive knowledge through decolonisation in South Africa, the incorporation of African concepts, cultures, and values, amongst others, is to be ensured in HEIs through the provision made available by the curriculum of teacher education. This implies the need to revise different existing modules to ensure that they accommodate new, relevant content capable of promoting additive-inclusive knowledge for pre-service teachers. In this regard, pre-service teachers can be taught how and allowed to infuse African (South African) related content into the curriculum without restructuring it.

Decolonising curriculum as the decentring of European knowledge

Sayed *et al.* (2017) argue that realigning the curriculum in African contexts with the integration of African ideals, values, knowledge, and achievements alongside the European worldview would better prepare students for the realities of their own living contexts. This is viewed as a transformation of the curriculum through Africanisation. By placing African knowledge in the centre, pre-service teachers would acquire inclusive teacher education that incorporates the diversity that exists. Pre-service teaching programmes need to engage students with a decolonised curriculum to enable them to have a better understanding of their origins, societies, history, ambitions, achievements, and future (Jansen, 2017). Studies conclude that the content of various modules or learning activities in teacher education is centred on Western knowledge and calls for decentring the curriculum to reflect the students' environmental context (Fomunyam 2014; McKaiser 2016; Le Grange, 2017; Heleta, 2016). This concurs with Feris (2017), who asserts that decolonising the curriculum in higher education means challenging the Eurocentric epistemologies that South Africa's higher education offers to students, which does not acknowledge social justice. In Lebeloane's (2017) view, the internalisation of indigenous experiences is critical to students' engagement in

universities as well as outside the context of the universities. This implies that the need for South African HEIs to question Eurocentric epistemologies offered to students would be paramount. This is envisaged to enable South African HEIs to cater for the immediate need of society. By so doing, it is African knowledge that is bound to be promoted, possibly alongside relevant Eurocentric practices. This implies the case of glocalisation, which is used to mean using a global standard to proffer solution(s) to local challenges.

Decolonising curriculum as a critical engagement with settled knowledge

According to Jansen (2017), the settled knowledge (or the resident curriculum) needs to be critiqued through critical engagement, asking questions such as these: *"Where did this knowledge come from? In whose interest does this knowledge persist? What does it include and leave out? What are its authoritative claims? What are the underlying assumptions and silences that govern such knowledge?"* (Jansen, 2017, p. 161). In the context of South Africa, the teacher education curriculum should be designed to critically engage students in knowledge construction, using a variety of approaches they consider sufficiently diverse and beneficial to knowledge constructs in learning experiences and processes. The students' ability to critique knowledge through diverse processes could ascertain and eliminate things about the past that they do not like. This introduces an element of social justice into learning, creating opportunities for them to become critical thinkers and also agents of change. As Le Grange (2017) points out, critical involvement with a curriculum of this kind is a means of ultimately transforming students. By implication, the teacher education curriculum is expected to enable the students to view the same set of problems with new lenses, making use of new theories, methods, and perspectives. Hence, critical engagement with settled knowledge is popular in promoting the philosophy of the people in the students (Le Grange, 2017). Meanwhile, according to Chilisa (2012) and Luckett (2016), critical engagement with settled knowledge in the

present teacher education curriculum seems to be lacking. Le Grange *et al.* (2020) hold the view that the curriculum tends to make provision for students to continuously regurgitate colonial ideologies which do not foster more inclusive teacher education. Ngugi (2005) calls this regurgitation epistemicide. Jansen's (2017) concern is that a Eurocentric knowledge base does not allow students to express their own concerns and views from their own references. Thus, the South African teacher education curriculum is expected to be designed to allow students to express their own concerns and views from their own references. This is expected to promote, amongst others, indigenous cultural values, knowledge, and easy comprehension, since students would not be taught in the abstract. Thus, students are to be exposed to an open mind towards learning and to be able to question all forms of knowledge in order to learn.

Decolonising curriculum as encounters with entangled knowledges

According to Jansen (2017), the decolonising curriculum ensures the recognition and accommodation of local knowledge. HEIs are the citadels of learning where learning experiences are expected to be diversely situated within entangled knowledge and should provide students with the necessary spaces and approaches to encounter such. It is important to recognise that humans have varied knowledge according to their existence, which is crucial to how and what they acquire as additional knowledge. According to Mbembe (2015), Heleta (2016), and CHE (2017), learning experiences from the Eurocentric knowledge remain entangled unless students have encounters that enable them to understand the entangled knowledges, overtly and covertly providing students with content knowledge that is rigidly constructed in the mould of colonial education. Jansen (2017) advocates for a break with the curricula in HEIs that do not provide students with the opportunities to challenge entangled knowledges. Thus, Jansen (2017) calls for a curriculum that is based on social justice to provide learning experiences that have more

impact(s) on the students. Thus, it is important in present post-apartheid South Africa for pre-service teachers to be exposed to the curriculum that will prepare them for the diverse social spaces that exist in the country through their engagement with the same entangled knowledges in order to attain more inclusive teacher education, thereby promoting social justice.

Decolonising curriculum to repatriate occupied knowledge

The curriculum is a series of potential experiences given to students to model their thinking and action (Fomunyam, 2014). It is perceived that *"Western, colonial, and Eurocentric knowledge is normative and universal; contrary to the Indigenous local knowledge"* (Mahabeer, 2018, p. 10). Hence, the call to decolonise curriculum is gaining prominence because the components of the present curriculum comprise Westernised and Eurocentric knowledge, which influences the minds of the students in teacher education. Jansen (2017) argues that curriculum can be decolonised to repatriate the colonised minds of the pre-service teachers from wholly Western knowledge into more decolonised intellectual spaces, where indigenous peoples' voices are recognised for social justice. According to him, this reparative approach necessitates the calls for the additive-inclusive decolonised curriculum model in pursuit of more inclusive education for diverse students. The additive-inclusive approach to decolonising curriculum is described as *"a kind of inclusion in a form of enclosure, dangerous in how it domesticates decolonisation"* (Jansen, 2017, p. 163). Chilisa (2012) posits that the present HEIs in South Africa are characterised by the implementation of colonised systems, which include the curricula. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) further explains that decolonisation not only entails pushing back the physical process but also dismantles all epistemic projects, which need to put the students on the right track to knowing that what colonialism has imposed on them is epistemicide. Thus, the need to revisit the curriculum of South African teacher education is pivotal.

Africanisation of Western knowledge to decolonise the curriculum

According to Jansen (2017), rather than making Africa the centre of the curriculum in teacher education, the Pan-African scholars are advocating for a shift from Western knowledge, ideals, and achievements to a total African context. This is seen as Africanising the teacher education curriculum. Not only the curriculum is to be decolonised as an Africanised curriculum, but also the pedagogies and textbooks to be composed by African authors, to reflect true social justice and for more inclusive teacher education. Mbembe (2015) interprets decolonising curriculum as a process of making the curriculum wholly African-based. Considering the works of Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, Kwame Nkrumah, and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, it seems that deeper insights can be drawn from using African knowledge to frame Western knowledge, in the process of decolonising teacher education curriculum. In contrast, Le Grange (2016) argues that decolonising the curriculum for teacher education means reviewing Western knowledge from African perspectives, which does not translate into destroying Western knowledge but decentring it to accommodate indigenous knowledge. Hence, the call for decolonising teacher education in South Africa continues to gather momentum, as there is an urgent need for pre-service teachers to be engaged with learning experiences that relate to their own environmental context. Insights into decolonising teacher education curriculum have been drawn from extant literature to strengthen the discourse on the phenomenon while Jansen's (2017) conceptions explicitly provide an argument for re-imagining a teacher education curriculum that promotes social justice. This suggests that the conceptions are indicative of the need for the content of teacher education to engage pre-service teachers in critical engagement with learning experiences based on settled knowledge. Thus, a decolonised curriculum is envisaged to be capable of helping students to address diverse contexts in South African realities. The pre-service teachers' encounter with various entangled knowledges provides them with opportunities to repatriate occupied knowledge and to shift from Eurocentric-dominated

knowledge. Thus, decolonising teacher education for pre-service teachers promotes the Africanisation of existing Western knowledge. Sayed *et al.* (2017) warn, however, that decolonisation of the teacher education curriculum is a complicated and multi-layered process, where lecturers' diverse understanding, intellectual backgrounds, different institutional contexts as well as their approaches to their students are key factors in the decolonising of the curriculum. Drawing attention to another aspect, Mamdani (2007) emphasises that decolonisation of higher education is necessary to explore discourses that have been kept silent in teacher education programmes. This shows that an attempt at the decolonisation of the curriculum of teacher education in South Africa may be complex, based on different personal and institutional factors. However, the need for such remains crucial. In this regard, students should be made to appreciate themselves and their values as Africans.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The roles of teachers in every society, inclusive of South Africa, remain crucial as they influence the level of societal growth and development. Meanwhile, the impact(s) of the roles of teachers are hampered due to various challenges such as policies, and lack of infrastructure, amongst others. In the context of this study, it was realised that existing South African educational policies, which are Eurocentric, tend to influence the learning abilities of students, and students during their 2015 to 2016 student movement protests that rocked South Africa's universities, called for the decolonisation of higher education, as part of their demand. This is an envisaged attempt to give indigenous people voices in their learning experiences. Hence, this study adds to the discourse on decolonising teacher education curriculum to make pre-service teachers relevant at grassroots levels, where their cultural beliefs, indigenous attitudes, and global perspectives of balanced classroom practices are taken care of in a dynamic curriculum context. This is expected to help the pre-service teachers to identify who they are and what is

applicable to them in their diverse multicultural contexts in post-apartheid South Africa, before transferring knowledge to their students. Meanwhile, the long-dominant influence of coloniality on HEIs and the need for decolonised minds are necessary to help proffer solutions to lingering challenges. It is established that decolonising teacher education curriculum is deeply rooted in complexities, and critical engagements are the keys to integrating African contexts into Western Eurocentric worldviews. This will enable pre-service teachers to demonstrate proactiveness and enthusiasm. This discursive chapter opens up further research for a pragmatic review of teacher education curriculum for a well-contextualised transformation. Hence, teacher education curriculum should embrace a customised disciplinary approach, to cater for all diversities in realities. Subsequent to the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Since students require knowledge that is appropriate to their societal needs, and decolonising teacher education curriculum will provide pre-service teachers a training platform to engage with the challenges and problems of learners, the need to revise the curriculum for teacher education becomes important.
- Different perspectives exist on the concept of decolonisation amongst various stakeholders of HEIs in South Africa. Their perspectives influence their stand on how pre-service teachers should be appropriately trained as social change agents who can appreciate South African diversities. Hence, relevant platforms should be made available to sensitise people about the notion of decolonisation in this regard.
- Academics should be professionally developed to be able to transform their classroom practices while infusing and promoting indigenous values. Thus, periodic training, such as how to ensure the smooth inclusion of African content without distorting or restructuring the curriculum, is of the essence.
- Policies on HEIs in South Africa should be designed to provide clear directions for recognition of African contexts,

and at the same time accommodate and promote African philosophy or indigenous knowledge systems within the teacher education curriculum.
- Glocalisation, as against globalisation, should be promoted. Glocalisation in this sense means allowing for local needs to be met using global standards, where necessary.

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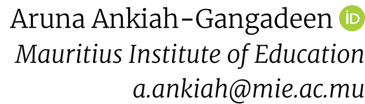
Chapter 9

Walking the Tightrope of Decolonisation in Education: Critically Gauging Curriculum Emancipation in SIDS Contexts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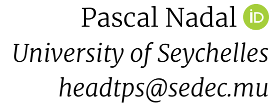
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Abstract

This chapter begins with an examination of two emancipatory moves in the Mauritian curriculum, namely the introduction of technical subjects and Mauritian Creole at upper secondary level with the responsibility for curriculum development, assessment and certification attributed to local institutions. It offsets these decisions with similar curricular experiences in the Seychelles, another SIDS that shares the geographical location and colonial past of Mauritius. While these enfranchising acts appear momentous against the backdrop of pervasive colonial influences, we choose to adopt a different lens for a better understanding of the phenomenon in current times. A consideration of the politics-educational policy-curriculum nexus within a world market economy brings to light the risk of anamorphic readings of the situation, whereby the distinction between colonial and global forces is blurred. In a compressed world where boundaries have ceased to exist, we argue that turning inwards may merely reinforce insularity

instead of enabling SIDS to achieve their vision of economic resilience. Placing the aspirations of the youth (the consumers of the curriculum) and the aspirations of SIDS at the centre, we make a case for the establishment of a creolised curriculum for global citizenship. We affirm that this strategic and pragmatic move recognises the need and sees the opportunity to plough from available resources for the country's advancement.

Keywords: *curriculum decolonisation, SIDS, creolised curriculum, global citizenship*

Introduction

While delineating the schism between the local needs of Mauritius, a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), and the country's attempts to fulfil economic aspirations like the 'big' countries, Nadal *et al.* (2017) argue that insular needs should not be overshadowed by drives towards internationalisation. Instead, indigenous knowledges should be preserved and valorised. In the field of education for example, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) should be given its rightful place rather than be kept as a 'second best option by default'. Along the same lines of thought, Bray (2016, p.6) posits that endeavours in the educational domain, just as in others, should be carried out in relation to the particularities of SIDS, since they *"are not just small versions of large states. Rather, they have distinctive features that demand particular strategies for development."* Interestingly, even though Maistry (2021) contends that dislodgement or dismantling from hegemonic Western frameworks is not a given, five years into the implementation of a major educational reform, we note some rather bold emancipatory curricular moves in Mauritius. These are occurring despite the predominant mindset nested in neo-colonial beliefs that (over)value Western epistemology and certification. Two initiatives are particularly noteworthy. First, the introduction of a new branch of studies, namely 'Technology Education', in Grades 10 and 11. Secondly, Mauritian Creole, the undisputed mother tongue of most Mauritians, is now being offered at these same levels. Not only

are the curricula of both subjects homegrown and tailored to the local context, but the assessment and certification are also overseen by local institutions. It is notable that these subjects are considered on a par with those offered at School Certificate level and examined by the Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) – the significance of which is brought out below.

The decolonisation of the curriculum adds an intricate layer to curriculum studies. This movement situates itself within manifestations of identity and questions established epistemic notions. Although decolonial discourses may be from ideological, political, sociological or other perspectives, they attribute centre stage to identity construction, voice and representation in discussions on the relevance and appropriateness of the curriculum. The current chapter is a deep reflection on the challenges of decolonising the curriculum in a context of globalisation and internationalisation. It adds to the "complicated conversations" advocated by Le Grange *et al.* (2020: na) by engaging in a critical reflection on curricular enfranchisement in the Mauritian educational sector and providing insights into similar thrusts in the Seychelles, a comparable SIDS context. Both islands are located in the Indian Ocean, to the east of Africa. They are former French and British colonies, hence the significant status of French and English in addition to the local language, Mauritian Creole. Symptomatic of *"a mindset which sees the colonial languages as the given carriers of knowledge"* (Deutschmann & Zelime, 2022, p. 61), English is the medium of instruction in Seychelles though, with time, some allowance was made for the learners' first language. In Mauritius, the learners' first language can be used for support during the first three years of primary schooling, as per the Education Ordinance (Colony of Mauritius, 1957), a colonial language-in-education policy. In the case of the Seychelles, Seychellois Creole is the medium of instruction in the first two years of primary schooling. The shift to English occurs as from Primary 3 through an early exit transitional bilingual model of education. The education systems of Mauritius and

the Seychelles are modelled on that of the British, namely six years of primary schooling followed by seven years of secondary schooling. Though the curriculum is developed locally, mainstream educational offers for 'academically gifted' learners remain solidly entrenched in the international examinations tradition associated with so-called 'prestigious' qualifications like the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) or the 'Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française' (DELF), an official qualification in French language delivered by the French Ministry of Education. Both islands have a highly examinations-oriented system (Deutschmann & Zelime, 2022), where academic achievement is prized as the pathway to social mobility. On the other hand, technical and vocational areas are relegated to those who do not meet the expectations of mainstream education. Such conditioning, Allais (2020) reveals, is yet another aspect of Africa's colonial legacy.

This brief backdrop highlights the deep mooring of the islands' education system in that of the West and helps bring out the gutsy nature of curricular emancipation, limited as this may be. Yet, whilst we underscore the progressive nature of decolonisation pursuits, we nonetheless acknowledge the difficulties of completely breaking away from Western influences due to the prevalence of global trends, the necessity for small islands to be part of the world market and the aspirations of the people.

Caught in the nets of globalisation and internationalisation

In the field of education, attempts to decolonise the curriculum (eg, see Kassaye, 2014, and Kim, Lee & Joo, 2014, regarding Ethiopia and South Korea respectively) are faced with a simultaneous sweeping movement towards the internationalisation of the curriculum, the perceived route to economic prosperity and enhanced mobility across the world. The necessity of being part of the internationalisation – or

in some instances, as in the case of Poland (Pachet & Seabra, 2014) Europeanisation - of the curriculum for economic reasons can be noted across continents. While this tendency is more apparent in the Higher Education sector, the school curriculum has not been spared. Pachet and Seabra (2014, p. 402) argue that, during the previous few decades, most diverse political and social contexts have driven the education and thus, the curriculum agenda *"by economic policies whose orientations follow globalised decisions (...) and the adoption of accountability policies that are anchored in a perspective of technical rationality connected to market principles."* Such an approach, they go on to say, bespeaks "*technicist orientations*" (Pachet & Seabra, 2014, p. 403) to knowledge construction and a "*utilitarian vision of school*" (Pachet & Seabra, 2014, p. 403). This prompts the epistemic question: 'What is to be included in the curriculum?'

Traditionally, the curriculum is defined as *"an official statement of what students are expected to know and be able to do"* (Levin, 2008, p.8). However, the nature of the knowledge to be acquired clearly varies in relation to the times and prevailing forces. In the colonial era, globalisation had led to the spread of colonial knowledge to the detriment of indigenous knowledges that were vilified (Maile, 2021). Today, the same trend may be noted with the difference that 'foreign' knowledge is no longer imposed but, rather, embraced for the benefits it brings. Despite protests against a Euro-centric or 'white' curriculum (Bird & Pitman, 2020; Choat, 2021) and movements like #RhodesMustFall, the propensity towards the internationalisation of the curriculum appears in various guises, such as foreign language study in Taiwan (Jeng-Jye *et al.*, 2014), and the endeavour to reduce *"disparities between Israeli educational achievements and those in leading world economies"* (Mathisa & Sabar, 2014, p. 260). The appeal that the internationalised curriculum represents can even be seen in the form of universalised tests, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), that measure students from disparate contexts around the world according to the same attainment standards, thereby (we may argue)

prompting countries partaking in this assessment to gear their learning programme accordingly. As Anderson-Levitt (2008) avers, *"[w]hoever holds the power to set the test questions is shaping definitions of a global intended curriculum"* (p. 362).

What makes market-driven curricular conversations within a global space more significant in small island contexts? While globalisation has brought its fair share of benefits to SIDS, thanks to advancement in travel and technology, it has enhanced the fragility of such contexts because *"they are usually 'takers' rather than the makers of the world economic* policies" (Crossley *et al.*, 2009, p.3). Further, Encontre (1999) stresses that SIDS risk economic marginalisation due to their inability to keep pace with the fierce competition in the trade arena. Another hazard resulting from a shrunken world is the inability of any country to be sheltered from the blowback of events happening outside its borders. Two stark contemporary examples illustrate this. We all witnessed how the COVID-19 pandemic, which originated in China, spread across the globe like wildfire. The subsequent impact on the health sector and economy is something for which no country had a buffer. Similarly, the economic consequences of the current war between Russia and Ukraine are being felt all over the world. It is increasingly necessary, therefore, for SIDS to match the potential of 'Big States' for their own survival and to achieve their vision of economic resilience.

According to the Education Strategy 2014–2021 (UNESCO, 2014, p. 15):

> *The growing importance of the knowledge economy has profound implications for the role of education as a determinant of economic growth. Increasingly, countries' ability to compete in the global economy and to respond to existing and emerging challenges depends on their education systems' ability to impart foundation skills, which enable further learning, and to impart transversal skills, which foster mobility. Therefore, it is more important than ever for economic growth strategies to be underpinned by an education and training system which develops a literate and trainable workforce.*

The stakes for SIDS with limited or no natural resources, one of their several vulnerabilities (Tu'akoi *et al.*, 2018; Jules, 2012), are more consequential, as these countries bank highly on their human resources. Former colonies, like Mauritius, rely mainly on education - hence, curriculum as capital. This emerges very clearly in the Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008–2020 (Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2009, p.1), which spells out the country's educational vision, namely "*(a) Quality Education for all and a Human Resource Development base to transform Mauritius into an intelligent nation-state in the vanguard of global progress and innovation.*" This very telling statement foregrounds the activation of policy levers in curriculum planning, and thus in determining what goes into the curriculum.

The gamble of international testing

As an offshoot of the tension between indigenous and global drives in curriculum content, a similar conundrum crops up when it comes to assessment. On the one hand, it is generally accepted that national assessment systems offer meaningful and localised benchmarks to evaluate competences developed according to standards defined by domestic educational policies reflecting the country's needs and aspirations (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2003). However, the lure provided by international assessments can and should in no way be minimised, especially in contexts where education represents the main gateway to socioeconomic advancement (Nadal *et al.*, 2017). The latter observation is particularly true in situations where the remnants of former colonial educational policies are still visible and appealing to many (Fleisch *et al.*, 2019), and where the urge to break the fetters of insularity in search of greener and larger pastures abroad is ever-present (Nadal *et al.*, 2017).

Thus, whilst we note that a number of sub-Saharan African countries - like Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania - have devised their own national assessment system at secondary level (where the

reliance on international certification is generally more pronounced, given the stakes for university admission), other countries have opted for regional continental forms of certification. For instance, countries like Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone enrol candidates for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). As its name implies, the WASSCE is a standardised test administered by the West African Examinations Council for anglophone West African countries. Even though not all seven key domains of learning are tested, certifications of this nature signal the coming together of formerly colonised countries to set up assessment systems that can carry more weight than national tests. In so doing, the ties with reputed traditional examining bodies from the northern hemisphere may be severed.

However, a number of sub-Saharan countries, like Lesotho, Mauritius, Seychelles, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, still resort to an examining body like CAIE for the enrolment of candidates in 'O'-level, 'A'-level and IGCSE examinations (Cheng & Omoeva, 2014). In the case of Zimbabwe, Fleisch *et al.* (2019) remark that the recourse to Cambridge international examinations alongside assessments that are locally organised by the Zimbabwe Schools Education Council (ZIMSEC) constitutes an example of the *"coexistence of the new and the old"* (p. ix). Fleisch *et al.* (2019) point out that, far from being an anecdotal occurrence, the *"trade-offs between the 'Western' and the 'African' knowledge systems will be influenced by the ongoing debates about decolonising the curriculum"* (p. xii).

One such debate concerns the influence of imported high stakes standardised tests on learners' critical perspectives. For Ekoh (2012), who focused on the Nigerian education system, this situation leads to an erosion of the critical African worldview. Even though we will here refrain from comparing Nigeria and Mauritius, as the two contexts have widely disparate realities, a number of observations about the situation in Nigeria resonate with local considerations in Mauritius. For instance, certificates from international examining bodies are perceived as bearers of pride and prestige (Dillard, 2001) in both contexts. This in turn leads

to a commoditisation of education that ends up hailing Western identity instead of really liberating and transforming local mindsets, as educational curricula should normally do (Omolewa, 2006). Also, the difficulty to *"[adapt] African knowledges into a colonially imported style of education"* (Ekoh, 2012, p. 34) does not work towards the creation of recognitive social justice (Woods *et al.*, 2012), which aims at allowing the learner to meaningfully interact with the curriculum in a bottom-top manner (Meo, 2005).

Moreover, the long-observed obsession with white-collar employment opportunities afforded by certificates from international examining bodies (Kitchen, 1962) has led to a situation in Africa whereby *"manual and agricultural work which had hitherto, been the basis for the individual's social esteem [...] became diminished in value"* (Ekoh, 2012, p. 26). This reminds us of the prevailing situation in Mauritius and the Seychelles (Purvis, 2004), where *"the TVET sector has been – and still is – perceived as the poor relation of the [...] educational system, attracting a substantial portion of drop-outs from the mainstream channel"* (Nadal *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, in both contexts, the outcome of a national exam at Grade 9 level determines if learners can carry on with their secondary studies in a full-fledged academic stream where assessment is conducted by an international examining body in Grades 11 and 13, or whether they will be earmarked for the TVET stream, where they will be exposed to locally designed and assessed programmes.

The case of the Seychelles warrants particular attention here, as – at the school's discretion – some vocational stream learners enrolled in the General Pathway Programme (i.e. those who did not qualify to read for the fully academic IGCSE or DELF examinations) may still be allowed to follow part of the DELF/IGCSE programme if they demonstrate that they have the capacity and the will to commit to extra efforts alongside the technical studies that they undertake at school and through work attachment. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that efforts towards the valorisation of local TVET programmes are visible both in the Mauritian and Seychellois education systems. In the latter system, for example, learners

who have completed their IGCSE may still opt for admission to specialised technical and vocational schools. These schools operate in areas like agriculture, technology, maritime studies, and tourism - the last two contributing to forming manpower in fisheries and tourism, two fields that constitute the cornerstone of the island's economy (Senaratne, 2021). TVET learners who have achieved more advanced academic standards than their peers from the General Pathway Programme may qualify for enrolment in courses offered at a higher level than the usual Apprenticeship Schemes proposed by centres of professional learning. A similar provision has materialised in Mauritius with the adoption of the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform in 2015, as it is henceforth possible for learners to be channelled towards TVET centres and polytechnics through multiple exit routes after the 9th, 11th and 13th grades of their schooling journey.

Undoubtedly, the valorisation of TVET courses to answer the domestic needs of the island in collaboration with local Tertiary Education Institutions (TEIs) like the University of Mauritius and the University of Technology of Mauritius remains a laudable initiative. However, it should be highlighted that one major preoccupation of Polytechnics Mauritius, the body set up to achieve the vision of the country in the field of technical formation, has so far been the securing of partnerships with foreign universities and international entities from countries like Australia, Switzerland and Malaysia for the accreditation or co-awarding of its qualifications. These affiliations with so-called prestigious foreign institutions of higher education are proudly advertised on the institution's website. Somehow, even when it comes to devising programmes that are not entirely academic and that aim at fulfilling local industry needs, it seems challenging for service providers from developing countries to do away with the 'international label' preoccupation.

To revert to the regular academic secondary education stream, the recourse to high-stakes international examinations nurtures a sense of educational elitism that proves detrimental - and, therefore, undemocratic - to a

large segment of the student population (Omolewa, 1982). A similar pyramid of exclusion operates in Mauritius, due essentially to the academic 'casualties' brought about by the system's shortcomings, including at the level of assessment (Callikan, 2019).

If in the case of Nigeria, the urge to access the handful of institutions offering the best chances to satisfy the high-stakes certificate requirements has led to malpractices like bribery and fraud (Omolewa, 1982), in Mauritius it fuels a different phenomenon: that of shadow education (Foondun, 2002). Indeed, it is an established practice for Mauritian learners enrolled in public - and, therefore, 'free' - schools to attend paid private tuition sessions either after school hours or during weekends. Often a lucrative and unregulated business activity, these sessions draw crowds of learners that may at times be as large as or even larger than the 'regular' classroom population size at school. Moreover, they may sometimes be serviced by the same teachers entrusted with the teaching of the subjects at the public schools where the learners are enrolled.

Given that shadow education is a reality at primary level, where national examinations are conducted, the prevalence of private tuition as an educational practice cannot therefore be solely attributed to the dependence on international examining bodies. However, it can hardly be disputed that the aspiration to succeed in Cambridge's 'A'-level examinations at the end of the secondary school cycle exacerbates the practice of resorting to private tuition. The implications in this case are that success in these high-stakes international examinations is a critical door opener either to the world of work or to that of prestigious universities, especially for those students competing for scholarships.

Language in education: The added stake

The last aspect that will be considered in this section is that of the language used as medium of instruction and testing. As posited by Zelime *et al.* (2018, p. 18), *"examples*

from different parts of the African continent clearly illustrate the potential negative impact that L2 medium of instruction and examination can have on learners' academic achievement." In Mauritius as well, year in and year out, local examination reports by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate draw attention to the fact that, even at primary level, candidates perform poorly in subjects like Mathematics, Science, and History and Geography, essentially because they find it difficult to understand and respond to high-order and open-ended questions set in English for national examinations (Rivet, 2016). We can, therefore, deduce the added difficulty that international examinations set in English pose to candidates sitting for examinations in subjects that entail an increasing level of complexity throughout their secondary schooling journey.

A similar observation about the adverse effect of a second or foreign or additional language medium on academic performance can be made about the 'highly exam-oriented' (Deutschmann & Zelime, 2014, p. 70) system in place in the Seychelles. As high-stakes final examinations take place in English there as well, *"advanced writing skills in the L2 are essential and a gatekeeper to educational success in all subjects"* (Deutschmann & Zelime, 2014, p. 70). Consequently, learners often fall short of the required level of mastery in the L2 *"to meet the goals of the curriculum [...] or to meet the practical demands of communicating subject-specific knowledge in writing"* (Deutschmann & Zelime, 2014, p. 70). Studies conducted in other contexts, such as in Hong Kong, have come to the same conclusion. For instance, as part of a quantitative study on the learning of biology through a bilingual learning programme, Yuen Yi Lo and Xuyan (2021) showed that the demands in terms of productive language skills (especially writing) proved more taxing for learners who took the biology test in a second language than for those who answered in their mother tongue.

In the light of such glaring evidence of academic prejudices brought about by curriculum mismatches and maladjusted assessment systems, why do countries –

especially small vulnerable developing states - still insist on the cachet that confer academic affiliations with international service providers? Is there more to be lost than gained by departing from the diktat of former colonial influence from the northern hemisphere? This is the question we answer using Mauritius as a case study.

Decolonial moves in the Mauritian curriculum

The NYCBE brought changes in the schooling sector, amongst which the added emphasis on TVET in a system that, as discussed above, is predominantly academic. This educational provision is undoubtedly tardy since the Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had, a decade before, already identified TVET as a significant area for sustainable employment (United Nations, 2005). The Ministry of Education has recently strengthened the move triggered in the educational reform by working on the introduction of a technical branch at upper secondary level to open up pathways for both mainstream students and Extended Programme[1] students to specialise in this area by eventually joining polytechnics. This major change has a twofold impact. First, it highlights the significance of technical competencies for the country's workforce and an appreciation of added opportunities that these competencies offer on the job market[2]. Secondly, it led to the development of a homegrown and 'home-assessed' programme, as all the expertise at

1 Students who do not clear the end-of-primary education examinations after six years of primary schooling are channeled to the Extended Programme at the secondary level. There, they are afforded fours years of study (instead of three for mainstream learners) that culminate in their participation in the National Certificate of Education (NCE) examinations.

2 In September 2022, a first batch of 371 students graduated from Polytechnics Mauritius in high-demand labour market fields such as Health Sciences and Nursing, IT and Emerging Technologies, and Tourism and Hospitality (Jugnauth: 'La

the levels of curriculum development and evaluation lies in local institutions. Indeed, the portfolio of subjects that this area will comprise will be based on the needs of Mauritian industry, such as hospitality. Further, assessment will not be conducted by CAIE, but by the National Examinations Board. The certification to be issued by the University of Mauritius will be considered on par with that from CAIE. While this initiative may be deemed a celebratory break from the Western grip, it must nevertheless be pointed out that local institutions were entrusted with the entire project after attempts to secure consultancy services from the West were unsuccessful. This goes a long way to show how indigenous resources are still marginalised even when the curriculum must be closely aligned with the local reality and industry needs, and the examining body has the requisite expertise.

The above remark is even more pertinent for the second policy decision case studied in this chapter, as it concerns the teaching and learning of Mauritian Creole (hereafter referred to as 'MC') at secondary level. MC is the sole home language of almost 85% of the population, way ahead of French (less than 4%) for example (Central Statistics Office, 2011). Nevertheless, it was only after years of struggle by advocates from diverse borders (Nadal & Ankiah-Gangadeen, 2021) that, in 2012, MC was finally introduced in Grade 1 as an optional subject on par with ancestral and heritage languages already taught at school, such as Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Modern Chinese and Arabic. Nine years later, as learners of MC were about to sit for the National Certificate of Education (NCE) examinations, serious questions arose about the future of the language, given that post-Grade 9 examinations offered in Mauritian secondary schools are conducted by CAIE. Would the latter be willing and able to offer MC to a small group of candidates from just one small island as part of the wide range of 'O'-level subjects it proposes as an international examining body? Was MC meant to have a future beyond Grade 9, as is the case for other optional languages in the curriculum, or

réforme de l'éducation répond aux intelligences multiples', 2022).

was it meant to fall into oblivion past the stage when national examinations are held? And should MC be offered beyond Grade 9, how would it be certified and which examining body would be entrusted with this task?

When the official response finally came, it was announced that CAIE would not be examining Mauritian candidates in MC. The decision, taken by a ministerial committee presided by the Prime Minister himself, was to opt for a homegrown solution, with the University of Mauritius being entrusted with the award of a National School Certificate in MC (Groëme-Harmon, 2021). It was pointed out that this local qualification would be on par with the international 'O'-level qualifications awarded by CAIE, eg, for promotion to upper grades or even as a gateway to employment in some sectors. Two distinct sets of reactions followed this announcement. Some decried that the absence of an internationally recognised qualification for MC meant that it was being viewed as a 'second-class' subject. Others celebrated the fact that - after more than 50 years of independence - the country was at least starting to enfranchise itself from some colonial ties in the field of education. But, at the risk of displeasing those who upheld the latter view, it is worth recalling that the homegrown solution involving the local university as examining body and the local institute of education as curriculum developer was only sought after CAIE had communicated its unwillingness to include MC in the panoply of more than 40 subjects that it currently examines. Had CAIE's response been positive, the entire 'homegrown' discourse upon which the country is now priding itself may not even have arisen. In fact, securing CAIE's agreement to assess the island's vernacular language would probably have been hailed as an unprecedented feat by a small island that strives to play in the big leagues!

These two nuanced cases of curriculum decolonisation in Mauritius are quite telling and propel us towards a broader reflection on the difficulty of completely shaking off colonisation, be it of the mind or in action, in contemporary times. In the rest of the chapter, we engage more deeply with

this phenomenon, taking into consideration the parameters within which decolonisation occurs.

Rescripting the 'curriculum decolonisation' discourse

At the outset of this chapter, we foregrounded two enfranchising moves in the Mauritian curriculum and pointed out that these were, in truth, not an indication of complete emancipation from Western influences. Comparable curricular experiences in the Seychelles were discussed. A better understanding of the phenomenon called for its study within the broader socioeconomic context, especially that of SIDS. The literature reinforced the discussion by highlighting how the powerful currents emanating from globalisation underscored curriculum-related decisions, not only in small islands or postcolonial contexts but also in bigger and more advanced nations. This prompted us to readjust our lens. It became clear that an exclusive focus on curriculum content and assessment would be myopic and push us to reiterate commonly rehashed discourses about colonialism and neo-colonialism. It would have been easy to adopt this path as the two examples forming the crux of this chapter undoubtedly reveal traces of colonised mindsets whereby Western mores still dominate, and the local is viewed as a secondary or fall-back option. However, this would have been a partial and not wholly truthful reading of the situation, or rather an anamorphic stance (a notion we borrow from Jules, 2012) whereby we present a distorted image of reality. As mentioned above, curricular decisions cannot be viewed in a vacuum. Since these are linked to broader educational goals - which are themselves crafted to achieve the government's aspirations for the country - the intricate link between politics, educational policy and the curriculum (Kelly, 2009) needs to be acknowledged and made overt.

Two cases in point from Mauritius are particularly illustrative. First, as part of a Bilateral Agreement on Circular Migration between Canada and Mauritius (Global Forum on Migration and Development, 2018), the Mauritian Ministry

of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training facilitates the migration of Mauritian workers to Canada to operate mostly in blue collar sectors like food processing, cleaning services, welding and repairs, and mechanics and transport. At the same time, though, this ministry runs a special desk to facilitate the entry in Mauritius of foreign workers - mostly from countries like Bangladesh, India and Madagascar - to take employment principally in the manufacturing and construction industries. It is estimated that the number of workers from Bangladesh present in Mauritius has increased fivefold over the last 14 years (Bhuyan, 2019). Bangladeshis indeed account for more than half of the 45 000 foreign workers currently present in Mauritius (Hilbert, 2020).

Recently, it was reported that even tourism, the flagship sector of the Mauritian economy, might not be spared by the phenomenon of foreign labour recruitment (Hilbert, 2022). That is because of the incapacity of local hotel operators to fill up to 10 000 posts that will become vacant over the coming years. Chastened by the prolonged episode of COVID-19-induced border closure; in search of a better work-life balance; and attracted by the higher pay package offered by international cruise companies, the local workforce - especially young people - is no longer interested in taking up available positions in the domestic tourism sector. Consequently, the government is being compelled to consider pressing demands on the part of local hotel operators to envisage the recruitment of foreign workers (Hilbert, 2022) even though the country has always prided itself on the uniqueness and authenticity of the Mauritian smile as the linchpin of its touristic offer. Paradoxically, the total number of foreign workers employed in Mauritius is greater than the total figure of unemployed Mauritian nationals, signalling a mismatch between the country's labour needs and the people's professional aspirations (Hilbert, 2020). Therein lies the need for international global competence for an inclusive world (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018).

The current times thus call for rescripting the decolonial discourse and taking on the challenge of developing a curriculum for the global citizen. Such a curriculum is informed but not held back by the historical (colonial) past. For SIDS, it provides an opening rather than reinforces insularity. This is by no means indicative of a capitulative stance towards the dominant (Western) powers but, instead, a strategic and pragmatic move that recognises the need and sees the opportunity to plough from available resources for the country's advancement. It bespeaks the conscious agentic move of the subaltern from the periphery towards the centre. No consideration of what a curriculum should include can take place without the learners and yet, ironically, they remain marginalised from the whole debate. Today's youth is no longer held back by the contours of their birthplace. A quick Google search provides an insight into the extent of youth exodus all over the world. Borders, that had long grown fuzzy with advancement in transport, have ceased to exist with the advent of new technologies, fast food and brands. The aspirations of the youth cannot therefore be quashed through the imposition of a narrow curriculum that limits the scope of learning to what is solely local and contextual. With knowledge now available at the click of a mouse, the emphasis in curriculum design should be on competencies, skills and critical thinking in order to develop future citizens who can display flexibility and resilience in an effervescent world; and who can exert critical thinking and are sound decision-makers (Acedo & Hughes, 2014).

Yet, the paradigmatic shift to a curriculum for global citizenship does not entail blanketing contextual and cultural specificities that causes identity erasure. Instead of the 'MacDonaldisation' of the curriculum, we argue for the creolisation of the curriculum, with hallmarks that go beyond mere accommodation and assimilation and that, instead, target hybridisation as an ongoing process. This takes us to the concept of rhizomatic identity that Glissant (1997) reappropriated from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1980) on schizoanalysis in order to discuss the multiplicity

of racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, as well as the complexity of never-ending creolisation processes. According to Glissant (1997, p. 11), the rhizomatic thought is the principle underpinning *“the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other”.* With roots growing around other roots and sharing cultural bounds for the sprouting of new identities - often in unpredictable manners and places - the rhizome as a sturdy underground plant system that survives harsh seasons and terrains is an appropriate metaphor to depict modern-day curriculum development endeavours. These endeavours aim at enabling the emergence of agentic, resilient and cosmopolitanised 21st century learners who unilaterally embrace indigenous stimuli, without being impervious to exogenous influences. By drawing from surrounding elements as assets for his subsistence, this learner is prepared to live in what Glissant (1997) calls a ‘Tout-Monde’ in the title of his treatise. The ‘Tout-Monde’ precisely acknowledges and hails the differences and diversity present around us as characteristic and inescapable traits of our global world. As such, the curriculum for global citizenship acknowledges and valorises indigenous knowledges. Additionally, it recognises and addresses the shortcomings of the system.

Epilogue: The ‘Bleu de Nîmes’ allegory

As we reflect on the line of argument we pursued in relation to curriculum decolonisation in this chapter, an image inexorably resurfaces: that of the ‘Bleu de Nîmes’. This 72-metre superyacht was chartered for almost $1 million by the Government of Mauritius at the beginning of 2022 for a special mission. Indeed, as part of Mauritius’s long-standing diplomatic dispute with the UK over the ownership of the Chagos Archipelago (which it claims was unlawfully dismembered from its territory by the UK as a blackmailing deal in exchange for independence), the Mauritian government organised a much-talked-of expedition to the Chagos. Officially, the purpose was to carry out a scientific reef-mapping exercise, but the underlying political move

was apparent, especially following favourable international backing obtained from the UN General Assembly and the UN International Court of Justice. The political agenda was established when the delegation landed on one of the islands, hoisted the Mauritian flag there and sang the national anthem...

On the face of it, this does seem like a bold move by a small Indian Ocean island to end its decolonisation process from a major player from the Northern hemisphere. But is it really so? Two simple facts do the talking: i) The boat carrying the delegation had to be chartered from another country, as no vessel from Mauritius was available for such a long trip; ii) journalists on board were all from foreign media outlets (notably from the UK and France, the two former colonisers of the island, and from the USA - which is currently leasing one of the archipelago's islands from the UK to host a military base), as it was felt that local journalists would not be able to ensure adequate international coverage of the event.

The 'Bleu de Nîmes' allegory is telling. The aspiration for absolute colonial enfranchisement does not necessarily translate into an unconscious severance of (neo)colonial ties. Nations are compelled to act cautiously, bearing in mind the rippling effects of measures envisaged. The same observation applies to attempts at curriculum decolonisation. Curricular emancipation, while a desirable prospect, must be informed by contextual realities and a forward-looking vision for the country and its people. We thus posit that a creolised curriculum that enables glocal education empowers the future workforce to be part of the 'Tout-Monde'.

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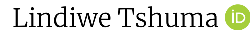
Chapter 10

Decolonising Curriculum Practices: An Analysis of Student Perspectives at a South African University

Lindiwe Tshuma 
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Abstract

This chapter describes student experiences of the delivery of a newly introduced university language-acquisition course as part of the institution's curriculum decolonisation agenda. The key research question to be answered is: To what extent are students satisfied with the first-year isiZulu First Additional Language (FAL) course newly introduced as part of curriculum decolonisation in the university? Guided by the lived curriculum theory, the study employs a survey methodology. A questionnaire including both closed-ended belief statements as well as open-ended statements was administered to 20 participants who were purposefully selected for the study. Qualitative data was independently analysed by the researchers; results emerging from the data reveal that students generally find the course informative and worthwhile, as it develops their communicative competence in isiZulu; however, they perceive the administration

of the course as suboptimal. This finding points to the need for further investigation regarding student learning satisfaction with courses introduced as part of curriculum decolonisation, and particularly regarding the planning that precedes the delivery of newly introduced courses in HEIs. Recommendations to improve student learning satisfaction include course coordinator capacity development to enhance core competencies in course administration, helping students to develop accurate expectations of language-competence courses, facilitating teaching quality that matches students' preferred thinking styles, and assisting students to develop positive attitudes.

Keywords: *curriculum decolonisation, curriculum transformation, planned curriculum, lived curriculum, student experiences, student learning satisfaction*

Introduction

Initiatives related to decolonising the curriculum in South Africa and other contexts have seen HEIs reform their curricula and introduce new courses in response to changes in society as well as preparing students for the future. Winberg and Winberg (2017) state that vast amounts of research on decolonising education and curriculum have been conducted in the arts, humanities and social sciences fields. However, they indicate the importance of including informants from these disciplines in the research to give them a more explicit voice (Winberg & Winberg, 2017). In this study the informants are first-year Bachelor of Arts General Degree students. There is a dearth of literature that reviews students' satisfaction with language-acquisition courses introduced as part of HEIs' initiatives to decolonise the curriculum. In South African HEIs the student voices on newly introduced courses may not be heard clearly enough.

Changing how you teach something is as much a part of transforming the curriculum as what you teach (Webbstock, 2017). Jansen (2017) points out that in the process of decolonising the curriculum, the curriculum in itself is dead

until it is brought to life in the teaching process. By tracing the connection between curriculum decolonisation and student learning satisfaction, this chapter analyses satisfiers and dissatisfiers that are particularly relevant to an undergraduate isiZulu language-competence course. The chapter further recommends and discusses implications for teaching and learning of the undergraduate course, based on the literature.

Background and Context

The institution's Language Policy, approved in 2014 with the aim of giving practical impetus to the University's transformation agenda through the promotion of diversity in the institution provides a clear pathway for enhancing the academic status of African languages. In the Linguistics and African Languages Department, isiZulu and Sesotho are earmarked as languages of teaching and learning parallel to English. Certain courses in the department are now taught in isiZulu and Sesotho, while others are still being taught in English. In 2019 the Faculty of Humanities Language Requirement Rule was implemented, allowing the Department of African Languages to draw from a large pool of students across the Faculty of Humanities for first-year enrolment in language-acquisition courses in isiZulu and Sesotho. These language courses use a student-centred, communicative approach to enable studying, writing and speaking in isiZulu and Sesotho within a certain field of study, including academic language. It is at the course level that the current study seeks to understand the level of satisfaction from a first-year student's perspective, as the course is targeted at them and they are best positioned to discuss the extent to which they are satisfied or dissatisfied with it.

Elliott and Shin (2002) present student learning satisfaction from the perspective of the business world and emphasise the importance of incorporating student voices into research that endeavours to understand their level of satisfaction within the education domain. Student learning satisfaction is important, because it is directly correlated

with student academic performance (Dhaqane & Afrah, 2016), retention and continuous learning. An all-encompassing understanding of student learning satisfaction implies that students need to be part of the process; student learning satisfaction cannot be explicitly understood unless it is approached in terms that students themselves can relate to.

Carter (2014) proposes three models to describe undergraduate student learning satisfaction: customer service, investment and happy-productive. The happy-productive model likens students to employees who, if they are satisfied with their working conditions, will be loyal to the company, produce better work and change employers less frequently. The investment model (Hatcher *et al.*, 1992) posits that students view their time and effort in the same way that investors do their money - in other words, they seek a return on what they expend. The customer service model considers lecturer-student interactions to be a transactional or a service-oriented encounter (Athiyaman, 1997). These models are based in the business world and hence, in addressing the way student learning satisfaction is constructed, may not perfectly fit the education domain in general, nor an isiZulu language-acquisition course specifically; however, they do offer contemporary guidelines that foreground student learning satisfaction and indicate that further research is necessary.

Educational satisfaction research is conducted at three levels: the course, the programme and the institutional levels (Green *et al.*, 2015). Course-level research is defined as investigating the individual classes that students take; institution-level research asks about the students' entire experience of being at the institution, including aspects teachers have little to no control over, such as costs, facilities and administrative staff performance. Programme-level research, however, is the level at which lecturers can have the most influence and includes the drivers of student learning satisfaction such as teaching quality, academic support and perceptions of programme value. The current study takes the form of a course-level investigation that seeks to ascertain

student perceptions of the value of the isiZulu language-competence course.

The key research question to be answered is: To what extent are students satisfied with the first-year isiZulu language-competence course newly introduced as part of curriculum decolonisation in the university? The objectives are to establish first-year isiZulu students' views of the language-competence they acquired in the newly introduced course and to establish whether students are satisfied with the course.

What are the characteristics of a curriculum?

An enquiry into student views on curriculum practices requires a definition of the term 'curriculum'. According to Sacristán, Subirats, Sebarroja, Rodríguez, Álvarez-Méndez & Adell, (2018), a curriculum is a set of objectives and related content that students are expected to know at the completion of a certain educational level. A complete curriculum stipulates the entire course outline and provides fine details on the academic content, the structure of the lessons to be taught, teaching and learning resource materials to be used, and the structure and format of the assessment activities to be administered to check whether the learning outcomes have been achieved (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021). A broader definition describes the curriculum in terms of the following four spheres: a plan or vision which guides students into acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge; an education institution's official document which defines the institution's purpose and its entire learning programme; an expression of the intended learning outcomes for the students providing a clear plan of how the skills and knowledge will be acquired; and a carefully planned learning experience intended to achieve the learning outcomes (Webbstock, 2017).

The definitions highlight the necessity of preplanning what should be taught in an educational institution: learning objectives, outcomes, teaching and learning activities (and resources), as well as a clearly outlined assessment plan. The definitions do not, however, state who the informants

of the curriculum are, nor do they indicate the education stakeholders (local or external) involved directly or indirectly in the planning of the courses to be offered in the education institutions. This is a cause for concern as it implies that the students, for whom the curriculum is designed, may be passive participants in the implementation of the curriculum.

What are the characteristics of a decolonised curriculum?

An enquiry into an HEI's curriculum decolonisation agenda requires a clear understanding of the nature of a 'decolonised curriculum'. Le Grange (2016) identifies the following as elements of decolonisation: deconstruction and reconstruction, self-determination and social justice, ethics, language, internationalisation of indigenous experiences, history and critique. This chapter highlights two of these elements: language, and the internationalisation of indigenous experiences. Language in this context concerns the importance of teaching and learning in indigenous languages as part of the decolonisation process. Internationalisation of indigenous experiences relates to students with diverse linguistic profiles sharing common experiences and appreciating the diversity of indigenous languages and culture. In Canada and New Zealand there are universities that started acknowledging the need to adopt approaches that are more inclusive of indigenous content. However, as in many other universities, such transformations remain challenging (Cupples & Glynn, 2014). These examples emphasise that there is much more involved in decolonising a curriculum than just introducing new content.

Kronenberg (2015) describes the Cuban curriculum transformation process as focusing on literacy, teacher education, and access to all services and facilities for a sound education. The Cuban literacy model campaign has been adopted in South Africa's basic education as a way of addressing the country's levels of illiteracy. Pett (2015) presents seven points that are vital to decolonising

curricula, including 'reteaching' teachers. In this chapter the reteaching of teachers implies the need for the capacity development of lecturers and tutors tasked with presenting newly introduced courses as part of the decolonisation agenda. By extrapolation, the reteaching implies the need for the capacity development of course coordinators responsible for course administration. Motsa (2017) argues that curriculum transformation is not achieved by merely Africanising some aspects of the curriculum. Curriculum decolonisation goes way beyond introducing more African languages into the teaching programme of a public urban university. One of the ways of developing the newly introduced courses is to raise the quality of content and presentation of the new courses to be parallel and comparable to the rest of the courses on offer, and also making student voices an integral part of the curriculum transformation process.

Theoretical Framing: The Lived Curriculum: Aoki (1993)

Aoki (1993) posited the twofold nature of curriculum: the planned and the lived curriculum. Instead of narrowly viewing the curriculum as a set of guidelines and activities to be strictly adhered to (the planned curriculum), the lived curriculum is foregrounded by the interactions between the lecturer and students (Martín-Alonso *et al.*, 2021). With the teaching and learning process requiring interactions within a context and a complex system of predispositions that prepare students for future actions (Biesta, 2017), the lived curriculum is described as the construction and reconstruction of lecturers' and students' experiences. The lived curriculum places great emphasis on the experiences lived through by both lecturers and students, including what they perceive as important, meaningful, relevant and problematic for them during the teaching and learning process. The lived curriculum is therefore what lecturers and students experience as they interact with each other within the learning context (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021). While the planned and lived curricula may appear on the face of it to be alternatives, they

are not mutually exclusive. The lived curriculum is a scenario where the two curricula worlds are considered to meet the needs of both (Olson, 2000). By enacting the guidelines stipulated in the planned curriculum, the lived curriculum provides opportunities for the planned curriculum to unfold, hence the view of the lived curriculum as the platform where the two curricula intersect.

Curriculum decolonisation implies that the actualisation of the lived curriculum may require disrupting the prevailing systems and norms (Maxwell & Roofe, 2020) that both lecturers and students may be accustomed to. The development of a decolonised curriculum needs to foreground and acknowledge student perspectives with respect to both the administrative and, to a certain extent, the pedagogical aspects of newly introduced courses.

Methodologies

Information about perceptions that are otherwise difficult to measure using observational techniques can easily be collected through the use of surveys. A survey methodology was selected for this particular study, mainly because it allows the retrieval of information on variables that can be studied from a population sample, which allows for making generalisations (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Research Context

This study investigates how first-year students at a university in South Africa perceive the teaching and learning of isiZulu FAL courses. The research site was the Faculty of Humanities at a South African public urban university that is strategically located in a historically advantaged community in one of South Africa's economic hubs in Gauteng province. The university's language policy recognises English as its main language of learning and teaching, while isiZulu, Sesotho and South African Sign Language are the only three African indigenous languages taught at FAL level.

Sampling

The investigation targeted first time first-year students in the Faculty of Humanities, Department of African Languages enrolled in 2019. The university's language policy implementation model entailed introducing an African language as a compulsory requirement for all degree courses, as recommended by the White Paper on post-secondary education and training (DHET, 2013), and targeted first-year students. This particular sample was chosen mainly because they were the first cohort to take an African language as part of the requirements for the BA General Degree, and the cohort was used for a pilot study to inform the roll-out of the model across all faculties, making these students' perceptions of the pilot phase a critical component of the implementation model.

Participant Demographic Information

Participants were 90% *(n=18)* female and 10% *(n=2)* male students. Half (50%) of the students were taking the isiZulu language-competence course as a free elective; 10% *(n=2)* were taking the language as a major; 10% *(n=2)* were taking the course as a requirement for other degree purposes; and 30% *(n=6)* were uncertain of why they had to take the course. Participants' home languages spanned the eight South African indigenous languages. The majority 35% (*n*=7) of the participants were Setswana home-language speakers, 20% *(n=4)* of the participants were isiZulu home-language speakers. They intended to take the language as one of their majors for the BA General Degree; 15% *(n=3)* of the participants were English home-language speakers and there were equal numbers recorded for isiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho and Siswati speakers at 5% *(n=3).*

Procedure: Questionnaire Schedule

To respond to the study's research question, a questionnaire was used to collect data in the second semester of 2019; the questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-

ended items to achieve coverage as well as to achieve depth by making allowance for detailed responses. Twenty questionnaires consisting of five questions were distributed to first-year isiZulu FAL students:

a. Was the isiZulu language-competence course worthwhile?
b. Overall, how do you rate your experience in the course?
c. What did you like best about how the course was taught?
d. What did you like least about how the course was taught?
e. What changes would you recommend for improving the course?

The first two questions were closed-ended with open-ended sections for writing comments. The last three questions were open-ended. According to Babbie (2016), validity indicates whether the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Cronbach's alpha coefficient analysis was used to investigate the internal consistency of the measures, since it is the most reliable test of inter-item consistency reliability for Likert-scaled or rating-scaled measures, as used in this questionnaire (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Data Collection and Analysis

Primary data was generated on the university premises through the administration of the questionnaires to first-year isiZulu FAL students and the instructions were clearly explained to students by the researchers. The 20 students (coded S68 to S88), were given 15 minutes to complete the questionnaires. Qualitative data from comments in the open-ended sections of the questionnaire was analysed by the individual researchers, using thematic analysis. Quotations exemplifying the identified themes were extracted from the questionnaire responses.

Findings

Student satisfaction is important for universities as it forms part of course evaluation (Green *et al.*, 2015). The key finding of this study is that first-year students generally find the

first-year isiZulu language-competence course satisfactory. The students find the course informative and worthwhile, as it develops their communicative competence in isiZulu; however, they perceive the general administration of the course as suboptimal.

Student Perceptions on Course Value

The first question, which sought to elicit responses on whether students found the course worthwhile or not, had two ratings: *Yes* and *No* as illustrated in Figure 10-1 below.

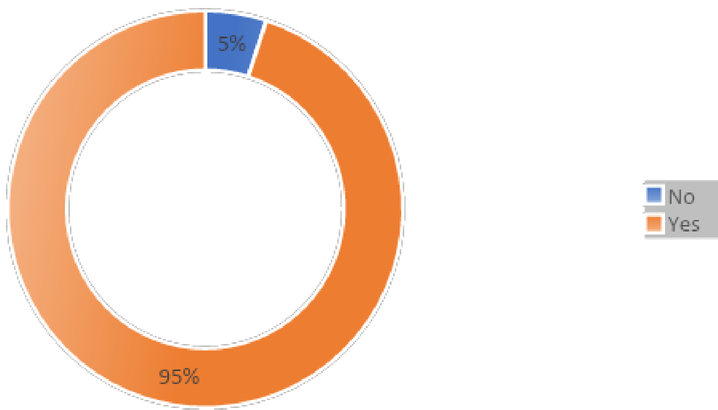

Figure 10.1: Student Perspectives on isiZulu Language-Competence Course Value

The majority 95% *(n=19)* of the students described the course as valuable and worthwhile, while 5% *(n=1)* described the course as not worthwhile. Those who found the course worthwhile reported improved reading skills, writing skills, fluency in speaking the language, and an improvement in sentence construction; thus, students linked the course value to their academic performance.

> ***S68**: I have performed extremely well in the duration of the course. I was gradually able to interact with other students.*

> ***S70***: *The course really helped with my reading skills; I did not know how to read isiZulu. My writing skills have really improved because of the course. Nouns and verbs, I had a problem of understanding them before.*

> ***S71***: *I can now fluently read a text written in isiZulu; I can speak isiZulu with a proper accent.*

> ***S74:*** *It was a worthwhile course and a very fun module. My reading and writing skills have greatly improved. Sentence construction is also improving because in the beginning of the year my sentence construction was sometimes incorrect.*

> ***S86***: *I have become better in my reading and writing skills because of this module.*

> ***S87***: *I can now write well, speak fluently and understand properly.*

One of the students who found the course not worthwhile indicated that the course did not help to improve communication skills. S78 registered dissatisfaction mainly because they felt the pace of the course was too fast for them to develop fluency in the language.

> ***S73***: *My skills in this language have improved but I still struggle to communicate. By the end of the course most people can read very well but my understanding is still quite limited.*

> ***S78***: *Just a year of fast-paced learning of a new language is not going to have me fluent, but I can greet and show respect.*

While a few students expressed dissatisfaction, it is worth noting that students developed some appreciation for the language as they learnt to greet and show respect to the language speakers. The majority of students linked their experiences regarding course value to their academic performance in the course. The findings suggest that most of the language skills were addressed by the isiZulu Language-

Competence Course, except for the communication skills aspect of the course, which it was felt was not adequately addressed. Student experiences in the lived curriculum context were somewhat related to the planned curriculum, which addressed their personal needs (improvement in reading and writing skills) as well as their social needs (the ability to interact in a different language).

Students' Perceptions of Overall Experience

The second question, which sought to identify student perceptions of their experiences of the course, contained five ratings: Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good and Excellent. Students' ratings of their overall experience are illustrated in Figure 10.2 below.

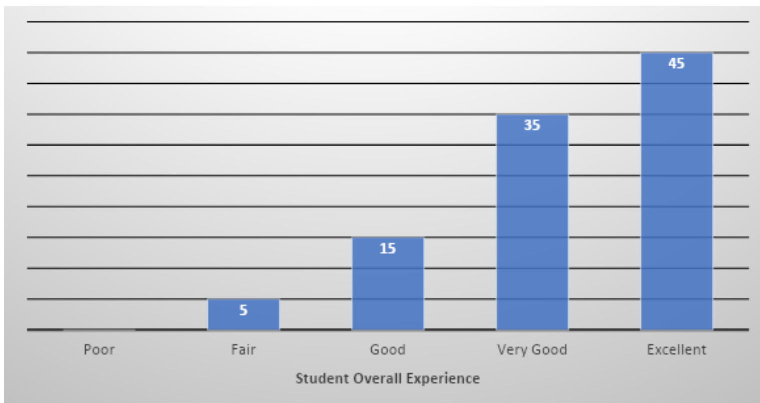

Figure 10.2: First-year Students' Overall Experience of the isiZulu Language-Competence Course

The majority of the students *(n=16)* rated their overall experience of the course as Excellent or Very Good. This was followed by 15% *(n=3)* who rated the course as Good, and only 5% *(n=1)* who rated the course as Fair. None of the students rated the course as Poor, which indicates therefore that overall, the students are satisfied with the course. Students' ratings of the course are supported by their descriptions of their experiences as detailed below:

> **S68:** *It was honestly amazing engaging within the course as we were able to construct paragraphs. There are words which I was not aware of which existed in isiZulu, which expanded my vocabulary. Students were also able to interact with one another through different rules.*

> **S69:** *I had a good experience learning other language other than English & my home language. IsiZulu is one of the interesting languages to learn.*

> **S70:** *Before this course I didn't enjoy isiZulu but now I do. I will definitely recommend it to a friend.*

> **S73**: *This course will help me communicate with people in the future. The course was very interesting.*

> **S76**: *The course not only encouraged us to speak isiZulu, but to improve our Zulu-speaking skills. It also allowed us to interact with those of different cultural backgrounds in the diversity classes. My writing skills have definitely improved.*

> **S77**: *Studying for the course was a great experience.*

> **S87:** *The experience was fun, I have learnt a lot, I have an interest in majoring in isiZulu.*

As expected, those who considered the course not worthwhile indicated a negative experience, while still expressing an appreciation of the language and its culture:

> **S78**: *Course was difficult and too fast paced. It is nice to learn and respect African languages and culture.*

Determining learning satisfaction as a predictor of academic performance is common in the field of education (Dhaqane & Afrah, 2016). In describing their satisfaction, some of the students referred to the skills they gained on the course (improved paragraph writing and speaking skills) as justification for their positive rating of the course: good, great, fun, enjoyable, amazing. Based on the students' positive

ratings, they found the acquired skills to be important, meaningful and relevant; all of which are elements of the lived curriculum (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021). Thus, a focus on just the planned curriculum would miss the value of documenting the students' experiences in the teaching and learning process. Such documentation could be an important resource for further developing a course whose key purpose is to contribute towards decolonising the curriculum.

Students' Perceptions of Positive and Negative Experiences

Questions 3 and 4 sought to elicit the students' positive and negative experiences respectively. Samples of participant responses are presented in **Table 10.1**.

The participants who indicated having positive experiences indicated the following points: learning new vocabulary; the interactive nature of the lectures, which was mainly highlighted by the use of videos and songs; participating in group activities; and making individual and group oral presentations, which provided opportunities for speech production and further developing fluency in the language. Such experiences are an indication of a satisfactory classroom environment, as described by Asakereh and Dehghannezhad (2015). S78 sums up the positive experiences best by metaphorically equating their experience of learning the new language to '*popping the English-speaking privilege bubble …*'

The participants who indicated having negative experiences were mainly concerned about the unavailability of a course outline; an administrative issue. The unavailability of a course outline is further implied by S73's comment on being assessed on vocabulary that had not been taught yet. While repetitive activities are an integral part of language acquisition, there is a possibility that the repetitiveness of the sessions as experienced by the students could have emanated from a lack of a clearly defined course outline. The use of informal assessment to inform succeeding lectures could have

allowed presenters to identify levels of content mastery and avoid repetition. This finding further reiterates that eliciting student experiences based on the lived curriculum is crucial in reviewing the planned curriculum. The unavailability of a course outline and the relevant formative assessment activities are areas to be addressed in drawing up the planned curriculum.

Table 10.1: Students' Positive and Negative Experiences regarding an isiZulu Language Competency Course

Positive experiences	**S68:** *There were videos and movies which students watched which were part of analysing different spectrums within the course*
	S69: *The fact that I got to speak in a different language other than English, the ability to freely engage in class*
	S72: *I really liked how the course emphasized oral presentations, I liked how the course motivated us to read and write isiZulu, I liked that it was highly conducted in isiZulu, which encouraged us to speak it*
	S73: *We learnt new vocabulary in every lesson, we interacted with each other in class, we learned about the culture through the songs and movies*
	S74: *I liked presentations, as I was able to increase my isiZulu vocabulary. My pronunciation of certain Zulu words became much better*
	S75: *I like the fact that we worked in groups, we were sometimes taught in English to better understand the course, and also the Wednesday, diversity classes, were much fun.*
	S78: *Learning a new culture, popping my English-speaking privilege bubble for a while*
	S82: *It was very inclusive and interactive*

Negative Experiences	**S69:** *The fact that we did not have the course outline available* **S73:** *Sometimes very little English is used which makes the lesson difficult to understand. We were tested on vocabulary we were not taught. It is not always taken into consideration that some students don't understand the language at all* **S75:** *The diversity classes were short, I did not like translating Zulu songs* **S76:** *Repeatedly doing one thing for a long time (learning how to greet for 2-3 months)* **S77:** *We often took too long to move from one concept to the next. Repetition was present and a concerning factor* **S78:** *The fast-paced learning, the fact that Zulu speakers were in my class, destroying confidence* **S82:** *There are a lot of repetitive sections in the course so at times we would do the same thing over and over* **S85:** *To some degree, the repetition of work, even though we understand it*

Although some students cited repetition as a negative experience, one of the students found the course to be too fast paced. Some participants indicated the use of English to explain misunderstood concepts as a positive experience, while others indicated the same phenomenon as a negative experience. S73 is of the opinion that fewer instances of using English in the isiZulu lecture made the course more difficult. These examples of contrasting experiences may be an indication that the course presentation may not have been differentiated enough to accommodate different student performance levels – another gap in the planned curriculum surfacing through coming to understand students' lived experiences.

Student Recommendations

The fifth question sought to flip the perspective and capture students' recommendations for the implementation of the isiZulu language-competence course. The participant recommendations were to a large extent aligned with their negative experiences and included both administration and pedagogy-related comments. The recommendations included: provision of student course outlines on time, provision of lecturer-student consultation times outside the normal lecture or tutorial times; making use of the learning management system (SAKAI) to provide additional resources; making the course content more challenging by expanding the vocabulary practised; providing more frequent assessments; and making the course more writing-intensive. In general, the administration-related and pedagogy-related comments highlighted aspects omitted from the planned curriculum, yet students' lived experiences expressed the need to have them included. Samples of student recommendations include:

> **S69:** *Make course outline available for all students, make use of SAKAI, no resources were posted.*

> **S72:** *I would recommend that lecturers allocate consultation times for students.*

> **S73:** *Students should be provided with more glossaries to improve their vocabulary. Lessons on language and language rules should be more structured. Students should get more detailed notes on language rules.*

> **S74:** *More writing intensive, more presentations to improve speech.*

> **S75:** *Increase the duration of the diversity classes, have a test after every two weeks for practice, have more class work and oral exercises.*

> **S76:** *Issue out course packs from the beginning of the year, include more diversity classes.*

> **S78:** *Stream classes to boost confidence, people who speak Zulu shouldn't be with those who can't. Teach more in-depth, and much slower.*

> **S83:** *A vocabulary list at the end of each class to keep track of new words learnt, because it is easy to forget.*

> **S86:** *Give more challenging work to help us better our understanding of the course*

> **S87:** *It [the isiZulu FAL course] should be taken seriously by the institution, it is one of the diversity improvers, it should be attended almost every day.*

Demographic data indicated that 20% of the participants are isiZulu home-language speakers; this suggests that these may have been wrongly placed in a language-competence class. Although some of these students may be intending to take isiZulu as a major, there is a need to further differentiate the course content based on students' prior exposure to the language. S87's recommendation proposes institutional support by suggesting that the isiZulu language competence course should be considered as one of the courses that could promote diversity within the institution. Jansen (2017) emphasises that curriculum is much more than content. Therefore, student recommendations should be one of the aspects incorporated into the implementation phase of the course at the university: the mere act of incorporating student perspectives into curriculum development contributes to the actualisation of the lived curriculum as well as curriculum transformation. As expected, HEIs may find it difficult to implement such measures because the actualisation of the lived curriculum usually requires disrupting the systems and norms of the institution (Maxwell & Roofe, 2020).

Discussion

The public urban university that introduced isiZulu as part of its curriculum decolonisation agenda is commended for the great leaps it has taken to promote diversity within the institution. However, student learning satisfaction as part of curriculum decolonisation still calls for further investigation in HEIs. A holistic approach to curriculum decolonisation should consider student satisfiers and dissatisfiers in the new courses offered as part of the decolonisation process.

The key finding of the chapter points to the need for further investigation of student learning satisfaction on courses introduced as part of HEIs' curriculum decolonisation processes. Student comments in course evaluations are an expression of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the course. By extrapolation, student voices need to be heard in discussions that focus on decolonising the university curriculum. Decolonising curriculum practices implies that HEIs have a responsibility to 'listen' to student voices, while it is the students' responsibility to 'speak up'. As students 'speak up' and HEIs 'listen', they will both be contributing to the actualisation of the lived curriculum. While the lived curriculum mainly highlights the 'lecturers' and 'students' participation, the HEIs 'listening' role (though not part of the classroom experience) needs to be accommodated in the lived curriculum. The planned and lived curricula should be viewed as dialectic in nature, with both lecturer and student experiences from the teaching and learning activities purposefully fed back into the periodic reviews of the planned curriculum.

Jansen (2017) poses the question: Who will teach the decolonised curriculum? Who will re-reteach the teachers (Pett, 2015) in preparation for presenting a decolonised curriculum? Introducing new courses as part of curriculum decolonisation implies that HEIs need to reconsider whether the lecturers and tutors presenting the new courses are adequately prepared to deliver quality courses and whether course administrators coordinating the courses are prepared.

Further research is needed in this regard for holistic curriculum decolonisation.

Conclusion

The objectives of this chapter were to critically review student satisfaction by analysing 20 first-year students' individual learning experiences of an isiZulu language-competence university course, and to ascertain whether students are satisfied with the course. This qualitative study collected data through a questionnaire-based survey and was guided by the lived curriculum theory. The survey was used to assess students' positive and negative experiences of the isiZulu language-competence course. This chapter concludes by briefly discussing the implications of the research findings for teaching and learning.

Enhancing Course Coordinators' Administration Competencies on Newly Introduced Courses

While course coordinator roles vary from one department to another, some core responsibilities in the administration of individual courses within a department include: general course management; assessment and feedback; advising and supporting students on course-related matters; monitoring and reviewing courses; and approving minor course changes (University of Edinburgh, 2022). Participants in this study suggested administration-related recommendations such as timely distribution of course outlines and effective use of the Learning Management System to distribute teaching and learning materials. Such recommendations are an indication that general course administration was suboptimal. There is therefore a need for course administrator capacity building. Furthermore, the capacity building needs to be supported by a competency-based recruitment approach. The use of students' administration-related comments to inform the actual course administration processes exemplifies the planned curriculum as informed by the lived curriculum.

Ensuring More Realistic Student Expectations of Language-Competence Courses Aimed at Decolonising the Curriculum

Earlier sections of this chapter addressed factors that influence students' learning satisfaction. Higher levels of student learning satisfaction are achieved when student expectations are met or exceeded. Ensuring that students develop more realistic expectations of language-competence courses should in turn raise student learning satisfaction levels. According to Hermann *et al.* (2010), when a lecturer clarifies course expectations and facilitates student-student and student-lecturer interactions, significantly higher levels of satisfaction in end-of-term evaluations are achieved. Although the students rated peer interaction highly, they requested student-lecturer consultation times outside the prescribed lecture presentations, perhaps an indication that student-lecturer interactions may have been inadequate. It is therefore of paramount importance to cultivate a culture of realistic expectations by meeting or exceeding students' course expectations and student-lecturer interactions.

Facilitating Teaching Quality That Matches Students' Preferred Thinking Styles

According to Green *et al.* (2015), in student learning satisfaction reviews, the quality of teaching is regarded as more significant than planning and institutional support. In the current study, high-quality teaching, clear assessment standards and criteria, and assessment fairness were identified as important aspects of participants' learning satisfaction. These factors are evident in student recommendations for the inclusion of more challenging content, exposure to expanded vocabulary, frequent assessments, and a writing-intensive isiZulu language-competence course. Therefore, it is imperative to target teaching quality to improve learning satisfaction.

Developing Positive Student Attitudes

The current investigation identified students' perceived positive and negative experiences of how the isiZulu language-

competence course was taught. Based on the analysis of the positive and negative student experiences, it is recommended that the African Languages Department at the institution should pay specific attention to the positive experiences that can be further improved, as well as addressing the negative experiences affecting the students; both aspects require attention. For instance, the use of songs and videos in lesson presentations is a positive experience that should be targeted for further development, if there is room for improvement in this regard. On the contrary, negative experiences such as excessive repetition of course content should be targeted for improvement only if it is found to be misaligned with the teaching strategies for language-competence courses.

Introducing a language-acquisition course at university level is a rigorous process that involves different stages and a regimen of activities and competencies across interconnected interdisciplinary domains (Makhachashvili & Semenist, 2021).

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Chapter 11

Dancing with Decolonial Curriculum Theorists: Technology as a Shapeshifter in Art and Design Education

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Abstract

In the past two decades, the concept of decolonisation of higher education in South Africa gained momentum. Amidst this growing concern, the role players in the education sector have interrogated their role in this discourse and examined how curricula and pedagogical approaches can stand up to this call for decolonisation. Some decolonial theorists have associated the concept with changing the nature of knowledge, shifting our position in relation to knowledge, and economic transformation. Even though there are multiple views and schools of thought, the question that remains unanswered in curriculum development is what the concept of decolonisation will look like in technologically advanced university settings. Will this be about erasing the Western education systems and methodologies? Or will it be about the Western education systems and methodologies used to cater to African indigenous knowledges systems? Or should

it be African indigenous knowledges systems catering for Western education systems and methodologies? Do all these even matter in a place where technology is a shapeshifter, especially in art and design education? In this chapter, we are unravelled and challenged by these questions as art educators in many ways. Thus, the main research question underpinning this study is how formal and informal learning and knowledges, driven by technology, could shape decolonised curriculum and skills to support disadvantage students in art and design education at the African University of Technology. A qualitative research approach is used in a post-colonial or postmodern epistemological setting to answer these questions. A discourse analysis through a desk study was adopted to interrogate and answer these questions. Viewing curriculum as a lived experience, the chapter reviewed various scholarly perspectives of a decolonised curriculum. Three main qualities of a decolonised curriculum emerged from the various views: the dynamic, inclusive, and responsive, curriculum. We believe that, firstly, at African universities of technology the decolonisation of curriculum design and pedagogy in art and design is inevitable because of the nature of knowledge production anchored in digital technology. Secondly, decolonised curriculum and skills could support disadvantaged students to meet industry requirements or employability in art and design disciplines. Lastly, strategies or models in place are generally not outside the boxes of traditional art and design education.

Therefore, considering the epistemological dimensions of education, the chapter postulates that a decolonised education and curriculum is one in which the access to knowledge, the process of acquiring knowledge and the nature of the knowledge gained are dynamic, inclusive, and responsive. Furthermore, the chapter identified areas (such as socioeconomic growth, industrial needs, current and future jobs, alternative knowledges) in which the curriculum should be responsive and acknowledge technology as the driving force. Hence, the chapter re-imagines a decolonised curriculum considering technology as the driving force and

proposes a framework that reflects the dynamic, inclusive, and responsive quality of decolonised art and design education and curriculum.

Keywords: *curriculum, 4IR skills, technology, decolonisation, new media art skills, pedagogy, epistemology*

Introduction

The call for the decolonisation of knowledge, identity, and culture of higher education in South Africa has been advocated by politicians, academics, researchers, and students, amongst others. Researchers in higher education, internationally and nationally, have interrogated their role in this discourse and examined how curricula and pedagogical approaches can stand up to this call for decolonisation. Some decolonial theorists have associated the concept with changing the nature of knowledge, shifting our position in relation to knowledge, and economic transformation. Strategies, models, and criteria on how universities can be transformed from the institutional level to the teaching and learning curriculum that transcends the current outcomes-based approach seem necessary. However, to develop such strategies, models and criteria, the concept of decolonisation and its implications and implementation in the curriculum must be unpacked.

Over the years, the definition and understanding of curriculum have evolved and continue to evolve. Around five decades ago, Grumet (1981) defined curriculum as the stories we tell students about the past, present, and future, and a decolonial view of this curriculum definition questions the stories students are being told about their past, present, and future, and who tells the story. More recently, Le Grange (2016) opines that curriculum is explicit (what students are provided), hidden (what students learn about the dominant culture of a university), and null (what institutions leave out). However, (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021) question these definitions or views, stating that they give little or no consideration to the changing state of knowledge. In Aoki's (1999) view, a curriculum should not focus only on the planned

(curriculum-as-plan) but also on how it is lived (curriculum-as-lived) by students and educators. Wallin (2010) stressed the significance of individual experience, stating that the curriculum should not be fixed or closed but rather thought of as an active conceptual force that prioritises individual experience while aligning with society and the economy. Hence, a decolonial curriculum could be viewed through a merge of these multiple perspectives, such as the curriculum as the stories being told, curriculum-as-lived, and curriculum as an active conceptual force.

The conceptualisation of decolonial curriculum in general and specific to art and design education at the universities of technology is faced with theoretical and practical implementation problems in many ways in South Africa. Researchers provided evidence on what the decolonisation of knowledge in teaching and learning could look like in art and design education (Carey Piers, 2017; Collet & Economou, 2017; de Wet, 2017; Morreira, 2017; Sidogi & Rasedile, 2017; Vorster & Quinn, 2017) but there is limited theoretical and practical interrogation on the decolonial curriculum concept in the context of a technology-driven era. Decolonial curriculum theorists such as Vandeyar (2020, p.13) concluded that *"any attempt at decolonising the curriculum on its own will be futile and at most superficial and cosmetic in nature…."* Considering Aoki (1999), who argued that curriculum should not focus only on the planned (curriculum-as-plan) but also on how it is lived (curriculum-as-lived), how then are inclusive curriculum and student-centred learning practicable in a rainbow nation? In contrast to curriculum dynamics, decolonial (as a noun) and decolonisation (as a process) add to the complexity of understanding the decolonial curriculum. The defining factors of decolonisation (transformation or development) include racism and epistemology (Mignolo, 2009), geopolitics (North versus South) and specific to identity, and aesthetics (Mignolo & Vazquez, 2013), technology (Kiran, 2015; Ogungbure, 2011), indigenous language and culture (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005; Thiong'o, 1998), production

(research) (Munro, 2017) and Pedagogy and education (Jansen, 2017; Le Grange, 2020; Valenzuela, 2021).

Given the complexity of the issue at hand, by joining decolonial curriculum theorists on a dancing stage, how will our engagement intend to achieve a decolonised curriculum? Will this be about erasing the Western education systems and methodologies? Or about the Western education systems and methodologies used to cater to African indigenous knowledges systems? Or should it be African indigenous knowledges systems catering for Western education systems and methodologies? Do all these matter in a place where technology is a shapeshifter, especially in art and design education at a university of technology? While extensive literature has explored various definitions, perspectives and understanding of decolonisation, the concept of decolonisation in education has mainly focused on IKS (Indigenous knowledge systems) and debates about the knowledges from the north and the south, identity, and culture of higher education. There is a lack of critical engagement or literature interrogation of the concept of decoloniality from technology point of view in curriculum development or methods of teaching and learning. Therefore, this chapter seeks to contribute to the discourse of decoloniality from a technology context in education. This was achieved through three set-out objectives: i)- To unpack the concepts of decolonisation from curriculum theorists; ii)- To reconceptualise the meaning of decoloniality from a technology-driven view-point; iii)- To identify solutions and implications of decolonial approach to knowledge in a technology-drive era. The chapter addresses some pertinent questions, such as why the decolonisation of curriculum design and pedagogy matters so much for African universities in the technological space. Why and how should decolonised curriculum and skills support students to meet industry requirements or employability? What strategies or models are in place to decolonise traditional art and design education at the African university of technology? Subsequently, we argue that informal learning knowledges driven by technology (Third and Fourth Industrial Revolutions) outside the

boxes of curriculum (Art and Design) are needed to support disadvantaged students to meet industry requirements or employability in art and design disciplines.

An Overview and Concepts of Decolonisation

The concept of decolonisation is like a shapeshifter character archetype that changes roles and is not easy to understand. Historically, the concept is generally related to both the aftermath and process of the political liberation of the colonised countries for independence and the abolition of slavery. According to Fanon (2008, p. 33), *"if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists"*. In simple terms, Fanon refers to the violence involved in this process between the leading characters (the coloniser versus the colonised) in the story unfolding from a historical process. On the other hand, Ashcroft *et al.* (2007, p. 63) talk about *"revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms"*. This view is rather radical and mission impossible when thinking about pragmatic rather than theoretical or rhetoric utterances. One of the challenges is that the process of dismantling colonialist power involves a raging fight between two main characters at almost all levels of their lives.

While several scholars try to explore what decolonisation entails, some question the need for decolonisation. According to Le Grange (2016), decolonisation is necessary to respond to first- and second-generation colonialism. These two generations of colonialism decimated indigenous knowledges by first conquering the physical spaces and bodies of the colonised and later colonising the mind through education, economics and law (Odora-Hoppers & Richards, 2011, p. 7). It is believed that the educational system made Africans doubt themselves regarding culture and history. This is attested by Botwe-Asamoah (2005, p. 4), who stated that Africans *"were made to believe that we had no culture and history to be proud of and that our people had made no contribution towards human"*. In this background, epistemologically and ideologically, the

concept of decolonisation presents more theoretical problems and fierce contestation of power relations in many ways in a different context. However, a holistic view of knowledge formation shows that the bodies of knowledge continually influence each other, which means that all knowledge systems are dynamic. Hence, according to (Dei, 2000, p. 113), indigenous knowledge does not reside in 'pristine fashion' outside of the influences of other knowledges. Therefore, decolonisation is not necessarily a process of destroying Western knowledge but rather decentring it or de-territorialising it (Le Grange, 2016).

Over the past five centuries, curriculum theorisation has been drawn from platforms laid by Western Eurocentric ontologies and epistemologies, resulting in epistemic-privilege knowledge that relegated other epistemologies to epistemic inferiority. Grosfoguel (2013) refers to this duality of knowledge structures (epistemic privilege and epistemic inferiority) as Cartesian logic, where knowledge from the Global South is considered inferior, non-Western, and too exotic to be taken seriously because it is alleged to lack scientific reasoning. Thus, Le Grange (2015) proposed that the central approach to decolonising curriculum is by rethinking the subject to liberate thought from the fetters of cartesian duality, which Le Grange (2016) suggested could be achieved through 4Rs central to an indigenous paradigm (relational accountability, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation, and rights and regulation). Relational accountability acknowledges the accountability of the curriculum to all relations. Respectful representation concerns how the curriculum acknowledges and creates space for the voices and knowledges of indigenous peoples. Reciprocal appropriation ensures that both communities and universities share the benefits of knowledge produced and transmitted. Rights and regulations ensure that ethical protocols that accord ownership of knowledge are observed (Chilisa, 2012).

South Africa's former President Thabo Mbeki, in his famous speech *"I am an African"* in 1998, which was grounded on the writings of the former president of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah - *"African renaissance,"* advocates for a shift from

colonial legacies of Western or European ways of knowledge production, colonisation, systems or methods, pedagogical models amongst other educational challenges. However, McLaughlin & Whatman (2011: 365) argues that the success of the decolonisation of education within university curricula in Australia lies in the hands of those who have power, non-indigenous peoples, to change the status core. They suggest that the sustainability of embedded indigenous perspectives within university curricula can be achieved through the critical race theory that is not explored adequately by largely a white academy (McLaughlin & Whatman, 2011, p. 374). The arguments put forward by Grosfoguel (2011) and McLaughlin & Whatman (2011) indicate that it is the responsibility of both the characters of the coloniser and the colonised in order to have a meaningful and sustainable change. However, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, p. 493), in Africa, *"What is envisioned by decoloniality are African people as active and free makers of their own futures".*

Steve Biko's writings, "*I write what I like*", on the importance of restoring the dignity of black people, for example, stated that *"the most potent weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed"* (Biko, 1978, p. 92). This statement can be understood in terms of the negative representation of black people in history books and the kinds of knowledge disseminated to perpetuate the inferiority perception. While alternative knowledges and perspectives are critical to restoring the dignity of the colonised character in education and curriculum, the questions that keep lingering are how these alternative knowledges and processes can be made possible. What does the decoloniality of the curriculum in art and design mean in that context? Is that about language and tools (IKS - indigenous knowledge system or technology), content (visual IKS and aesthetics: murals, colours, patterns, designs, fauna and flora, architecture, attire)? Moreover, what will this shift mean in multicultural and technological universities in South Africa? How could this support disadvantaged students to meet industry requirements or employability?

Internationally, according to McLaughlin and Whatman (2011, p. 367), *"[d]ecolonizing knowledge in universities, therefore, involves a deep sense of recognition of and challenge to colonial forms of knowledge, pedagogical strategies and research methodologies"*. From the Latin American universities' perspective, Valenzuela (2021, pp. 1029-1031) talks about three levels that can be decolonised in universities, namely a) institutional level, b) degree programmes, and c) teaching level (pedagogical methods, strategies and learning assessment methods). The author further suggests six possible dimensions that can be used as guiding criteria at Latin American universities to decolonise the curricula and teaching and learning processes, namely, political, economic, ecological, relational, epistemological and cultural (Valenzuela, 2021, p. 1033), although in all these levels or criteria, the author identifies the problem of power relations between top-down educational policies and bottom-up educational initiatives when it comes to IKS. Similarly, in South Africa, Fomunyam *et al.* (2020, p. 47) identified five elements that universities can follow in order to decolonise curriculum, namely, *"changing the nature of knowledge, reviewing the curriculum, deconstructing teaching and learning, institutional identity, architecture and culture, and Africanization."* Although the identified elements are critical, Africanist perspectives are what makes this different from the South American universities. Amidst these different perspectives, the whole concept of decolonisation remains the same, which is to expand our worldview in relation to knowledge by i) cultivating alternative knowledges that contest the supremacy of one form of knowledge, ii) building relationships, a sense of community and inclusivity in the pedagogical practices, and iii) promoting and preserving indigenous culture, which includes languages, practices, knowledges and history.

As discussed in the previous section, the notion of the curriculum opens multiple pathways and a basis for decolonisation. From Aoki's (1999, 2005) notion of curriculum as lived experience and Wallin's (2010) definition of curriculum as an active conceptual force, we could draw

that decolonisation of the curriculum is indeed not an event but a process that is responsive and inclusive and dynamic. As reflected by various authors, curriculum as a lived experience means constructing and reconstructing knowledge through experience (Okyere, 2018), connecting knowledge acquired in institutions to knowledge acquired from the realities of life (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021), taking into account the dynamics and uniqueness of the educators and students involved in the learning process (Okyere, 2018), accommodating societal and individual differences, lived meaning and narratives (Aoki, 2005), and ensuring the curriculum is relevant to societal environment and needs (Pinar, 2011). From these various views, three main qualities of a decolonised curriculum emerge, which are dynamic, inclusive, and responsive curriculum (Aoki, 2005; Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021; Okyere, 2018; Wallin, 2010). These qualities can be used as indicators to evaluate, construct, and reconstruct the epistemological aspects of education, which are: access to knowledge, the process of acquiring knowledge, and the nature of the knowledge acquired (Rosenberger & Verbeek, 2015). That is, as a way of decolonising education and curriculum, the access to knowledge, the process of acquiring knowledge, and the nature of the knowledge acquired must be dynamic, inclusive, and responsive.

Higher education institutions operate in a knowledge economy, where their knowledge packages (curricula) are expected to contribute to the nation's socioeconomic development and global society. The curricula are expected to provide students with the necessary skills and innovation-oriented education experience (Fomunyam & Khoza, 2021). Therefore, as part of the responsive quality of a decolonised education, the curriculum must be responsive to the ever-changing and technologically driven society and equip students with the needed skills to combat new challenges. According to Peters (2000), a responsive curriculum should be flexible and adaptable to the current realities of life and consider the challenges and demands of the present while anticipating the future. Hence, considering technology as

the driver of change in the Fourth Industrial revolution, this chapter proposed that the process of decolonisation should include a significant consideration of technology as one of the driving forces of economic growth. Thus, the arguments and postulations in the rest of this chapter are based on the understanding that i) dynamic, inclusiveness and responsiveness are the main qualities of a decolonised education and curriculum (Fomunyan & Khoza, 2021; Peters, 2000; Aoki, 2005; Wallin, 2010; Okyere, 2018); ii) access, process, and nature of knowledge are three critical epistemological aspects to consider in decolonising education (Horsthemke, 2017; Rosenberger & Verbeek, 2015; Valenzuela, 2021); and lastly, iii) technology is the driver of the current knowledge economy and should be considered and integrated into the decolonisation process of curriculum and education in general and specific to art and design (Kiran, 2015; Makwela & Olalere, 2021).

Decoloniality in the Technology-Driven Era

While the previous section has provided a detailed understanding of the various concepts, views, and schools of thought around decolonisation, the bottom line is that decolonisation is not just about places or things; it includes ideas and thought processes (Rao, 2019). Hence, the concept of decoloniality focuses on untangling how knowledge is produced. According to Mignolo (2011), decoloniality is synonymous with decolonial thinking and doing, which questions the perceived universality of Western knowledge. Over many centuries, this single worldview has been considered normal, and identity and knowledge were constructed from this position. In order to delink from this Eurocentric episteme, decolonial theorists proposed a shift in position in relation to knowledge (Quijano & Ennis, 2000).

This ‘shift’ is neither about erasing the Western education systems and methodologies nor returning to the precolonial ways of thinking. The shift focuses on creating new systems of thinking based on an expanded worldview that

no longer centres on colonial meaning-making. The shift or new system of thinking, according to Bhabha (2004), is 'The Third Space' that draws from the past where necessary but acknowledges that culture is generative and creative. From an epistemological dimension, the concept of expanding worldview focuses on three main aspects: i) the nature of knowledge that contests the supremacy of just one form of knowledge (Western knowledge), and open spaces to promote a dialogue amongst others (such as alternative knowledges) and responsive to societal needs; ii) the process of acquiring dynamic knowledge (not static), and goes beyond the four walls of formal education; and ii) the access to knowledge, which should be inclusive.

Formal education (especially higher education) has undergone different phases (elite, mass, and post-massification) due to its connection with the socioeconomic structures and its constant association with the socio-technological forces in the different phases of the industrial revolution. With the technological advancement in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the epistemological understanding of the nature and process of acquiring knowledge is expanding and directly or indirectly driving decoloniality. For example, technology such as the Internet expands worldviews by providing global access to information that blurs the line between formal and informal learning. Hence, the emergence of practices such as self-taught, DIY approaches, e-learning, and the recognition of prior learning (RPL), where non-formal learning is recognised as equivalent to formal education. Advancement in technology provides opportunities for collaborative activities that overlap silos and allow cross-functionality. A good example is the multi-/inter-/trans-disciplinary approaches in education. These are all examples of how technology is disrupting and expanding the nature and process of acquiring knowledge.

Therefore, the influence of technological advancement in teaching and learning should not be excluded in conceptualising or theorising decoloniality. On the one hand, technology will inevitably shape the future. According to

the post-phenomenology theory, one of the implications is the expansion of human-world relations, where technology promotes experiential knowledge and interaction in the process of acquiring knowledge (Kiran, 2015). Within the art and design disciplines, technology is impacting and expanding the types of skills required, epistemological curiosity, intellectual tools, authorship, commodification, and representation or aesthetics (Makwela & Olalere, 2021). These impacts on knowledge acquisition and requirements can be linked to the dynamic and responsive qualities of a decolonised education and curriculum. As explained in the previous section, a decolonised curriculum is expected to be responsive to the ever-changing socioeconomic needs, dynamic and inclusive. Compared to technology's impact, the expansion and disruption of the nature and process of acquiring knowledge signal decolonisation qualities. For example, the self-taught and do-it-yourself (DIY) approaches and the blurring of formal and informal learning are dynamic qualities promoted through decolonisation. Furthermore, the emergence of trans-multidisciplinary approaches and the promotion of experiential knowledge is the responsive quality of a decolonised education and curriculum. Hence, technology could be a driving force towards achieving a decolonised education system where knowledge is viewed from multiple perspectives and the pedagogic process of acquiring it is dynamic.

Decoloniality should also be tailored towards expanding knowledge and developing skill sets for future jobs while keeping in mind the role of culture. The reference to culture is based on the idea that technological advancement without the skilful exploration of people's culture is impossible, because culture fuels and inspires technological accomplishments in human society. Unarguably, every technology within a social praxis is a product of culture since culture is a phenomenon that encompasses all the material and non-material expressions of a people; it affects how people interact with nature and, therefore, varies with the environment. To take advantage of science and technology for development, African

societies must reconcile their traditional cultural environment with the different circumstances of the modern international environment, which has been largely shaped by science and technology. Also, it is essential to note that technology is not just a catalogue of tools and expert demonstration of its usage. It is, forthrightly, a cultural mindset that ensures the acquisition and usage of techniques, methods and skills acquired as an integral part of society. In order to grapple with this issue efficiently, we must pursue a conceptual clarification of critical notions (Ogungbure, 2011).

This chapter opines that culture plays a germane role in any society's scientific and technological transformation. This is in recognition that any significant intellectual or ideological creation of an individual thinker is derived broadly from a broad spectrum of societal legacies engineered by culture. Consequently, African people cannot make much progress in a quest for technological advancement if the dynamism of culture is not used. In addition, there is a need for self-reawakening and reorientation that will place more value on the technological products of local industries. Thus, there is a need to pursue an agenda in Africa that will encourage the sophistication of cultural practices that would bring about the development of a culture of technology. Hence, decolonisation in a technology-driven era requires that policymakers and governments in Africa promote a culture of technology via the eyes of African culture and take a crucial look at the limited technological developments of industries in the continent and, therefore, adopt an African-centred agenda to build and strengthen technological capabilities in Africa, which can assist critical social change. (Ogungbure, 2011)

It is important to note that two basic tendencies are discernible; one is almost exclusively concerned with the technical aspect of the subject matter, while the other emphasises the socio-economic and cultural dimensions. The first school of thought (technical aspect) regards technology as the systematic knowledge for the manufacture of a product, for the application of a process or for the rendering of services which may include managerial marketing

technologies. In contrast, the second school (socio-economic and cultural) conceives of technology as all elements of productive knowledge needed for transforming inputs into products, in the development and rendering of services, and in generational shifts to further the tentacles of productive knowledge. In addition to this view, technology includes the social and economic atmosphere in which the application takes place as well as the ways of fulfilling particular needs deriving satisfaction (Ogungbure, 2011)

Decolonial Approach to Knowledge: Solutions and Implications in Art and Design Education

South Africa is known for its vast disparities in income, with just over 10 per cent of the population enjoying affluent lifestyles (Moloi *et al.*, 2017). As a result, students entering universities in South Africa do so from positions of extreme inequality, which includes varying quality of schooling, level of exposure and financial resources. Hence, according to Ndebele *et al.*, (2013, p. 92), *"[a] curriculum structure can be either enabling or constraining in relation to key goals. Given South Africa's inequalities and development needs, curriculum structure should as far as possible enable students' underlying potential to be realised, provided that the quality of the qualification is maintained."* Even though the post-apartheid policies have generally widened access to higher education, the percentage of participation from historically disadvantaged groups remains relatively low (Chetty & Pather, 2015). While there has been an improvement in the participation rate over the years, evidence shows that the universities of technology in South Africa contributed significantly towards providing education to the historically disadvantaged group (Macupe, 2020).

The concept of decolonising curriculum in art and design education at universities of technology in South Africa faces similar challenges of either enabling or constraining the access or the improvement of disadvantaged students. One of the constraints can be linked to the criteria for art and design student selection for first degree or diploma entry at the five

universities of technology (UoTs) offering the art and design courses in South Africa, namely the Tshwane University of Technology, Vaal University of Technology, Durban University of Technology, Central University of Technology and Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Art and design comprise creative disciplines (such as design or applied arts, film or video, and fine and studio art) that fall under the broad field of visual and performing arts (Department of Education South Africa, 2008). Even though arts and design programmes offered at the UoTs widen access to these creative disciplines, the reality is that most historically disadvantaged students struggle to meet the admission criteria because they exited a schooling system that did not expose them to the needed creative skills. The access or entry requirements are primarily based on admission point scores (APS) with compulsory matric results (including English and Maths or Maths Lit) or TVET college results equivalent to Grade 12 requirements. Age exemption is considered for adult students above the age of 23 years. The selection process includes submitting a portfolio of practical work demonstrating talent, creativity, and potential to complete the courses successfully.

Given that the selection process for admission into art and design programmes at these institutions includes portfolio-based evidence and the minimum APS, in most cases, applicants do not have an extensive portfolio of evidence to prove their creative skills due to a lack of exposure to creative subjects at secondary school. This can be related to the articulation gap, which is reported as one of the contributing factors to student failure and dropout, especially, the students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds. The main problem with the articulation gap is the mismatch between secondary school entry-level and higher education (Ndebele *et al.*, 2013). The mismatch or articulation gap also questions the idea of decolonisation, where students function as co-creators or constructors of knowledge. In situations where students have no prior exposure to creative subjects in secondary school, they cannot drive learning or construct knowledge. This is one of the main challenges faced in art

and design education. Above this, art and design courses are technologically driven in terms of creative computer software applications as tools that merge the traditional ways of production and digital production through teaching and learning. The affordability of such technology and the lack of computer skills present an additional problem. However, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has played an essential role in funding disadvantaged learners.

This led to the question, what are the major art and design discipline transition challenges from secondary education to higher education for learners who did not have art and design education? In a three-year diploma with 360 credits or bachelor's degree (first degree) with 360 credits estimated to be 3600 notional hours, will the students meet industry requirements or employability in art and design disciplines? According to Ndebele *et al.* (2013), reforms have been proposed to lengthen the core programmes' duration by introducing extended courses to address the articulation gap, although in art and design, extended courses are not offered or are discontinued. In this context, what are the strategies to decolonise the traditional perspective in art and design education, considering the influence of the rapidly changing technology?

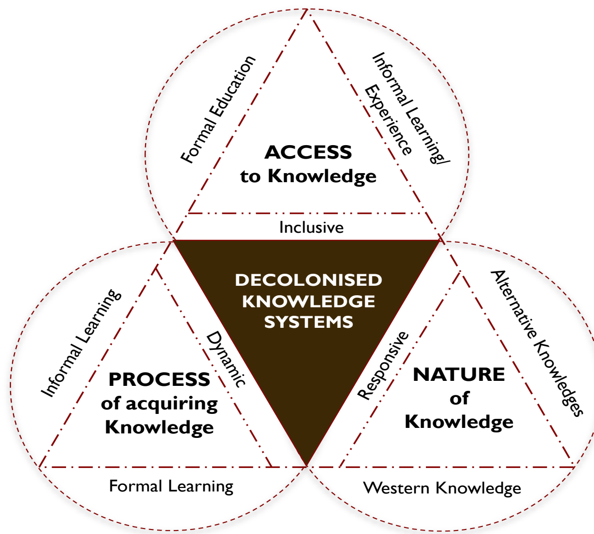

Figure 11.1: Solution-based perspective towards decolonising art and design education (Rosenberger & Verbeek, 2015)

As illustrated in Figure 11.1, decoloniality from an epistemological dimension should address three key aspects (access, process and nature) (Rosenberger & Verbeek, 2015). Firstly, access to knowledge (higher education) should be inclusive, where the criteria set at entry-level enable rather than constrain access to knowledge. Universities should develop a more structured alternative access to programmes through, for example, RPL, where informal learning and experiences can be assessed and considered equivalent to formal learning. Even though RPL has been in place in most universities for a while, the reality is that this pathway to entering higher education programmes remains dormant. Hence, this alternative pathway goes beyond just developing RPL policy; the government and higher institutions should spearhead training on assessment, campaigns to raise awareness and sensitise people to the significance of RPL and develop a straightforward process and strategy with details of the ontological knowledge on what counts as RPL. Also, indigenous languages such as Sesotho, Sepedi, SeTsonga,

TshiVenda, isiZulu, isiSwati, SeTswana, isiXhosa, isiNdebele amongst others, can be considered in place of English for students who do not meet the minimum of four scores in English. Formal education requirements could be expanded to include extended, bridging or foundation courses focusing on creative skills development to train and prepare potential students without creative education.

Secondly, the process of acquiring knowledge should be dynamic and not static. For example, engaging in technology-mediated informal learning (self-directed by a learner and unstructured) and extra-curriculum activities could be the way forward in bridging the knowledge and articulation gap while preparing students for the dynamic job requirements. Online tutorials (or short courses), without formal structure or accreditation through knowledge commons, can supplement procedural knowledge (curriculum or content) and provide inclusive access to knowledge to empower students. YouTube stars, for example, Mdu Ntuli Izikhokho's show, Jonas Lekganyane, and Adventure of Noko Mashaba were self-taught through open sources online on Google and YouTube, amongst others. Informal education or learning or knowledge obtained through such open sources plays a critical role in using technology and sharing knowledge.

In education, Budge (2012a) explored the socially wise approach to creativity through the inclusion of blogs by educators for the learning experiences for students. Although these activities are within the universities, Budge (2012b) suggests that they foster creativity through *"community, sharing of creative practice, environmental awareness, support for the creative work of others and awareness of globalism."* Hence, supplementing formal learning with informal learning activities could enhance the process of acquiring knowledge. However, for informal learning to be effective, it is essential to design formal learning in a way that accommodates, encourages and supports informal learning. A good approach is the flipped classroom approach, where traditional learning happens at home, while classroom activities focus on experiential learning. Self-directed learning, open learning,

and extra-curriculum activities are examples of approaches that could drive informal learning.

Thirdly, the nature of knowledge acquired must be responsive to the immediate and global society's needs. It is important to broaden the nature of knowledge acquired by opening spaces for alternative knowledges. These alternative knowledges are not limited to indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing; it encompasses all alternative knowledges, which can be acquired through internationalisation (such as academic exchange programmes) and interactive collaborations (such as the Triple Helix approach, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)), field trips (to the industry, indigenous knowledge sites etc), guest or visiting lecturers (from the industry, government, IK holders, etc). All these practices or activities broaden students' worldviews in relation to knowledge. The nature of knowledge should be responsive to socioeconomic needs. For example, the ever-changing job requirements and skills, the technological impacts and needs, and the multi-disciplinary expansion of job roles.

The Nature of a Decolonised Art and Design Education in the Fourth Industrial Revolution Era

While these three aspects (access, process, and nature) are crucial to address in a decolonised educational approach to knowledge, it is important to note that the goal of every higher institution is the employability of graduates. Hence, amidst the decolonisation attempts, it is important to ensure that the graduate attributes and skills align with the needs of the industry and the nature of the future jobs they are being trained for. Technology development has always presented challenges and opportunities in the creative industry, mainly because creative disciplines are often tied to technological development. The Fourth Industrial Revolution presents a gradual release of the labour force from physical activity and mental efforts in favour of more exceptional creativity (Prisecaru, 2016). These technological developments affect the art and design ecosystem, especially the skill sets for future

jobs. Therefore, we argue that to adapt to the technological drivers of change in the 4IR, a multidisciplinary approach in developing skill sets for future jobs is one way to achieve a decolonised education that equips students with the needed skills for future jobs.

As illustrated in Figure 11-2, the multidisciplinary approach requires integrating technological skills as a driving force rather than replacing discipline-specific skills. We believe that discipline-specific skills will still play pivotal roles in future jobs but will require technological skills to function effectively in the changing landscape. Such technological skills will include artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), programming or coding, Internet of Things (IoT), three-dimensional (3D CAD) modelling and simulation, and additive manufacturing (3D printing). This multidisciplinary approach will require entrepreneurial and management skills exposure to drive multi and transdisciplinary collaborations and interactions. The entrepreneurial skills will include strategic and critical thinking, financial, analytical, and organisational skills. In contrast, management skills will include planning or organising with set guidelines, good communication skills (interpersonal skills), and excellent decision-making and problem-solving skills. Even though the relevance of the technological skills will vary across different specialisations, the dynamic nature of the technological applications will require keeping up to date with the technological development to stay aware of what is obtainable.

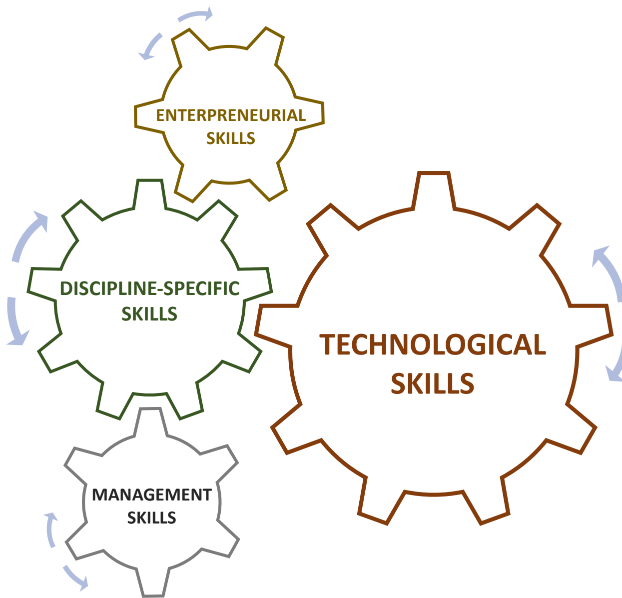

Figure 11-2: Multidisciplinary approach in developing skills sets for future jobs. Source: (Makwela & Olalere, 2021)

However, while those skills (technological, entrepreneurial, management and discipline-specific skills) are critical, the means of accessing and the process of acquiring those skills are necessary. Hence, a decolonial approach (shown in Figure 11-1) is a possible way to go, where the skills are acquired from multiple worldviews. Figure 11.3 illustrates how the skill sets for future jobs in art and design disciplines can be developed through multidisciplinary and decolonial approaches. According to Schwab & Samans (2016), three categories of skill sets cut across all industries, namely, abilities (cognitive skills, physical skills), basic skills (content skills and process skills), and cross-functional skills (social skills, resource management, system skills, complex problem-solving skills and technical skills). As shown in Figure 11.3, decolonised art and design education goes beyond providing inclusive access or incorporating informal and formal learning as a valid process of acquiring knowledge or engaging both

Western and alternative knowledge systems. The nature of the knowledge acquired should include discipline-specific skills, technical or technological skills to engage with emerging technologies effectively, and soft skills to drive an effective multidisciplinary interaction and aid the technological drivers of change.

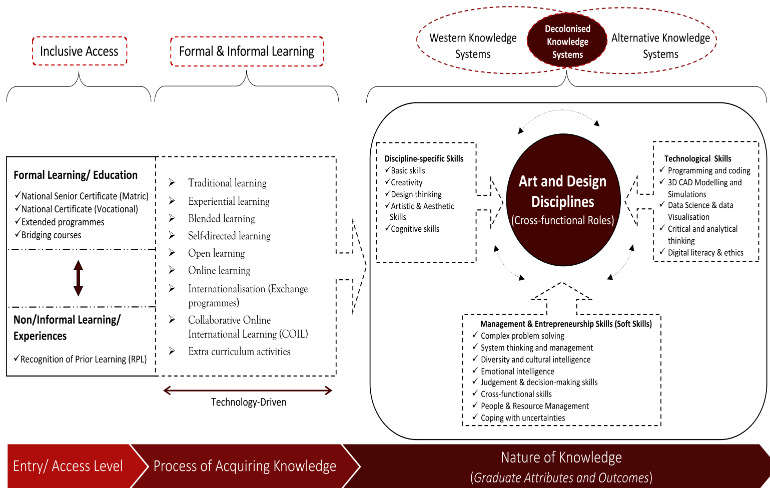

Figure 11.3: Responsively decolonised art and design education

Conclusion

This chapter address some pertinent questions and concerns around decolonisation, especially in art and design education, where technology is seen as a shapeshifter. The chapter begins by providing an overview and concepts of decolonisation, which include identifying various definitions, approaches, elements, and dimensions of decolonisation. The findings from this exploration revealed that the main qualities of a decolonised education and curriculum is being dynamic, inclusive, and responsive. The exploration also revealed the importance of technology as the driver of the current

knowledge economy, and hence, should be considered and integrated into the decolonisation process of curriculum and education. From this understanding, the concepts of decoloniality were unpacked through technology-driven lenses to establish the role of technology in the decolonisation discourse. The findings show that technology is impacting and expanding the types of skills required for future jobs, however, the culture of technology should be promoted from the eyes of African culture. Subsequently, the chapter explores the decolonial approach to knowledge and identifies three key aspects (access to knowledge, process of acquiring knowledge, and nature of the knowledge) that need to be addressed in a decolonised knowledge system. Some challenges emerged from the findings such as, vast socio-economic disparities among students, which could limit potential access and exploration of technology. There is also articulation gap between secondary school and higher education, especially disadvantage students exiting schooling system that did not expose them to creative skills. Finally, the chapter proposes a framework for decolonising art and design education in a technology-driven era. The framework was developed using the multidisciplinary and decolonial approaches aimed at decolonising educational practices and developing the needed skill sets required for the future job. It is important to note that technology is not just a catalogue of tools and the expert demonstration of its usage. It is forthrightly, a cultural mindset that ensures the acquisition and usage of techniques, methods and skills acquired as an integral part of society. Therefore, decoloniality should be tailored towards the expansion of knowledge and developing skill sets for future jobs, while keeping in mind the role of culture.

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Conclusion

Curriculum Potential for Theory, Theorising, and Praxis

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Curriculum studies has been and will always remain an open field, open to alternative interpretations by both insiders and outsiders. Over the years, such interpretations in Africa have from time to time been championed by people who have no understanding of the field or European fundamentalists with no real experience of the nuances and context in Africa. Curriculum studies in Africa has fundamentally been oriented to focus on Western constellations without fundamental thought about praxis and responsiveness. This book is geared towards opening up fundamental debates about the nature, types and approaches of curriculum and curriculum theorising in Africa, the charges orienting this curriculum on the continent and the different dimensions of responsiveness they speak to. Since curriculum is fundamentally a question of power and how such power is manifested in how students learn, what they learn, when they learn, how what they learnt is assessed, who facilitates what they learn and the principles that would underpin learning or knowledge construction in this case, curriculum studies fundamental centres around the study of this power and who wills it, how they will it and what they will it for. Exploring how these discourses happen and how they shape the field in these unsettling times has been critical in this book.

The chapters in this book focus directly or indirectly on ensuring responsiveness in education. While responsiveness and how it is evoked would vary from context to context, the

fundamental principles, or alternative ways of exploring it have been the focus of this book. The chapters provided more insight to curriculum potential on the continent. Klafki (2000) argues that curriculum potential can be understood from five perspectives. These are exemplary value, contemporary meaning, future meaning, content structure and pedagogical representations. Exemplary value as a potential for curriculum considers the generality and specificity of sense and value which the content can or should exemplify for students. It questions what basic phenomenon or fundamental principle, what law, criterion, problem, method, technique, or attitude can be grasped by dealing with this content. Exemplary value as a curriculum potential re-orients curriculum content and ensures that it not only engages charges like responsibility but also works towards responsiveness. Engaging quality and decolonising perspectives situate curriculum and theorising perspectives on the continent on the path of contextual responsiveness and relevance, thereby ensuring the curriculum and all that pertains to it adapts to the changing times and the crisis which education, both basic and higher, are currently facing.

Contemporary meaning on the other hand, as a curriculum potential, explores meaning - meaning in context of both time and place. It seeks to answer the question, what significance does the content in question, or the experience, knowledge, ability, or skill, to be acquired through this topic, already possess in the minds of the students who are to study the topic? What significance should it have from a pedagogical point of view? Such meaning in context in consideration to or in conjunction with prevailing circumstances would ensure that meaning is constructed as it pertains to both the now and the future. Curriculum responsibilities and charges that speak to everything disorienting or reshaping the way we see, and experience education and its effects all work towards creating contemporary meaning, meaning which is Afro-centric and takes into consideration local issues in the drive for responsiveness. Next to contemporary meaning is future meaning. While contemporary meaning looks at

what the content offers the student in terms of meaning construction in the present, future meaning looks at what kind of meaning the content would have for the student in the future. It seeks to answer the question, what constitutes the topic's significance for the student's future? Curriculum content should hold potential for future meaning. In other words, the meaning constructed in the classroom should hold potential for future meaning, as well as ensure logical connection between the now and the future. Without any potential for future meaning, the content is questionable. Exemplary value, contemporary meaning and future meaning explore the essential ingredients, features, and significances that constitute the educational potential of the content, while contemporary and future meaning necessitate an analysis or the unpacking of educational meaning and significance of those essential elements – an analysis which is crucial for disclosing the curriculum potential inherent in the content. By discerning those essential elements and elucidating their possible manifestations and significance, the chapters in this book have evoked alternative meanings and notions which speak not only to theory and theorising but to responsiveness and praxis. In other words, the discussion of educational potential and its actualisation presupposes a careful analysis of curriculum for educational meaning and significance – an analysis that is guided by an educational ideal and informed by a theory of educational content that underlies curriculum material (Deng, 2011; Gudmundsdottir *et al.*, 2000).

The fourth curriculum potential, content structure, explores the organisational patterns of knowledge within the curriculum as well as the materials which would be used in the facilitation of teaching and learning. How content is structured, determines the pace of learning and if such learning would be effective. If structured inappropriately, students would be faced with content structures which are incoherent and do not offer a proper opportunity for development. It therefore seeks to answer the question, how is the content structured? Content structure, in other words, how the content is structured has been placed in a specifically

pedagogical perspective by exemplary value, contemporary meaning and future meaning or the questions they seek to answer. Such structure is what necessitates the need for tutors and tutorship. The final potential pedagogical representations seek to interrogate pedagogical inclinations inherent in the content and how such inclinations or representation ultimately shape the exemplary value, contemporary meaning, and future meaning which such content is supposed to carry. It seeks to answer the question, what are the special cases, phenomena, situations, experiments, persons, elements of aesthetic experience, and so forth, in terms of which, the structure of the content in question can become interesting, stimulating, approachable, conceivable, or vivid for students of the stage of development of this class or for whom the content is being prepared? This makes the chapters in this book which deal directly or indirectly with curriculum implementation quite critical as they explore this phenomenon and try to articulate new pathways for teaching and learning on the continent.

Potentials four and five, or content structure and pedagogical representations, or the questions they seek to answer, concern the means of actualising the potential – in terms of content structure and pedagogical representations – which becomes outgrowths of analysing the content in terms of educational potential, for such potentials are the ultimate goal of education. Deng (2011, pp. 545–546) argues that *"it is important to note that the search for methods (ie, the means for actualising potential) is the final step – the 'crowning' moment in instructional preparation".* As such, engaging or discussing educational potential and how it would be actualised, presupposes a careful analysis of curriculum content for educational meaning and significance, *"an analysis that is guided by an educational ideal and informed by a theory of educational content that underlies curriculum material"* (Deng, 2011, p. 546). Such an analysis is relatively unknown to the African tradition of curriculum and instruction. Since much of what patterns in Africa with regard to curriculum and its pedagogical representations or inclinations of meaning is borrowed from the Global North and its traditions,

teaching is not construed in terms of delivering a body of 'objectified' knowledge and skills to students (Fomunyam, 2014). Fomunyam continues that teaching and learning and by extension curriculum implementation is seen as a 'fruitful encounter' between content and the student or the co-construction of knowledge between the lecturer and the student using the content and the various capital which they possess. Under such circumstances, the lecturer, or teacher as the case might be, is expected to analyse and unpack content in a way that opens up its educational meaning and significance. Hopmann (2007, p. 117) takes this discussion a step further when he argues that the central question in the drive to improve education and enhance educational potential is *"if and how the educative substance could be opened up for the students as intended,"* or more exactly, *"if and how it became open in their individual meeting with the content in the given teaching process"*. This book therefore offers an intricate look into some of the happenings in the educational landscape, as a way of informing possible directions for theorising and change.

Curriculum potential is inextricably associated with the notion of curriculum matters and responsiveness and this centres on the cultivation of the intellectual and moral capacity of students who would be able to respond to the contextual realities in their nations. The analysis of curriculum potential is most often largely limited to the questions of what potential the content is reckoned to have and how this potential can be actualised. Some scholars overlook the social and the cultural or even the political expectations or demands on schooling as well as the translation of those expectations or demands which carry implications for the meaning and significance of curriculum content (Fomunyam, 2014).

In summing up the conversations in this book, it is vital to the criticality of theory, theorising, and praxis on the overall well-being of teaching and learning in general and the student in particular. From a contextual perspective and alternative curriculum theories, the meaning and significance of content is determined and shaped by a theory of content, and this would explore a particular way of conceptualising,

selecting, organising, and transforming content for institutional, curricular, and pedagogical purposes. From this perspective curriculum materials contain not merely content but also a theory of content (Deng, 2011). In the classroom, the meaning and significance of content have to do with classroom enactment of teaching and learning and in such processes the teacher or lecturer translates the content, more precisely, the theory of content into instructional events and activities within a particular instructional context and towards particular educational purposes. As such, what constitutes the content, what meaning and significance that content has, and how students can experience this meaning and significance are thus determined by the teacher's interpretation of educational purposes and the theory of content, which is ultimately shaped by his or her understanding of students, of self, of pedagogy, and of the instructional context (Hopmann, 2007).

Therefore, curriculum theory, theorising, and praxis as constituents of curriculum studies give the theoriser the opportunity to extend the discussion on curriculum which has primarily focused on the potential contribution of curriculum content to the development and growth of students to the contributions of other curriculum constituent elements like pedagogy, assessment, technology or resources, instruments, matters, charges, and responsiveness, amongst others.

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