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Curriculum without Borders: Transdisciplinary, Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Teaching in Higher Education

Nyna Amin
and
Rubby Dhunpath

2019

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ARTICLES

Nyna Amin and Rubby Dhunpath  Editorial: Curriculum without Borders: Transdisciplinary, Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Teaching in Higher Education ........................................ 1
Desire Chiwandire  Universal Design for Learning and Disability Inclusion in South African Higher Education Curriculum ..................................................................................... 6
Bothwell Manyonga and Sindile Ngubane-Mokiwa  Curriculum Development: An Enriched Approach for Twenty-First Century Open Distance ................................................. 37
Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo  The Organic Crisis and Epistemic Disobedience in South African Higher Education Curricula: Making Political Science ................................. 65
Benita Bobo and Jacqueline Akhurst ‘Most Importantly, It’s Like the Partner Takes More Interest in Us’: Using Ubuntu as a Fundamental Ethic of CE Partnerships at Rhodes University ........................................................................................................... 88
Fayth Ruffin  Indigenisation and Africanisation of Legal Education: Advantaging Legal Pluralism in South Africa ......................................................................................................................... 111
Belinda Verster, Karen Collett and Carolien van den Berg  Creative Meaning-Making through a Multimodal, Interdisciplinary Exploration: LC Enhancement ........................................ 139
Bert Olivier ‘No Borders’ and Complexity ........................................................................................................... 161
Contributors ......................................................................................................................................................... 185

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Editorial
Curriculum without Borders: Transdisciplinary, Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Teaching in Higher Education

Nyna Amin
Rubby Dhunpath

It would be safe to say that in the South, the decolonisation project has reduced Shulman’s notion of pedagogical content knowledge to the contents of curriculum. For decades, the South has consumed and applied curriculum content even when it ignored demographic, contextual and cultural differences and contradicted embodied realities. A case in point is Maslow’s (1943) motivational theory as it cannot explain the acts of resilience and agency displayed by impoverished and oppressed high school students who, in 1976, resisted the imposition of a language curriculum and confronted the military might of the South African apartheid regime. Maslow’s theory continues to occupy space and to promote middle class ideas of self actualization in the curricula of disciplines like Education and Psychology. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is much discontent about the intents and contents of higher education programmes.

As mentioned in the call for manuscripts, whilst scholars have theorised and taught higher education curriculum without disturbing its insidious interior and poor outcomes, the students have detected its weaknesses and limitations and highlighted these through protest actions that have shaken the foundations of disciplines and the material foundations of higher education infrastructures in South Africa. The students are impatient at the lethargic pace of change, and their actions have disturbed the functions of institutions in the country. Undoubtedly, despite the deficiencies of our curricula, the students
most affected by poverty, by social inequities and uncertain futures are demonstrating the ability to think critically - a key competence regarded as a 21st century skill (See e.g. World Economic Development Fund, 2015). Critical thinking by students is discomfiting as they generate interpretations that trouble our imaginations of ideal higher education students, revealing the ambiguity of the values we place on skills when they are redirected at higher education. Students it seems, already possess the ability to think critically so our concerns about their intellectual faculties are misdirected; we should instead, be concerned by our curriculum designs and interpretations.

At present, curriculum work, whether revision, transmission, interrogation, intervention or communication produces multiple discomfits - consuming energies, troubling fixed notions and disrupting taken-for-granted values in higher education teaching and learning. For too long, disciplines have dictated the content and worldviews, most often, in isolation, guarding its borders to prevent contamination and dilution. The publication, “Disrupting Higher Education Curriculum: Undoing Cognitive Damage” (Samuel, Dhunpath & Amin, 2016) and the decolonise the curriculum fallist movement, provide a spectrum of ideas on how cognitive damage is activated through the processes of formal and informal learning underpinned by the curriculum choices we make. Undoing cognitive damage, as captured in the writings of authors in that volume point to curriculum work as a complicated and time-consuming endeavour: it requires unmasking the hidden assumptions, stereotypical beliefs, imported worldviews, inappropriate and irrelevant content, and most importantly, discovering the ways in which curriculum designers and implementers are complicit actors of cognitive damage. It will require a rethinking of the notion of a discipline, perhaps by fragmenting its borders, compounding its aims and combining resources from multiple disciplines. In other words, engaging in teaching, learning and research which is transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary in nature. These are complex approaches that accelerate ideation and permit creativity to thrive. These approaches are akin to the notion of curriculum without borders.

The idea of curriculum without borders emerged organically in 2014 (see Amin & Campbell 2014). Their debates and discussions regarding preservice teachers and palliative care workers were enriched by amalgamating knowledge bases and disciplines for deeper insights, explanations and practices, “A curriculum without borders is open to insertions of various kinds that characterize each context. It is flexible and makes space for the
unexpected, the uncertain and the extraordinary” (Amin & Campbell, 2014, p. 167).

To grasp a concrete idea of a curriculum without borders we turn to a work of art by the Dutch artist, Maurits Cornelis Escher (see Fig 1). In the works that he produced, Escher combined mathematics and art to produce unusual tessalations that perplex our normative sensibilities. In Fig 1, for example, the biological similarities of fish and fowl become apparent when the distinctions between them become indistinguishable at some point. So too, for water and sky. Likewise, the borders between various disciplines are porous and often the similarities, overlaps and synergies are not easily identifiable or recognisable.

Figure 1: Escher artwork

Figure 1 is a graphic demonstration of the multiple realities that co-exist and their effects at the zone of convergence. At the poles, fish, fowl, water and sky are conspicuous, but in the equatorial belt of borderlessness, they merge and meta-perceptions and intelligences are stimulated. Similarly, convergence of various sorts, e.g. disciplines, knowledges, concepts and
theories, we argue, promote complex thinking and creativity. Likewise, a curriculum without borders is enriched by inclusion, expansion and integration. We can conclude that curriculum revision is not about instigating an either or option, like making choices between indigenous and western science, or between quantitative or qualitative methodologies. All kinds of ideas, irrespective of origin and approach are useful when complementarity is valued and insertions of extra-curricula content is an available option. All kinds of ideas produce better science and better knowledge. Critical thinking can and should be applied to all knowledge systems, whether it be discipline-, transdiscipline-, interdiscipline- or multidiscipline-based. A curriculum without borders ensures that contextual, cultural and demographic relevance and appropriateness are the guiding principles of teaching, learning and research.

The articles that make up this issue make for interesting reading regarding the notion of curriculum without borders. In keeping with the polyvalent nature of borderlessness, we have opted not to comment on the various articles as that would contradict the argument we are positing. However, we do encourage readers to engage with the debates, discussions and interpretations of curriculum without borders.

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Universal Design for Learning and Disability Inclusion in South African Higher Education Curriculum

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Abstract

During apartheid in South Africa, students with disabilities (SWDs) were educated in special schools and taught an inferior curriculum, preventing them from accessing and participating with success in universities. To redress this, the new democratic government that came to power after apartheid put in place a range of laws to address the apartheid’s curriculum inadequacies. However, this has had little impact in the academic success of SWDs, whose dropout rates continue to increase. In order to broadly understand the inclusion of SWDs in higher education (HE) curriculum transformation, this study utilised a document analysis method to conduct a critical review of literature on the experiences of lecturers, SWDs and Disability Unit Staff Members (DUSMs). The study sought to explore whether lecturers’ curriculum practices could be said to be informed by Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which was also used as theoretical lens. The findings indicate that due to lack of training both lecturers willing and unwilling to support SWDs in the curriculum are struggling to operationalise UDL principles in designing and delivering their curriculum. The study concludes by recommending that university management invest in professional development courses in UDL aimed at practically training lecturers on how to inform the design of their curriculum with UDL principles. This study has added new knowledge by highlighting the need for the active involvement of the university management, and thus it recommends future studies to sample the university management on measures they are taking in supporting disability inclusion initiatives on their campuses.

Keywords: Universal Design for Learning, universal curriculum design, higher education transformation, inclusive education, disability inclusion, lecturers, Disability Units, university management, ableism, diversity, professional development courses
Introduction

Recent literature has discussed how twenty-first university classrooms consist of students diverse in disabilities, race, ethnicity, culture and language (McGuire-Schwartz & Arndt 2007). Given that these students are learning the same general curriculum, Tinto (1982) calls for educators to make their curriculum more accessible in order to achieve both the retention and academic success of all students in these classroom settings. Moriña et al. (2012: 3) have enjoined countries that are transitioning from a special education system to an inclusive education system to begin the process by modifying their teaching and learning practices until they are ‘as inclusive as possible’. In particular, if mainstream educational institutions are to achieve meaningful inclusive education for SWDs, the participation of SWDs within the curricula must increase (Booth 1996). In the South African context, inclusive education has been defined as supporting learners with disabilities so that they are able ‘to be involved with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible’ in the curriculum (Dalton et al. 2012: 3). This definition arose from the context of South Africa’s history, as the marginalisation of SWDs was rife during apartheid South Africa, as ‘the curriculum (and education system as a whole) generally failed to respond to the diverse needs of the learner population, resulting in massive numbers of drop-outs, push-outs and failures’ of SWDs (DoE 2001: 5). To address these challenges, the post-apartheid South African government implemented numerous transformation-oriented supportive disability policies to improve the academic access outputs of SWDs. Despite these efforts, however, recent literature indicates that South African higher education institutions (HEIs) are still lagging behind in terms of improving the academic success of SWDs by allowing them to access the general curriculum on par with their non-disabled peers (Chiwandire & Vincent 2019; see also Mutanga 2019). This has become a serious concern, with numerous South African scholars calling for the need for adequate strategies that address issues

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1 As adapted from the definition of curriculum by South Africa’s Department of Education (DoE 2001: 19), curriculum is understood in a broad sense. ‘It includes what is taught, the medium of instruction, how the curriculum is organised and managed, the methods and processes used in teaching, the pace of teaching, the learning materials and equipment used, the nature of required fieldwork experiences, as well as how learning is assessed’. 
Desire Chiwandire

such as support services provision, curriculum adaptations, alternative assessment options and adaptations to be developed and put in place in HEIs (Howell 2005; Ntombela & Soobrayen 2013; Ndlovu & Walton 2016). However, these efforts, it is argued, have remained fruitless, as most South African HEIs continue to marginalise SWDs by delivering inflexible and inaccessible curriculum (Chiwandire & Vincent 2019). The purpose of the present study is, therefore, to specifically explore and understand the curriculum practices within South African HEIs, particularly from the literature on the experiences of lecturers, SWDs and DUSMs. Furthermore, I sought to understand these curriculum issues broadly from a transformation standpoint in light of recent ongoing calls for the need to transform the South African HEIs’ curriculum to reflect their diverse student population. Hence, the present study seriously cogitates Ntombela’s (2013) suggestion that South African HEIs should prioritise the academic needs of minority groups like SWDs, whose needs are also significant, in order to not compromise the process of transformation. This suggestion guided the present study, as I was mainly interested in gaining an in-depth understanding as to how SWDs are faring in the curriculum from a transformation standpoint. This is because some SWDs may be unable to participate in functional and general education activities in the same manner as their non-disabled classmates, and may require adaptations in the curriculum to facilitate maximal independent participation (Ryndak & Alper 1996).

Disability Inclusion and HE Curriculum Transformation

Within inclusive education debates, transformation has often been understood from an academic inclusion standpoint, with educational institutions being called upon to transform their cultures to increase access, participation and academic achievement of SWDs (Artiles et al. 2006). Ainscow et al. (2006: 16) advocate for a transformative view of inclusive education ‘in which diversity is seen as making a positive contribution to the creation of responsive educational settings’. As Avissar (2011) argues, the first environment that needs to be transformed is the general classroom setting itself, through the provision of a flexible and accessible curriculum that addresses the diverse learning needs of students, including those with disabilities. Within the South African context, one way of promoting disability inclusion can be through campuses’ provision of accessible curricula and assessment practices by lecturers (Lyner-Cleophas 2019), which are backed by supportive disability
legislative framework that legally entitle SWDs the right to participate fully in the curriculum once they enrol in HEIs.

Furthermore, Section 29[1][a] of the new Constitution guarantees everyone, including persons with disabilities (PWDs), the right to education. The 2001 *Education White Paper 6: Special needs education. Building an inclusive education and training system* states that ‘[n]ew curriculum and assessment initiatives will be required to focus on the inclusion of the full range of diverse learning needs’ (DoE 2001: 31-32). This suggests South Africa’s *White paper on post-school education and training*, could be achieved through strengthening learning and teaching across the HE system, allowing these institutions to improve the success rates of SWDs (DHET 2013). Measures such as these notwithstanding, educational research in South Africa has shown that the reality on the ground with regards to how the curriculum is delivered in classrooms still excludes SWDs, depriving them of opportunities to fully ‘see themselves reflected in their curriculum’ (Canadian Ministry of Education 2009). Recently, the South Africa’s *Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training System* has pointed to an inflexible curriculum and teaching and learning environment as two of the institutional challenges that are hindering the academic inclusion of SWDs in HEIs (DHET 2018).

The early transitioning into democracy saw the South African government implementing policies aimed at the radical transformation of the HE curriculum. This process was facilitated with the enactment of the *White Paper 3: A Programme for Higher Education Transformation*, which aimed at facilitating access to HE for the historically disadvantaged students, enjoining lecturers to use ‘flexible models of learning and teaching, including modes of delivery, to accommodate a larger and more diverse student population’ (DoE 1997: 7). However, debates on curriculum and transformation within the South African HE context have so far focused on issues of race, with particular attention being paid on the need for universities to dismantle the apartheid racist curricula and replace it with new curricula which particularly reflect the lived experiences of Black South Africans (Lange 2014; Badat 2010; Msila 2007). Likewise, proponents of decolonisation of the curriculum have also argued that South African universities can decolonise the curriculum through teaching content that is relevant to African conditions (Jansen 2017).

This focus on race issues has recently been criticised by proponents of inclusive education as narrow, because it fails to respect diversity in its broader sense by also including SWDs, a group that was also historically excluded. In
particular, disability scholars have voiced concerns about the exclusion of disability in South African HE transformation agendas (Ohajunwa et al. 2014; Matschedisho 2007). The failure for HEIs to transform their curriculum has disproportionately affected the academic success of SWDs in these institutions. For instance, several studies into the experiences of SWDs in South African HEIs (Tugli & Klu 2014; Tugli et al. 2013) found that SWDs who access HEIs are mostly at high risk of not finishing their degrees at the allocated time, or are more likely to drop out because of curricular barriers. Most recently, Mutanga (2017) has attributed the high drop-out rates of SWDs in HEIs to inflexible and inaccessible curriculum, and this has resulted in SWDs making up less than 1% of the total student population in South African HEIs. It is against this background that some recent disability policies have called for South African HEIs to accelerate genuine transformation that aims to achieve the full inclusion, integration and equality for SWDs (DHET 2018). In what follows I discuss in detail the theoretical framework which informed the present study.

**Universal Design for Learning Framework**

According to the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST 2010), UDL is ‘a framework for designing curricula that enable all individuals to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning. UDL provides rich supports for learning and reduces curriculum barriers while maintaining high achievement standards for all.’ Mitchell (2010: 13) has defined UDL as involving ‘planning and delivering programmes with the needs of all students in mind from the outset. It applies to all facets of education: from curriculum, assessment and pedagogy to classroom and school design.’ UDL has its roots in the concept of universal design, which, according to Campbell (2004), ‘was first introduced in the field of architecture’, and enjoins building planners, engineers, architects and the like to design ‘buildings that are suitable for all users’ (Imrie & Hall 2001: 335), rather than taking the approach of adding to or adapting physical spaces designed for non-disabled people (Chard & Couch 1998).

Central to UDL is its intention to primarily address the inflexible curricula that impacts on SWDs’ participation with success (CAST 2014). UDL’s emphasis is on the ‘flexibility and customisation of options within the curricula [which] are critical to student success’ (Anstead 2016: 16). The curriculum built on principles of UDL has been commended for its respect for diversity and its ability to accommodate ‘differences, creating learning expe-
Universal Design for Learning and Disability Inclusion

Experiences that suit the learner and maximise his or her ability to progress’ (Rose et al. 2002: 70). In order to practically apply UDL principles, firstly by utilising the principle of ‘multiple representation’, the lecturers ‘allow students with sensory disabilities (e.g., blindness or deafness); learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia); and language or cultural differences to make connections between various learning concepts’ (Anderson 2019: 2). Secondly, employing the principle of ‘multiple means of action and expression’ increases the lecturer’s chances of accommodating ‘students with significant movement impairments (e.g., Parkinson’s disease), or those with strategic and organizational abilities (e.g., ADHD, Asperger Syndrome), and also ones with language barriers by providing different methods of navigating the learning environment’ (Anderson 2019: 2). Thirdly, employing the principle of ‘multiple means of engagement’ is important in sensitising lecturers to take into consideration the fact that ‘learners significantly differ in the ways in which they can be engaged or motivated to learn’, and this would require such lecturers to provide multiple ways for their learners to engage in the learning process holistically (Anderson 2019: 2).

McGuire-Schwartz & Arndt (2007: 128) also argue that curriculum informed by UDL offers promise of transforming university classroom practices. To date, studies on HE curriculum and UDL have mainly been conducted in the United States (US), where it has been suggested that employing UDL is an effective way of transforming HE curricula to be accessible to SWDs (Bruch 2003). Several educational institutions in the US have often been cited as best practices in terms of applying UDL framework, and UDL has also been formally mandated as law, which has played an important role in breaking negative biases against SWDs in the classroom setting (Anstead 2016). For instance, the US’s disability legislation, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), ‘affirms UDL as an efficient and effective way to provide all students access to curriculum and assessment’ (Wills 2008). Likewise, the authorisation of the US’s Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 placed an obligation on all HEIs that receive federal funding for teacher quality partnership grants ‘to report on the outcomes of UDL training within their preservice preparation programs’ (Edyburn 2010: 33). This means that lecturers who inform their curriculum with UDL principles by ensuring that they comply with the non-discriminatory law treat SWDs as equal with their non-disabled peers, ensuring all learners ‘receive flexible instructional methods, materials, and assessments to meet
Desire Chiwandire

their unique needs’ (Anstead 2016: 1). For purposes of the present study, I pay particular attention to three core principles of UDL, which include:

….. ‘Multiple means of representation’: provide multiple, flexible methods of presentation to support recognition learning (the HOW of learning); ‘multiple means of action and expression’: provide multiple, flexible methods of action and expression to support strategic learning (the WHAT of learning) and ‘multiple means of engagement’: provide multiple, flexible options for engagement to support affective learning (the WHY of learning) (Dalton et al. 2012: 3).

If employed, these UDL principles can play an important role in helping lecturers to effectively address a wide range of learning needs in a single classroom (Dalton et al. 2012). However, putting these principles in practice is much easier said than done for many lecturers. In order to address this barrier, some HEIs have resorted to offering their lecturers professional development courses in UDL so that these lecturers can understand UDL principles and apply them to their specific learning environment accordingly (Anderson 2019). The millennial, for instance, has seen some US HEIs training lecturers in the use of UDL principles to modify their curricula, instruction, assessment and environment as an effective way of addressing the diverse learning needs of the recent increasing enrolment rates of SWDs, and this has had positive change in participating lecturers’ teaching behaviour (Langley-Turnbaugh et al. 2013). Within the South African context, the UDL framework was first mentioned in the 2015 Guidelines for the creation of equitable opportunities for people with disabilities in South African Higher Education: Draft for Discussion (Howell 2015). Despite this policy document’s call for lecturers to inform their curriculum with such concepts as UDL ‘if they are to help make their curriculum accessible to students with diverse learning needs’ in HE (Howell 2015: 10), to date no South African study has been conducted on this matter. The only available study on UDL and curriculum issue to date has focused only on supporting South African ‘teachers and therapists who are working with children with disabilities either in special schools or in the mainstream to meet a wider range of learning needs’ (Dalton et al. 2012: 4). Thus, the present study aims to fill in this gap, and in what follows I discuss the methodology employed to collect and analyse the data presented in this study.

12
Methodology

Despite the important role played by lecturers in achieving inclusive education for SWDs as indicated above, there is a dearth of literature on how South African lecturers are expected to accomplish the task of tailoring the curriculum to suit each learner’s particular needs (Donohue & Bornman 2014). To fill in this gap, I used Google Scholar to conduct a document analysis of published and unpublished literature – South African national and disability policies, local and accredited international peer reviewed journal articles, online newspaper articles, Masters and PhD dissertations – between the period of 1994 to 2019 in order to gain an in-depth understanding of lecturers’ teaching practices in relation to issues of curriculum access for SWDs, as well as how SWDs experience their own participation in the curriculum. Bowen (2009: 27) describes document analysis as ‘a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic’. As a qualitative analytical research method, document analysis ‘requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge’ (Bowen 2009: 27). In searching for the literature, such key words as ‘students with disabilities’; ‘curriculum’; ‘inclusive education’; ‘transformation’; ‘ableism’; ‘lecturers’; ‘diversity’; ‘Universal Design for Learning’; ‘Disability Unit Staff Members’; and ‘Disability Units’ were used.

Given that most of the South African literature on disability inclusion in HE has mainly been written from the perspectives of lecturers, DUMSs and SWDs, I reviewed the literature on all these stakeholders in order to achieve a holistic representation of diverse voices. Firstly, I reviewed the literature on the experiences of lecturers, particularly how they support their SWDs in university classrooms, because South Africa’s disability policies view this cadre as important if HEIs are to achieve inclusive education for SWDs. South Africa’s White Paper 6, for instance, views classroom educators as a primary resource for achieving the goal of an inclusive education and training system (DoE 2001). Apart from this, I also found reviewing the literature on lecturers important because, following Edna (2016), the successful implementation of inclusive education is highly contingent on the availability and active role of lecturers who are disability-sensitive and well-trained to teach SWDs.

Secondly, in their study of SWDs, Fuller et al. (2004) recommended that one of the effective ways of studying disability and related issues in HEIs is by listening to the voices of SWDs as they reflect on their learning and
assessment experiences, as this group is often at most risk of retention and academic failure. Following this suggestion, I reviewed the literature on the experiences of SWDs. Thirdly, I sampled the literature on the experiences of DUSMs from various South African HEIs, because this group has been called to address challenges facing SWDs through playing ‘an important role in ensuring fair and equitable policies and practices for students with disabilities’ (Pretorius et al 2011: 2). Howell (2015) also argues that South African Disability Units must play a key role in influencing the teaching and learning processes on campuses if they are to foster a holistic approach to disability inclusion. Recent disability policies have also called upon Disability Units to follow SWDs ‘in their studies and monitor progress to ensure that students receive or are accorded maximum support to succeed in their studies and to minimise student drop-out’ (DHET 2018: 63). Given that most DUSMs in this literature spoke negatively about their respective universities’ management personnel, I had to find more literature discussing the role of the university management in disability inclusion issues. It was hoped that this would add value to the present study, following Howell’s (2015) suggestion that addressing disability inclusion from a transformation standpoint is a senior leadership concern, and thus the university management ought to take disability inclusion more seriously in their strategic thinking and associated institutional planning.

Reviewed data were coded and analysed using Braun and Clarke’s method of inductive and deductive thematic analysis (2006). I then analysed data in relation to theory by creating categories in the data which were of relevance to the dominant theoretical constructs of UDL: principles of ‘multiple means of representation’, ‘multiple means of action and expression’ and ‘multiple means of engagement’ (Dalton et al. 2012: 3). In what follows I discuss in greater detail the dominant findings of the present study.

Findings

Lecturers’ Lack of Training in UDL

One of the benefits of delivering a flexible and accessible curriculum is that it effectively addresses the diversity of students present in any particular educational programme (Mittler 2000). Although it has been suggested that South African lecturers can achieve this through adopting a learner-centred
approach that particularly enhanced the learning needs of SWDs (van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya 2015: 2), lack of training in UDL continues to be a stumbling block for some of these lecturers. Mutanga & Walker’s (2017) study, which explored lecturers’ perspectives on measures they are taking to include SWDs, found that SWDs were most at risk of academic failure because their lecturers lacked understanding regarding the need to address diversity in their teaching and learning activities. From a diversity standpoint, I found out that one of the challenges that continues to hamper progress for the practical realisation of inclusive education in Africa in general is the lack of lecturers’ skills in adapting the curriculum to meet a range of learning needs (Chataika et al. 2012). This is because the successful practical implementation of UDL principles by lecturers within HE is largely dependent on the particular training on how to operationalise UDL principles through, for example, adapting ‘the curriculum and teaching methods in accordance with individual student needs’ (Kraglund-Gauthier et al. 2014: 8). In order to achieve this, Canadian HEIs, such as Durham College and the University of Ontario (UOIT), ‘share a faculty enrichment centre which offers training in UDL principles and has a web site devoted to educating faculty on applying UDL principles to online learning’ (Anderson 2019: 3).

A widespread effort to operationalise UDL principles is not currently being made in South Africa, as is evident from the literature on the experiences of both SWDs and lecturers, as the latter still lack appropriate skills for adapting the curriculum. For instance, one study of lecturers from the University of Cape Town by Ohajunwa et al. (2015) detailed that participants who were committed to supporting SWDs in the mainstream curriculum mostly did so out of their personal interest or by their own methods, often in an ad hoc manner, because they lacked of training on how to appropriately support their SWDs. I found that most South African HEIs are not providing staff development and training on campus regarding disability, despite recent recommendations that the university management within these institutions should provide professional development programmes (Makiwane 2018). This has mainly been confirmed by various studies of DUSMs, who have raised concerns about the university management personnel’s reluctance to budget or invest financially in disability inclusion initiatives, including curriculum accessibility, as they view doing so as a costly exercise (FOTIM 2011; Ntombela & Soobrayen 2013; Mutanga 2015; Chiwandire 2017; Chiwandire 2020). Research further indicates that even universities which offer such staff
Desire Chiwandire

and development training on disability issues, like Stellenbosch University, do not make such training compulsory for lecturers, and this often results in low turnout (Lyner-Cleophas 2016).

Other studies have shown that lecturers’ lived experiences of also having a disability has positively impacted in their willingness to support their SWDs in the curriculum despite these lecturers’ lack of training in operationalising UDL principles. This is evidenced by Chiwandire’s (2017) study of SWDs and staff with disabilities at Rhodes University that found that only the two lecturers with disabilities expressed positive attitudes towards teaching an accessible curriculum that addresses the learning needs of SWDs, attributing their positive attitudes to their personal lived experiences. In addition to that, Ohajunwa (2012) conducted a study of the University of Cape Town’s lecturers, which aimed to find out how disability issues can be included in undergraduate curricula. This study revealed that, despite the willingness on the part of some lecturers to include disability issues in undergraduate curricula, most of these participants were unsure if they were using the best methods, and the seven academic staff that included disability issues were doing so in isolation as opposed to as part of a departmental effort (Ohajunwa 2012). Lecturers sampled in a study conducted by Ohajunwa et al. (2015) expressed concerns that an overcrowded curriculum presents challenges to disability inclusion in teaching and research. Such complaints could possibly be mitigated if these lecturers had received training in UDL principles, as they would employ such principles in making efforts to ensure that inclusive features have been built into classroom instruction right from the outset of designing the curriculum (Brinckerhoff et al. 2002).

Likewise, Nwanze (2016) conducted a study that examined how disability issues can be included into the undergraduate curriculum at the University of Cape Town. This study found that ‘disability issues were included, but with minimal support and was done through individual effort and not a university collective effort because lecturers did not have support structures on how to even begin to think of including disability issues’ (Nwanze 2016: iii). These studies clearly show that lecturers’ passion to support SWDs without the backing of expertise in curriculum development using UDL principles will likely result in such lecturers only achieving partial inclusive education for the minority SWDs, because, in reality, designing a curriculum that will also be accessible for students with diverse disabilities requires thorough planning (Hatlen 1996). Such thorough planning ought to be
Universal Design for Learning and Disability Inclusion

informed by UDL framework, as it advocates for curriculum development that gives all students, including SWDs, equal opportunities to learn (CAST 2014). This is because at the heart of UDL is addressing diverse learners’ individual differences within the general education environment (Chita-Tegmark et al. 2011) and the UDL’s principle of ‘multiple means of action and expression’ can best achieve this goal (Dalton et al. 2012) as it enjoins educators to ‘use strategies that allow the learner to practice tasks with different levels of support and to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a diversity of ways’ (Dalton et al. 2012: 3).

Non-inclusive Curriculum

Given the diverse backgrounds of students, HEIs in South Africa have been called to ensure that their curricula validate and give voice to students’ diverse range of experiences and identities (Quinlan & Sayed 2016). Against this background, advocates of UDL propose that the principle of ‘multiple means of representation’ can help lecturers best address this challenge (Dalton et al. 2012). Through employing the principle of ‘multiple means of representation’, ‘the teacher can present, for example, the learning materials through a variety of media (visual, auditory or tactile), and provide multiple examples that can be modified in complexity to meet a range of learning needs’ (Dalton et al. 2012: 3). However, the findings of the present study show that the South African HE environment is not yet conducive for many lecturers to inform their curriculum with this UDL principle (Dalton et al. 2012). For instance, Matshedisho’s (2007) study of SWDs found that their lecturers were resisting using alternative, accessible teaching methods and learning and assessment formats as they either did not consider doing so as part of their academic duties or were simply ignorant of these issues.

Lyner-Cleophas et al. (2014) has argued that, despite South Africa having well-developed disability legislative and policy frameworks, the implementation of these on the part of lecturers in order to achieve full disability inclusion has been slow. Similarly, other studies have attributed the lecturers’ inability to accept the responsibility of establishing inclusive learning environments to their lack understanding of South African legislation and institutional policies relating to SWDs (van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya 2015). Some lecturers sampled in Lyner-Cleophas’s (2016) study justified their failure to adequately engage with and support SWDs on the basis that they were ill-
prepared to teach SWDs. This has resulted in some lecturers intentionally dodging their responsibility to support SWDs by constantly referring SWDs to Disability Units (van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya, 2015; see also Howell 2005). DUSMs from various South African universities themselves have complained about lecturers’ constant referral of SWDs to Disability Units as unjustifiably increasing the workload of these Units, which are already understaffed and struggling to cope with job burnout (Chiwandire 2020).

Some of the South African studies have shown that, rather than embracing curriculum inclusive practices, some lecturers are rather resorting to shifting the blame on SWDs. Howell’s (2006) study, for instance, found that some lecturers’ resistance to the idea of delivering a flexible and accessible curriculum stemmed from their erroneous association of students’ disability with incapability. Likewise, Ndlovu & Walton’s (2016: 4) study concluded that lecturers’ reluctance to support SWDs often emanated from their ‘negative perceptions of the capabilities of students with disabilities and low expectations of their academic performance.’ This is exacerbated by the fact that lecturers within South African HEIs ‘are allowed to choose whether they want to ‘help’ disabled students or not’ (Matshedisho 2007:689).

Some of the South African literature tends to blame SWDs for not being proactive enough in communicating their learning needs and curriculum adaptation requests to their lecturers. In particular, this body of literature has blamed the academic failure of SWDs on their lack of self-advocacy skills² (van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya 2015; Swart & Greyling 2011; Lyner-Cleophas 2016). Other studies have also particularly blamed SWDs who have not self-disclosed their disability for creating a stumbling block for themselves to accessing the curriculum. The rationale behind this body of literature is that disability disclosure is essential if SWDs are to be able to officially receive the appropriate services and supports within the curriculum from their lecturers or through their Disability Units (Mutanga 2013; Lyner-Cleophas 2016; Chiwandire 2020).

Studies of SWDs have reported on how lecturers’ negative attitudes towards teaching an inclusive curriculum has particularly negatively impacted

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² Within the HE context and disability inclusion debates, Vaccaro et al. (2015: 673) have defined self-advocacy as the student’s ‘ability to communicate one’s needs and wants and to make decisions about the supports necessary to achieve them’.
on the retention and academic success of students with such invisible disabilities, such as psychiatric conditions and specific learning disabilities like dyslexia. In particular, these SWDs have complained about how they felt that they are often being misunderstood by some of their lecturers who forget or doubt the need for support under the assumption that they are faking their disabilities (Chiwandire 2020; Chiwandire 2017; Lyner-Cleophas 2016). Lyner-Cleophas’s (2016) study also found that some lecturers spoke about being ill-prepared to support SWDs, or that they did not know how to best practically support SWDs because of insufficient training and information regarding diverse disabilities. In other studies of SWDs, these participants have attributed lecturers’ failure to make necessary provisions in the curriculum to their lack of disability awareness (Matshedisho 2010; Haywood 2014).

In contrast, studies in the US have shown that lecturers who have received adequate training in implementing UDL principles provide an inclusive curriculum which supports the diverse learning needs of both SWDs and non-disabled students. Schelly et al.’s (2011:24) study on student perceptions of faculty implementation of UDL is the case in point; some of the student participants found that their lecturers ‘used significantly more UDL strategies following the UDL training compared to the student responses before training’. This mainly took the form of lecturers providing ‘more course materials in multiple formats and representations, making the material more accessible for all students’ (Schelly 2011: 24-25).

Inclusive Curriculum
Recent years have witnessed the burgeoning of South African literature that indicates a growing interest on the part of some (predominantly minority) lecturers taking proactive measures in delivering a curriculum that is also inclusive of the learning needs of SWDs. A study by Mayat & Amosun (2011), which explored the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal’s lecturers’ perceptions towards accommodating SWDs in a Civil Engineering Undergraduate Program, is the case in point. This study found that a number of participants ‘expressed the willingness to admit and accommodate students with disabilities in the undergraduate civil engineering program’ (Mayat & Amosun 2011: 58). This was further evidenced by the participants’ willingness to make appropriate adjustments at the levels of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment (Mayat & Amosun 2011). Similarly, a 2015 study of the University of Free
State academic staff members, conducted by van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya (2015), found that the minority of these participants displayed positive attitudes towards supporting SWDs. This indicates that although South Africa has numerous disability policies that provide rights for SWDs to access inclusive education, these policies still lack guiding frameworks, which ‘results in universities approaching disability differently, resulting in ad hoc and uncoordinated efforts towards disability matters’ (Mutanga & Walker 2017: 8). This has also been exacerbated by the fact that most HEIs do not have structures in place that hold to account lecturers who do not adhere to their legislation, policies and procedures relating to inclusive education (van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya 2015).

Similar findings have also been reported in studies on the experiences of SWDs. Swart & Greyling’s (2011) study, which aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of how SWDs experienced participation at their university, found that students in the Humanities and Social Sciences experienced more curriculum support and adaptations from their lecturers than students in the Natural Sciences and Economic and Business Sciences. Similar issues were also reported by SWDs sampled at Rhodes University (Chiwandire 2017) and Stellenbosch University (Lyner-Cleophas 2016), as they reported that lecturers in the Humanities were more willing to support SWDs in the curriculum in comparison to lecturers in the Sciences. Lecturers making efforts to embrace diversity in their classrooms have been appreciated by their SWDs, as shown by other studies. For instance, SWDs sampled in Matschedisho’s (2010) study spoke positively about some of their lecturers for making efforts to respond to academic needs of SWDs through providing alternative styles of teaching that are sensitive to SWDs. Although these lecturers holding positive attitudes towards attempting to teach an inclusive curriculum should be acknowledged, I caution against the potential of them delivering an insufficient one-size-fits-all curriculum approach to supporting SWDs; especially those lecturers who did not receive training in UDL principles. This one-size-fits-all approach has been criticised for being problematic in that it fails to recognise the heterogeneity within the PWDs, which has the danger of lecturers failing to meet the diverse needs of students with different types of disabilities. Mutanga and Walker (2017; see also Mutanga 2017) have also further criticised South African lecturers who uses this ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach as unjustifiably treating SWDs as a homogenous category – a prejudice which results in overlooking the varied experiences of SWDs.
Although lecturers who are willing to prioritise the needs of SWDs to access the curriculum are important exemplars of best practices within the South African HE context, a lecturer’s positive attitude alone does not necessarily guarantee his or her utilisation of effective teaching and assessment practices informed by UDL principles. To achieve an inclusive classroom, recent literature has cautioned educators that inclusive education is not the ‘specialised kind of teaching and classroom accommodation that is afforded learners with disabilities only’ (British Council 2018: 1). Rather, educators should view it as good quality teaching for diverse learners in the general classroom setting (British Council 2018). In other words, this recent literature enjoins lecturers not to pay attention only to SWDs to the extent that they forget to also address the educational needs of non-disabled students, and thus it is also important for South African lecturers to avoid running a similar risk. This is because doing so will be as good as reinforcing the oppressive and exclusionary culture of segregatory special schools, which historically isolated SWDs from their non-disabled counterparts (Barton 1997).

Against this background, employing the UDL’s principle of ‘multiple means of engagement’, which places emphasis on ‘creating interesting learning opportunities that motivate and stimulate learners according to their personal backgrounds and interests’, can provide lecturers with fruitful guidance in this process (Dalton et al. 2012:3). Informing the curriculum with this principle is important, especially given the findings from South African studies of SWDs that indicate that these students are experiencing marginalisation and isolation from their non-disabled peers in the classroom setting (Swart & Greyling 2011; Ramakuela & Maluleke 2011; Chiwandire 2017). In particular, Chiwandire’s (2020) doctoral study shows how SWDs themselves also feel misunderstood even by their non-disabled student peers, who discriminate against the former by resisting making friends and doing group work or assignments with SWDs.

Hence, such UDL-oriented teaching strategies as cooperative learning will be worth employing in this regard if lecturers are to create this positive academic and social success for both SWDs and their non-disabled peers. This is because UDL principles can help students to be self-motivated and thus successful in their studies (Black et al. 2015). Katherine (2016: 9) defines cooperative learning as ‘a method that takes place in a classroom using small groups and collaboration between students’. Central to cooperative learning are characteristics which include: ‘positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-toface interaction, social skills, and evaluation of the
Desire Chiwandire

group processing’, all of which are important in promoting the engagement and academic success of all students within a group (Altun 2015 cited in Taylor 2016: 27-28).

Discussion

Although under the South African Constitution and several disability policies SWDs should have a right to access a flexible and accessible curriculum in the classroom setting, the findings of the present study indicate that is still not a reality, and thus clearly show that ‘policy is not practice’ (Jansen 2004: 126). This is particularly true of how most of the sampled South African HEIs still reinforce ableism\(^3\) in the curriculum and disabling practices that hinder the equal participation of SWDs in the curriculum. This has been attributed to the lack of coordinated efforts between relevant stakeholders such as lecturers, DUSMs and the university management personnel. In particular, at both national and institutional level, there is an absence of effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure that involved stakeholders actually honour their responsibilities regarding supporting SWDs to access the curriculum. This has created a fertile ground for some lecturers and university management personnel to constantly claim that they are still unaware of their legal obligations to support SWDs in the curriculum, and this has put the academic success of the latter jeopardy in many ways.

For instance, lecturers holding negative attitudes towards disability who consistently refer their SWDs to Disability Units increase rather than solve curriculum issues. This is because although DUSMs at South African campuses have been commended for playing an important advocacy role and liaising with various university departments on how to best address the academic needs of SWDs (Howell 2005: 61), this does not necessarily mean that DUSMs are professionally equipped in UDL principles or have professional expertise in practically teaching SWDs. Hence, I agree with Mutanga’s (2017: 145) suggestion that ‘Disability Units should not be seen as the only way of responding to the needs of students with disabilities’. Rather,

\(^3\) Campbell (2001: 44) has defined ableism as ‘a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human’.
the university management should also work in collaboration with lecturers, DUSMs and other relevant stakeholders on how to best facilitate the provision of professional development courses in UDL that target lecturers from all academic faculties. The university management in some Canadian (Kumar & Wideman 2014) and US (Langley-Turnbaugh et al. 2013) HEIs have already resorted to offering their lecturers training and professional development courses aimed at promoting UDL as a valuable instructional design framework. This comes as a direct influence of the obligations imposed by these countries’ disability laws; obligations that are not often respected by the South African university management.

The study also found that lecturers resisting developing and delivering an inclusive curriculum are those with predetermined or negative biases that assume SWDs are incapable of performing well academically like their non-disabled peers. In addition to that, previous South African literature has rather put the blame on SWDs for lacking self-advocacy skills and for not officially disclosing their disability as a self-imposed hindrance to accessing the curriculum. However, the present study criticises this view as narrow and perpetuating social injustice, because the reality is that ‘universal design for learning is not always implemented, and the student cannot be expected to take the blame when such systems fail’ (Osborne 2019: 229). This reality has also been evidenced by South African SWDs themselves (particularly those involved in disability campus activism) through voicing their concerns about their universities’ perpetuation of the perception that accommodating SWDs is a favour, rather than a Constitutional right (Dirk 2016; Macupe 2017). As far as disability disclosure is concerned, it is worth noting that if lecturers were to inform their curriculum with UDL principles right from the outset, such curriculum can also benefit even those SWDs who choose not to disclose their disabilities (Schelly et al. 2011: 24).

The lack of a co-ordinated involvement of the university management, especially in relation to facilitating the provision of professional development courses in UDL that target lecturers, has also been identified as a major barrier hindering the full inclusion of SWDs in the curriculum. This is because, rather than the university management also being proactively involved in issues of disability inclusion as they are required by law, they have rather shifted this responsibility to lecturers. This has especially been the case with the university management who do not make an effort to familiarise themselves with their individual institution’s transformation strategic intentions towards addressing
Desire Chiwandire

disability inclusion issues (Howell 2015). Thus, such university management personnel’s expectations on lecturers have failed to materialise because, as suggested by Edyburn’s (2010), in order for lecturers to practically operationalise UDL principles in their teaching practices they should first receive adequate training in creating UDL products, which many South African HEIs are failing to provide. The importance of offering training in UDL to lecturers has been confirmed by empirical studies which found that positive effects of training lecturers in the use of UDL in their teaching can increase their willingness to implement UDL principles in their university classrooms (Schelly et al. 2011: 24). Thus, without adequate training in UDL most of the South African lecturers will always remain ill-prepared to effectively support SWDs in the curriculum.

Although the present study acknowledges the good intentions and efforts being made by the minority of lecturers who are supporting SWDs in the curriculum, there is still a need to provide them with appropriate institutional support. Such institutional support should take the form of providing additional UDL-based training to these lecturers so they can avoid teaching a one-size-fits-all curriculum or a curriculum focusing mainly on teaching SWDs at the cost of their non-disabled peers. Such institutional support should be provided in the form of professional development workshops in UDL, as these are essential for lecturers’ pedagogical improvement (Orr & Hammig 2009). This is because academic staff members’ long-term teaching experience, having a disability or having personal interest in supporting SWDs in the curriculum does not necessarily guarantee that they will design and teach an inclusive curriculum. Rather, it is only after acquiring training in UDL principles that South African lecturers can potentially develop and teach what Curry (2003) refers to as a learner-centred curriculum, which selects flexible, usable and accessible tools and thus creates an enabling classroom environment that is functional for all students. This is evidenced by the findings from one study of University of Southern Maine’s sixteen lecturers who participated in a five-year programme of UDL education, implementation, evaluation and dissemination (Langley-Turnbaugh et al. 2013). In that study, these lecturers appreciated their participation in the programme of UDL education as an eye opener that enabled them to effectively operationalise UDL principles in a way which positively provided both their SWDs and non-disabled students equal opportunities to succeed academically in their classrooms (Langley-Turnbaugh et al. 2013). This is particularly evidenced by
one participant, a long-time professor who argued that professional development in UDL ‘has had a transformative impact on nearly all aspects of my teaching’ (Langley-Turnbaugh et al. 2013: 21).

**Conclusion**

Within Disability Studies, recent years have witnessed the burgeoning of literature that challenges the deficit discourse in quite remarkable ways, and this has positively opened up new avenues for scholarship in this field. Nwokorie & Devlieger (2019) in particular have recently critiqued discourses of empowerment of PWDs for framing disability mainly in terms of deficit, stating that these are disempowering because they conceal the personal lived experiences of this group. Rather, instead of thinking about disability in terms of the deficit medicalised model of disability, a social model of disability has been put forward as an empowering alternative approach that presents disability in terms of full range of experiences that are shaped by personal context, environmental barriers and everyday assumptions (Block et al. 2015). From the findings of the present study, I suggest that this should take the form of the university managements’ involvement in empowering their lecturers to constantly ‘improve their teaching methods and update course content to deliver high quality education to students’ (Dužević et al. 2014: 233). Recent literature has suggested the importance of the involvement of the top university management in achieving systematic dialogue in transformation and disability inclusion initiatives at South African HEIs (Lynier-Cleophas 2019). To date, this has not fully materialised because of the continual absence of the university managements’ voices in South African HE literature’s debates on disability inclusion matters, and this has been raised as a matter of concern by Mutanga (2017).

The aim of the present study was to understand whether or not lecturers design and deliver instruction in accordance with UDL’s three core principles. By employing UDL as theoretical lens, the present study yielded findings which have added new knowledge about disability inclusion and curriculum in HE not only in the context of South Africa, but in ways that are of more general significance. In particular, the present study has added new insights into broadening our understanding about issues of disability inclusion and the curriculum through unearthing hidden disabling barriers impeding equal access opportunities to the curriculum for SWDs in South African HEIs. Unlike
previous literature, which have often blamed lecturers, DUSMs and SWDs for curriculum failings in HE, the present study has identified the university management personnel’s lack of political will to invest in professional development courses in UDL as the major disabling barrier to providing a conducive environment for lecturers to be trained on how to design and deliver an inclusive curriculum. This is because the present study’s findings have shown that although UDL principles have a potential of transforming HE curriculum, without HEIs providing professional development courses in UDL, most South African lecturers will remain ill-equipped with practicalities of how to operationalise the three principles of UDL in practice if they are to deliver the inclusive environments.

Given this importance of the need to involve the university management, I propose new recommendations which radically move away from how disability inclusion and curriculum practices have traditionally been understood within the South African HE context. This is because previous studies have failed to provide concrete solutions aimed at mitigating these challenges by shifting away attention from the university managements’ failings and incompetencies in dealing with issues of disability inclusion. Rather, the dominant finding in previous South African literature has mainly been placing emphasis on the need for universities to sensitisise lecturers on disability issues if they are to support SWDs. This finding was also recently confirmed by Makiwane’s (2018: 792-793) study of 20 SWDs on four campuses of Walter Sisulu University, who also recommended the need for these campuses to conduct disability awareness workshops aimed at training lecturers on how to handle and assess SWDs in the classroom. In the present study, I propose a move away from this dominant finding by enjoining South African HEIs to rather invest in holding workshops aimed at training lecturers on how to practically design and deliver the curriculum informed by UDL principles. Such UDL workshops can potentially have multiple beneficial outcomes not only for lecturers who hold negative attitudes towards SWDs, but also for lecturers who are willing to teach an inclusive curriculum, but lack knowledge on how to practically design and deliver curricula which address the learning needs of diverse SWDs. This is because a curriculum informed by UDL principles has been applauded for not only addressing the learning needs of students with mild or moderate disabilities, but also for those with severe disabilities whom most educators are always shying away from supporting (Hartmann 2015).
In conclusion, although the current South African literature only places much expectations on lecturers, SWDs and DUSMs to be the only stakeholders to facilitate curriculum accessibility issues in South African HEIs, the present study has added new knowledge by arguing that such issues are beyond the control of these stakeholders. Rather, there is also an urgent need for the university management personnel to be actively involved in initiating campus-wide involvement in disability inclusion promotion (Marks 2008). In particular, this should take the form of funding professional development courses in UDL that target lecturers from all academic faculties. It is hoped that such professional development courses in UDL will help educate these lecturers on how to operationalise such UDL principles as ‘multiple means of representation’; ‘multiple means of action and expression’ and ‘multiple means of engagement’ in order to design and deliver the curriculum that addresses all students with diverse learning needs. Given the dearth in literature on the experiences of the management, there is a need for future qualitative studies to also focus on sampling this group specifically on measures they are taking in supporting SWDs in accessing the curriculum, among other things, as previous studies have ignored this important aspect.

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Desire Chiwandire


Universal Design for Learning and Disability Inclusion


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Curriculum Development: An Enriched Approach for Twenty-First Century Open Distance Learning

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Abstract
The aim of this paper is to analyse and explore the progress of curriculum development, which remains a contentious issue, particularly in the context of higher education expansion, massification, commodification and the so-called ‘Fourth Industrial Revolution’. This paper examines how the curriculum is developed within the complexities of a shifting job market and changing student aspirations. Existing literature in curriculum development focuses on the instrumental value of education and graduate attributes for economic development, with a lesser focus on the intrinsic value of education. There is a paucity of evidence, particularly regarding Open Distance Learning (ODL), that researchers have explored the issue of curriculum development and capabilities formation. These two aspects are important in that they potentially offer students an effective way to change their lives, improve their communities and direct their own destinies. The research was undertaken by means of a desktop literature review; to examine curriculum development in South Africa after 1994 and includes the function of education while exploring the theoretical frameworks underpinning curriculum development. In so doing, the paper locates curricula in a broader capabilities framework, challenging existing practices. It then examines the challenges of curriculum development in ODL and how we might start rethinking curriculum development and capabilities formation and initiate a dialogue of capabilities formation in ODL in South Africa. It further suggests numerous innovative ways of curriculum conceptualisation, interpretation and implementation.

Keywords: Curriculum development, capabilities formation, ODL, pedagogy, sustainable living
Introduction

The context and nature of South Africa’s democracy, to a large extent, requires an understanding of how the discourse of transformation has influenced curricula and pedagogy (Costandius & Bitzer 2015) and the South African higher education has been sensitive to the injustices that were created by apartheid. In the early post-1994 years, the focus on education was on transformation, with emphasis on providing previously marginalised and disadvantaged groups, access to education, with reference to the black (African) population and women (CHE 2013). Since 1994, higher education enrolments for the said marginalised and disadvantaged groups have increased exponentially, that is, by 80%, to constitute 59% of total enrolments in higher education (DHET 2011). Recent statistics indicate that there are a million students in public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which represents a dramatic increase from the half million enrolled in 1994 (CHE 2016). Black African people have more access to higher education and their enrolment has doubled to 67%, with the headcount of black students now at 80% of the total enrolments in higher education (DHET 2011). This demonstrates that there has been a notable increase in the enrolment of previously marginalised and disadvantaged groups in higher education as previously noted. Nevertheless, there are poor graduation rates, 30% graduate in 3 years with 56% in 5 years and, if UNISA is included, it drops well below 50% (Cloete et al. 2016). The participation rates for black and white students still differ significantly: 55% for whites and 16% for African students in 2013 (CHE 2016: 6). The growth rate for new entrants over the period 2006-2013 was 1.7% while the average annual growth for returning undergraduates was 4% over the same period (Cloete et al. 2016). Most students stay in the undergraduate system for far too long, which is unnecessary.

In addition to participation, the South African context (in terms of poverty, unemployment and inequality) puts pressure on students who come to university with the desire to acquire qualifications and skills to render them employable (Walker & Fongwa 2017) so that they can earn an income as opposed to them only being ‘good’ people in the society. In comparison with Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), the university is still regarded as the better option for acquiring a qualification that will enable one to get a job. These nuanced tensions between acquiring knowledge for the benefit of the society and for economic reasons relate to students’ freedom to
be and do things that they value and what the university is doing in terms of advancing the Human Capital Theory (HCT)\(^1\) in higher education. This is important, particularly in South Africa where university first-generation students are under pressure to graduate and get jobs to support their families (Rogan & Reynolds 2015). As Walker (2007) points out, the economic dimension should not be underestimated amongst students.

More recently, there has been interest in the decolonisation of the curriculum and its relevance after twenty years of democracy. This follows student protests calling for the removal of colonial memorabilia, for example, the #Rhodes Must Fall and the #Fees Must Fall movements that triggered debate about decolonisation of education and structural change in South African universities (Pillay 2016; Shay 2016). The decolonisation debates have comprised issues of undergraduate curriculum change and how it is no longer fit for purpose. In South Africa, questions continue to be asked whether the curriculum is relevant and if it responds to the diverse needs of the wide spectrum of students that make up the current student body (Shay 2016). It is further argued that professional curricula have shifted to problem-based or problem-centred ones, which raises concerns of the balance and sequence of theory and practice, amongst other issues. Further issues raised under the banner of decolonisation, include the arguments that the curriculum preserves values of white supremacy, racial hegemony and raise the point that student voices are not valued in curriculum design, all of which contribute to the reinforcement of this society’s broader inequalities (Shay 2016).

More recently, the buzz phrase, the ‘Fourth Industrial Revolution’ (4IR) has emerged. The 4IR refers to a stage of technological change, which is set to bring radical changes to the workplace, including the re-configuration of jobs through automation and artificial intelligence. It is argued, however, that industry will still need universities to provide the right kind of people. The implications of this revolution are not yet clear but the anxiety about the interaction between these technological developments and humans has been raised by academics and the general populace. There is great uncertainty about the overall impact of digital transformation on job skills\(^2\), and its implications

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\(^1\) Within HCT, the main goal of higher education is directed towards preparing students for jobs that the global economy requires.

\(^2\) In the form of data science and analysis, data equipment automation, industrial intelligence systems and systems integration skills.
for old university curricula (which is at risk of becoming obsolete).

Currently, however, as alluded to above, a very significant question being raised concerns what the 4IR means for university education, particularly in terms of curriculum conceptualisation and delivery. Moreover, what does the 4IR mean for the curriculum of Humanities and social sciences, which deal with abstract issues? Sociology, as an example, is a discipline that traditionally helps people to understand their social circumstances, thereby providing them with better options for controlling their circumstances. The discipline does not intentionally focus on directly influencing skills for economic development, although it could be argued that skills developed in humanities and social sciences, such as critical thinking and creativity, are important in the workplace. The humanities and social science remain vital as they reinvigorate the real public value of education as discussed by Brewer (2013). Contributing to a discussion about the role of universities in the digital era at the ‘EnlightED: Reinventing education in a digital world’ Conference in Madrid, Spain, Rector at Universidad Carlos de Madrid, Juan Romo, emphasised that students need ‘soft skills’ and a solid moral compass. He explained that at the above-mentioned university, humanities are core subjects for everyone, including engineers, because, for example, in the future, everyone, will need to understand the importance of ethics (Romo 2018). The question we may ask ourselves, is how our education system (in both contact and ODL universities) and the curriculum prepare students for the opportunities that the 4IR presents. In response to this, the paper examines curricula and the function of education and challenges the philosophical assumptions of curriculum development. The paper ends by arguing how an expansive capability informed curriculum can break the ‘curriculum borders’. Before dwelling on the expansive nature of the capability approach, the paper interrogates curriculum development and the function of education.

The Curriculum and the Function of Education
The concept of curriculum is broad, complex, dynamic and highly contested. A curriculum is not neutral and may or may not contribute to social justice because of political, cultural and economic forces, which influence it (Apple 2003). Curriculum development is characterised by two elements, ‘curriculum development technique’ and ‘curriculum conscience’ (Grier 2005). Curriculum development techniques are the theoretical models and frameworks that
describe procedures to develop curricula, whereas curriculum conscience is about thinking critically about implications and consequences of curricular decision (Posner 1998). In the case of ODL, curriculum development would have to be context-specific and take cognisance of the learning needs of diverse students. To achieve a context-relevant curriculum, one must conduct a careful needs analysis of the students and the lecturers, the support staff and the institution. Stakeholder contribution ensures that students receive holistic values that enhance their chances of living sustainable lives (Kouwenhoven 2003). The future of sustainable education in the twenty-first century requires a responsive, boundless curriculum, in contact education as well as in distance learning environments, which challenges the existing conceptualisation, practices and implementation of curricula. In this vein, a responsive curriculum ought to cover three areas: content (the ‘what’ of a curriculum), pedagogy (the methods of teaching and learning) and lastly, assessment and outcomes (Kelly 2004). This understanding allows the interrogation of three concepts of the curriculum: how knowledge is legitimised, how it is transmitted and its acquisition by students. What is still lacking in this definition are the contextualisation factors, curriculum outcomes and the absence of relevant stakeholder participation, such as the students, in designing the curriculum. The curriculum should offer much more than a statement about the knowledge-content or merely the subjects which schooling is to ‘teach’, but it should demonstrate justification of the purposes of such transmission and an exploration of the effects that exposure to knowledge and subjects is likely to have, or is intended to have, on its recipients (Kelly 2004).

There are several debates relating to education, curricula and pedagogy in literature. For the purpose of rethinking the purposes of education and the development of curriculum, we focused on the contestation around higher education as a public or private good. The debate about the public versus private good of education provides insights on why students pursue education. As a public good, students are educated to become productive citizens whereas as a private good, education primarily benefits individuals who can earn more money and enjoy other benefits (Bloom, Canning & Chan 2006). The debate is that if education is a private good then students who benefit from it should fund their studies but if education is a public good, then society has a responsibility to provide financial support (Altbach et al. 2009). The recent rate of return analysis shows that African graduates have the highest rate of return in tertiary education, with South Africa having the highest in the world.
Bothwell Manyonga & Sindile Ngubane-Mokiwa

(Cloete 2016). Due to the ideology of education as a private good, many countries have shifted the financial responsibility to students and their families. In such a setting, students become consumers and universities become producers (Walker 2010). This suggests that education is regarded as a marketable commodity. For example, fee-pegging is determined by market forces, where tuition fees for disciplines deemed less important in the knowledge-based economy, are lower (Taylor 2008). A performativity culture has led to an increasing emphasis on private goods yielded by higher education at the expense of the broader social purposes of higher education (Singh 2002). Universities are being called upon to become more responsive to the needs of a knowledge-based economy (CHE 2002; Ensor 2004; Griesel 2004; Shay 2014). Under these circumstances, the broad role of the university is being narrowed and redefined. Universities compete for students, they aim to make profit and there is an increase in accountability structures which also monitor the performance of the many aspects of the academic field (Altbach 2008). In the global North, massification is associated inter alia, with an increased pressure of efficiency and quality and a commensurate loss of exclusiveness, (Teferra & Altbach 2004). Whilst this is also true for the global South, privatisation and expansion of education has occurred without an accompanying increase in financial, physical and human resources and which, accordingly, has had a direct impact on the physical infrastructure, the quality of teaching and learning experience, research and the quality of life of the students (Mohamedbhai 2008; Hornby & Osman 2014). Most public universities world over now receive a smaller proportion of their budgets from government (Altbach 2008). For example, between 2000 and 2012, the total state contribution to higher education funding in South Africa declined from 49% to 40%, while the contribution from student fees rose from 24% to 31% (DHET 2011). This has far reaching consequences in terms of quality, particularly in a context where under-prepared students require additional support to cater for foundational conceptual gaps (Shay 2017).

The debate about education being a public good or a private good can be positioned within the larger debate about the function of higher education. Primarily, education can have an instrumental personal economic role. Within this approach, the main goal of higher education is directed towards preparing students for the jobs that the economy offers and most higher education curricula and pedagogy appear to respond to employability and market demands at the expense of expansive human development (Walker 2012).
Human Capital Theory (HCT) is a financial investment which views education yielding economic returns (Unterhalter 2010). It presumes that education develops certain qualities in people and these qualities enhance economic development in the same manner that increase in physical capital or investment does (Unterhalter 2010). Within this theory, people are perceived as the means to an end for economic productivity so that students are educated to be economic producers, consumer-citizens and entrepreneurial selves (Unterhalter 2010; Walker 2010). Thus, according to the tenets of this theory, education is important because it creates skills and helps with acquisition of knowledge, which allows workers to be more productive, thereby being able to earn higher wages (Robeyns 2006). This is important, especially in South Africa, where the levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality are high. Therefore, HCT is central to economic development efforts for individuals and nations as well as the global economy. The instrumental roles of education are not limited to economic roles alone, but there are also non-economic instrumental roles. At the personal level, when considering the skill of reading for instance, one could think of having access to information by being able to read the newspaper or a medical instruction leaflet, being knowledgeable about issues of health, reproduction and contraception and so on (Robeyns 2006). At the collective level, the non-instrumental roles of education include the fact that children have to learn to live in a society where people have different views of the good life, which is likely to contribute to a more tolerant society.

While the benefits of the HCT are evident, notable problems remain. Firstly, HCT theorists refer to the economic well-being of people and societies, which is an important factor, but inadequate on its own. They place emphasis on the role of higher education in the transformation of human beings into human capital and being instruments of production and economic growth as a way of achieving economic well-being (Schultz 1972; Becker 1975). The HCT has been critiqued as being too economistic; furthermore, it does not adequately address certain non-instrumental issues such as culture, gender, identity, emotions, history and so forth (Davis 2003; Fine 2002). Thus, in essence, HCT considers social returns and the intrinsic value of education as being of less importance than its instrumental and private value (Psacharopolous 1996).

Secondly, education can be intrinsically important. A person may value knowing something simply for the sake of acquiring that knowledge. This means that education and knowledge can be treated as ends in themselves.
There is consensus among scholars subscribing to the capabilities approach that putting emphasis on utilitarian purposes of higher education misses the point of providing curricula that can shape individuals to live enriched and productive lives. This includes, but is not limited to, the instrumental value of education (Boni & Gasper 2012; McLean 2006; Nussbaum 2006; Sen 1999; Walker 2008; 2013). As Sen (2009) contends, economic development is a means to an end, which is human development. There is evidence to suggest that education builds healthier, wealthier and more equitable societies (Peercy & Svenson 2016). However, the HCT approach has become more aggressive, developing policies that pose a challenge to (higher) education. Talik (2003) argues that new values, policies and practices are replacing the old ones and market-driven policies are replacing social democratic values and government subsidies (Ibid). As a result, reductive discourses of employability and well paid global citizens in a global workforce are given priority in the curriculum over other aspects that are important for human development and thriving lives (Walker 2012). Therefore, these researchers argue that higher education institutions cannot afford to sell pre-packaged skills and formal knowledge to student ‘consumers’ without considering the socio-historical context of student lives in combination with the socio-economic realities which await them outside of higher education spaces. This discussion has become vital in an era where the universities face the challenges of transforming education and decolonising the curriculum, particularly after the ‘decolonisation of the curriculum’ movement.

**Theoretical Frameworks Underpinning Curriculum Development**

To provide a context for the use of the expansive capabilities approach, at the end of the paper we offer a synopsis and analysis of a body of literature on philosophy and curriculum paradigms. The intent is to outline and challenge some of the philosophical assumptions foregrounding designs and discuss what informs curriculum development; the process of developing, implementing and assessing; and why it would need to change, as well as methods to develop relevant responsive curricula.

Curriculum development is a careful and conscious exercise made by curriculum designers and lecturers in higher education. As a practical matter, curriculum decisions need to be made skilfully, based on an accumulated
situational understanding on the part of the lecturer concerning learning outcomes. As such, it is a personal, social, political and theoretical exercise as MacDonald suggests:

I suspect that in many ways all curriculum design is political in nature; that is, it is an attempt to facilitate someone else’s idea of the good life. By creating social processes and structuring the environment for learning, curriculum design is thus a form of ‘utopianism’, a form of political and social philosophizing and theorizing. If we recognise this, it may help us sort out our own thinking and perhaps increase our ability to communicate with each other (McDonald-Ross 1975: 293).

Due to the lack of consensus on curriculum philosophy, the term ‘philosophy’ is used interchangeably with the hierarchical paradigm and theory to refer to approaches that inform curriculum development. Philosophy, which, for the purpose of this paper, is hereafter referred to as ‘hierarchical paradigm/s’, is important as it shapes key curriculum trends and informs educational decisions on how the concept of curriculum is understood and designed. A hierarchical paradigm is the starting point in any curriculum decision making and is the basis for all subsequent decisions regarding a particular curriculum. These paradigms establish criteria for determining the aims, selection, organisation and implementation of the curriculum in the classroom. Hierarchical paradigms help us answer general questions such as: (i) What are universities for? (ii) What knowledge is valued? and (iii) How should students learn the content? Hierarchical paradigms for curriculum development may generally be categorised as one of three paradigms: traditionalists, reconceptualists, and critical theorists. Although broad and general distinctions can be made among these three perspectives, they do not exist separately from one another. Before we discuss the three broad perspectives, it is necessary that we briefly summarise four sources for curriculum development.

As referred to above, four sources for curriculum development have been identified: (i) epistemological; (ii) learner based; (iii) objectives-based (technical-scientific); and (iv) society and problem-centred (McKernan 2008). The epistemological curriculum refers to its epistemology and its knowledge or subject base (Ibid). This has generally come from two basic forms: the traditional disciplines, or forms of knowledge approach and ‘fields of
knowledge’ as defined by their subject knowledge, rather than their distinctive ‘form’. For example, sociology and psychology. The advocates of the epistemological approach argue that these disciplines and subjects will develop appropriate character and qualities of mind (Kelly 1989). The learner-based approach argues that the curriculum development is based on the needs, interest and human development of the student. According to (Dewey 1922) curriculum development should centre on the experiences, interests, and abilities of students. The students are exposed to a more democratic curriculum that recognises the accomplishments of all citizens, regardless of race, cultural background or gender. The problem-centred curriculum, as it relates to society, is based on the difficulties of living; the problem-centred development attempts a form of life-adjustment education using personal, group and institutional issues and problems. Curricula addressing social problems such as racism, inequality, terrorism and so on, would fall within this design (McKernan 2008).

Firstly, the traditional paradigm, which has dominated curriculum design for decades, assumes that curricula contribute to maintaining society by socialising young people into values of achievement, competition and equality of opportunity (McKenna 2004; Wolf, 2006). Thus, functional knowledge is deliberately created and transmitted to reinforce societal norms and values. It is also argued that behaviour is regulated to accept the general moral values by means of the curriculum and through a hidden curriculum agenda, in higher education (Durkheim 1977). Within this paradigm, the power structure that perpetuates societal stratification is subtle compared to that of critical theory (McKernan 2008). Curriculum knowledge is narrowed towards producing graduates with skills to contribute to economic development (Parsons 1961).

Secondly, the re-conceptualistic paradigm views the curriculum as a social construct in which there is no single reality or truth. A reconceptualist views curriculum as an inescapably political as well as intellectual act (Beakley 1991). This view takes socio-cultural and historical circumstances into consideration in the validation of knowledge or truth. The curriculum is not merely a collection of materials that students work through; rather, it could be thought of as a cultural product that develops through social interactions (Grundy 1987). This implies that the curriculum reflects a cultural dialogue in a given context and it is not neutral (McKenna 2004). The paradigm analysis of curriculum and pedagogy questions perceived pedagogical truths as part of a strategy of challenging injustices produced through the institutions, practices, and knowledge structures of education (Beakley 1991). Rather than trying to
expose the curriculum as representing the interest of the elite, reconceptualists focus on the processes, procedures and apparatus wherein truth, knowledge and beliefs are produced. Theories such as positivist and structural functionalist belong to the traditional paradigm. Post-structuralism, post-modernism and phenomenological, which all fall under the reconceptualist paradigm, differ from critical theory in that they suggest that power does not emanate from a single source, but exists in multiple sites and is always subject to negotiation (Gewirtz & Cribb 2009). In critical theory, the aim of the curriculum is to provide knowledge that leads to the emancipation of individuals from the powerful and false accounts of reality, whereas reconceptualists aim to deconstruct how the accounts of reality are created in a given context. Reconceptualism is useful in exploring power relations, but it has been argued that it cannot investigate issues of distribution, justice and equality (Unterhalter, Vaughan & Walker 2007).

The third approach is that of critical theory, which views educational knowledge as a theory of social reproduction (Apple 1996; Bowles 1988; Bruner 1996; Freire 2000), which seems to be working in the interests of the elite groups and appears to be reinforcing prevailing power relationships and inequalities (Bowles et al. 1988). Critical theory is influenced by Gramsci’s analysis, which illuminates the ways in which social control can be achieved without the majority being deprived by dominant groups (Gramsci 1971). Prominent scholars within the critical theory paradigm (Adorno 1973; Herbamas 2001; Horkheimer 1993) emphasised that there is a direct relationship between the requirements of capital accumulation and the curriculum. Critical researchers argue that education should interrupt social class hierarchy that reinforces inequality, but that is difficult to achieve hence, it becomes important to understand contesting forces that shape curricula (Apple 2003; McLean 2006; Freire 1970). Curricula are further influenced by various factors that include, but are not limited to, the values of the teacher, tradition, available resources, related knowledge, the students’ interests and abilities as well as school policy (Wood & Deprez 2013). Thus, rather than ask whether students have mastered certain subject matter and have done well on common tests, we as educational practitioners ought to ask a different set of questions to determine the motive and justification of curriculum construction: Whose knowledge is this? How did it become ‘official’? What is the relationship between this knowledge and those who have cultural, social and economic capital in a society? Who benefits from these definitions of
legitimate knowledge and who does not? What are educators doing to change existing educational and social inequalities to make curricula and teaching more socially acceptable?

While generally paying attention to power and conditions in schools other than those associated with HCT, the approaches (except for the learner-based approach) to curriculum development outlined above fail to consider people’s well-being, individual experiences, values and differences within groups and how one might suggest for instance a complex, capability-inspired curriculum for sociology undergraduates. Although the different theories raise various important aspects of the curriculum, it remains necessary to investigate the curriculum development from a capabilities formation perspective, because it is concerned with human diversity within unjust structures and it addresses individuals and social arrangements within a framework of justice and equality (Unterhalter, Vaughan & Walker 2007). For example, unlike the capabilities approach, which advocates for social justice in different forms, the weakness of the traditional paradigm’s ideology is that it assumes that education is fair and that it rewards the best. The traditional paradigm tends to reproduce inequalities within societies that may restrict students from realising their potential. In addition, there is limited student participation in class. In contrast to Sen’s concepts of public deliberation and collective reasoning, the paradigm excludes students’ participation in curriculum and pedagogy design. In considering various theories, the next section unpacks a paradigm that has dominated ODL provision.

**Curriculum Development in ODL**

ODL has several defining characteristics that include the spatial and temporal separation of lecturer and learners; industrialised processes; scalability and cost efficiency and the use of technology for learning as well as flexibility and reach (Lentell 2004). Thus, it requires input from different stakeholders such as subject experts, educational consultants, professionals, practitioners and the diverse student population (Louw 2015). It is further argued that curriculum design should be done with the aim of making learning accessible to the said student populations, facilitate collaborative learning, foster student-centred engagement, allow for authentic and transformative learning, and critical engagement (Ngubane-Mokiwa 2017). There are several characteristics of Competence-Based Education (CBE) that could lead to sustainable human
capacity through curriculum development (Kouwenhoven 2003). CBE is focused on developing professional practice, being student-centred and learning process-centred, using constructivist approaches, the teacher as a ‘cognitive guide’, having a learning environment that aims at developing competencies, development of generic competencies, using assessment-based competencies and developing curricula that focus on knowledge creation of competencies (Kouwenhoven 2003).

A study undertaken in Mozambique illustrates how competence-based education could offer a contribution to the education of students who are well prepared to answer the needs and demands of society. The model below (see Figure 1) shows the relation between competence, key competencies and constituting (domain specific and generic) competencies for competence-based curriculum development.

As this paper is focused on designing curricula in an ODL context, we propose Holmberg’s theory of didactic and learning conversation as the guiding frame (Holmberg 1999). Holmberg argues that for learning to occur there has be a conversation which takes place through student assignments and feedback to these assignments, telephonic conversations, electronic mail, and other forms of support. The theory further postulates that for learning to take place there must be three forms of support: affective, cognitive and systemic. These differing forms of support all contribute towards enhancing the didactic conversation between the student, the lecturer, the learning material and the institution. To design a meaningful curriculum, one needs to analyse the learning conversations with the aim of analysing them and generating meaning for curriculum interventions. As one of the mantras of ODL is responsiveness, the results from conversational analysis allows the university to be responsive to students’ learning needs and professional/corporate authentic needs. In line with Harri-Augstein’s empathy approach, learning conversation makes learning student-centred rather than teacher-centred (Candy, Harri-Augstein & Thomas 1985).

One difficulty experienced by most ODL curriculum developers, is making a shift from objectivism-based design (Tenenbaum et al. 2001). Scholars argue that there is a need for curriculum design to be based on ‘non-conventional’ behaviourism dominated paradigms. To help us close this gap, ten competencies of a distance education professional have been suggested and these include interpersonal communication, planning skills, collaboration/teamwork skills, English proficiency, writing skills, organisational skills,
feedback skills, knowledge of the distance education field, basic technology knowledge and technology access knowledge (Thach & Murphy 1995).

**Competence-based Curriculum Development**

![Diagram of Competence-based Curriculum Development](image)

Figure 1: Competence-based curriculum development (Kouwenhoven 2003).

It is important to identify competencies because they inform one of the kinds of knowledge and skills required to be productive in one’s key performance areas (Thach & Murphy 1995). The above summarised competencies do not include curriculum development and delivery skills,
which leads to a negative learning experience for the students. He further argues that the omission causes academics to revert to their traditional teaching practices, which are not distance education friendly (Holmberg 1989). This is attributed to lecturers’ resistance whenever they are expected to change the way they have always been designing and facilitating teaching and learning (Ncube et al. 2014).

A further challenge arising in ODL is the misunderstanding that technology is in and of itself a solution to bridging the distance between the students and the lecturers and the institution (Anderson & Dron 2011). Other proponents of this approach argue that ICT integration forms an essential part of curriculum development as it is meant to be a learning facilitation tool, which is informed by pedagogy (Tella & Adu 2009). ODL [is meant to] advance social justice with an emphasis on redress, equity and empowerment of the previously disadvantaged groups in South Africa such a black African woman, people with disabilities, the rural and urban poor and adults generally who have missed out on opportunities to access higher education (Tella & Adu 2009). Nonetheless, it is still essential to be critical in appraising how ICT is integrated into curriculum development, delivery and assessment (Wood & Deprez 2012). Suggestions have been made that ICT should be used effectively to facilitate the achievement of curriculum outcomes (Tella & Adu 2009). In addition, the utilisation of technology allows for more discourse and more personalised learning, but this requires a change in the way teachers teach and a move away from the industrial model of ODL towards an individualised capabilities approach, since this can assist in developing flexible 4IR capabilities.

Towards an Expansive Capabilities-Inspired Curriculum in ODL

As previously stated, the development of curriculums in ODL must be based on the reality that there is a separation in time and space between lecturer and learners; and that the use of technology for learning is key. Its defining characters include openness to students, places, teaching methods and to criticism as the course materials are in the public domain. The instructional design ought to encourage and support self-study and the curriculum is developed around learning outcomes. Without focussing on the infrastructure and logistical support that is required, we now turn, technically and practically,
to what we are able to learn from the capabilities approach in the development of curriculum in ODL. Broadly, the capabilities approach allows us to reconfigure curriculum boundaries with the focus on developing functioning (the beings and doings) thus fostering capabilities for every student to achieve the life they value or may have reason to value.

In reference to the contrasting positions of HCT and HD that have been presented, the design of a curriculum based exclusively based on economic benefits is inadequate as universities run the risk of prioritising private achievement over a collective good (Unterhalter et al. 2007). While economic responsibility and stability are important, they should be among the many facets that ought to be directed towards people’s well-being (Wood & Deprez 2012; Dreze & Sen 2013). It is therefore, proposed that the curriculum be examined from a human capabilities-based perspective that is not merely concerned with increasing people’s skills, but rather takes a broader view of human and economic well-being. This paper argues that education and hence curricula need to be developed from a public good perspective, which encompasses the limited neo-liberal fundamentals of education. The strength of the capabilities approach is that it is multidimensional, meaning that it does not prescribe to set rules, but encourages the development of context specific curricula that enhances the development of capabilities formation. The capability approach values human well-being and it subsumes the values of the human capital approach to education (Walker 2012). What ought to be clear is that the capabilities approach does not reinforce the notion of curriculum borders, but encourages conceptualisation of the curriculum through input from relevant stakeholders. The assumption is that the stakeholders will influence curriculum designers, in this case lecturers, to purposefully select curriculum knowledge that meets the student’s aspirations and the expectations of all.

In addition to Holmberg’s theory of didactic/learning conversation as the guiding framework in ODL, it is necessary to start thinking about the intentional development of capabilities in ODL. The capabilities approach is a normative framework that proposes that social arrangements should be primarily evaluated according to the extent of freedom that people have to promote or achieve the functioning that they value, their well-being and agency

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3 Relevant stakeholders such as students, academics, employers, government policy makers, etc.
freedoms. In higher education, the capabilities approach considers each student’s functioning, that is, the valued beings and doings and making use of opportunities and/or realising their underlying capabilities; a set of real opportunities students must do and to be what they have reason to value (Sen 1999; 2009). According to Nussbaum (2011) the capabilities approach asks what people can do and to be in shaping their lives in higher education. The aforementioned implies that students should have some freedom or opportunities to be able to be and to do what they have reason to value in their lives. Both capability (potential and opportunity) and functioning (being able to exercise valued capabilities) are important in higher education. For example, it would not be enough for students to value a capability for voice but be prevented from exercising their voice in learning contexts through educational and social arrangements, which value some identities more than others. If we cannot observe the functioning of voice, we may wish to ask questions both about the underlying capability and teaching and learning conditions (Boni & Walker 2013). The capabilities approach emphasises the flourishing of individuals, thus it shifts the unit of analysis from large diverse social units such as race, ethnicity, gender that perpetuate inequality in higher education to individuals. It suggests ways of evaluating higher education at an individual level (Unterhalter et al. 2007). When, for example, we want to analyse class performance in a subject, the capabilities approach allows us to examine not only what a student achieves, for example, passing a course, but also the opportunities and freedoms that were available whilst studying for the course.

The capabilities approach provides rich resources for thinking about social justice in higher education (Unterhalter et al. 2007). The question, ‘equality of what?’ (Sen 2009) raises questions about social justice and equality in higher education in terms of, inter alia, access, inputs and treatment, requiring us to examine whether the curriculum and pedagogy provides for the different needs of diverse students (Nussbaum 2011). The capabilities approach also enables us to put focus on equality in the capability to convert resources into functionings. Although Sen is not an education theorist, his notion of public deliberation and collective reasoning are vital in advancing democratic processes in curriculum design and university policy in universities.

The capabilities approach offers insights on how curricula can be conceptualised. It offers a richer perspective on what it means to be human and thus, on the different types of graduates universities should educate (Walker
Bothwell Manyonga & Sindile Ngubane-Mokiwa

2012). The approach argues that advancement of justice depends on inclusive democracy that allows public reasoning and discussion that injects different perspectives, and plural voices on educational matters (Sen 1999; 2009). Sen’s (1999; 2009) notion of public deliberation and collective reasoning is vital in advancing democratic processes and educational policy in universities. It offers insights on how curriculum can be conceptualised. He argues that advancement of justice depends on inclusive democracy that allows public reasoning and discussion, which injects different perspectives and a plurality of voices on educational matters (Sen 2009). In such a scenario, individuals are regarded as agents who voice and act on things that they may value. Walker (2012) pursues the same argument, noting that public deliberation and collective reasoning provide space for continued scrutiny about how universities and relevant stakeholders, including students, and employers could deliberate about values of the curriculum through debating and discussing issues in public gatherings.

Nussbaum expands the approach by providing a partial theory of justice through her list of central human capabilities for human dignity and a life that is worthwhile and fulfilling (Nussbaum 2000). Through the list, she specifies the minimum requirements of justice for all societies, including higher education (Nussbaum 2000). The list of 10 central capabilities recognises that students ought to value friendship, have respect for others, experience emotions towards others and reason about their own good lives (Nussbaum 2000).

The capabilities approach has certain limitations. Of these, two issues that stand out are its abstract nature and the overly individualistic character of this approach (Baxen et al. 2013). Concerns have been raised that the approach does not set out clear tenets on how it can be implemented. The idea of developing capabilities lists, is debated on whether they should be developed as an effort to achieve a minimum threshold in different fields. Nussbaum’s list of 10 central capabilities has been criticised by several scholars. The contestations include the fact that the list is too prescriptive, undemocratic, and fails to recognise cultural differences (Feldman & Gellert 2005; Robeyns 2005). Some argue that it is limited and biased towards political frameworks and legal constitutions (Clard 2005). The most cited critique is raised by Sen (2004) who insists that the task of weighing different capabilities should be left to the ethical and political considerations of each society based on public reasoning and deliberation. While he does not specify which capabilities he regards as more important than others, Sen (2009) notes that a list based solely
on theory is problematic as it might fail to recognise the different socio-cultural contexts and which denies the chance of public reasoning.

Sen’s notion of public reasoning referred to earlier has been criticised for not providing greater specification on the practicality of carrying out such an exercise and the necessary conditions required, particularly in ODL. Other scholars think that Sen’s advocacy of deliberative democracy is necessary, but not sufficiently developed to satisfy the notion of a theory of justice (Corbridge, 2002; Feldman & Gellert 2006). Despite these arguments, the notion of public deliberation and collective reasoning creates space for academics, students and relevant stakeholders to examine the curriculum values and provides a platform to inform the future on the democratic construction of curricula. Coming back to ODL contexts, insights from capability approach requires nuanced thinking on developing curriculum given the fact that students are physically separated from the teacher. It is necessary to train and support staff on ways to reach students, for example, through creation of messaging tools.

Conclusion
To conclude this discussion, we reiterate that the curriculum and pedagogic style are at the centre of students’ learning in higher education. Conceptually, we argue that an approach which designs curriculum and pedagogy based on, for instance, vocational and academic aptitude, is limiting as it treats all students uniformly. Accordingly, we suggest that what is required is an approach that clarifies that curriculum and education ought to foster real opportunities for students to be and do what they have reason to value. With the development of capabilities at the centre, students should be able to thrive. In terms of social justice, on the one hand the capabilities approach views higher education as an ethical project concerned with the instrumental, intrinsic and social value of education, while on the other it focuses on the transformative potential of equal opportunities through the beneficial design of the curriculum and pedagogical arrangements to allow students to become and be what they value (Boni & Walker 2013). The capability approach challenges the narrowness of approaches such as the HCT and it raises the importance of a participatory and deliberative development of curriculum development and pedagogy (Walker 2006). The capabilities approach allows us to break theory boundaries and revitalise higher education curricula through its focus on the
formation of capabilities through the provision of education by means of a curriculum that is ethically sound (Walker 2006), rich and thick, with its multi-dimensional instrumental and intrinsically based values and transformative potential (Dreze & Sen 1995).

As scholars, what we need to start thinking about is the development of a capabilities-inspired curriculum model for human well-being. We should create grounds for rethinking curriculum development in ODL, particularly focusing on how Holmberg’s theory of didactic and learning conversation and other relevant ODL theories and approaches as well as the said capabilities approach can complement each other. We cannot assume that all students are able to afford or have access to digital technologies and information on the internet. Issues of poverty, lack of infrastructure in rural and remote areas and inadequate government support and intervention need attention. In our African context, we need to consider and continue addressing issues to do with the digital divide, the cost associated with connectivity and theft of IT equipment from learning institutions.

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An Enriched Curriculum Development Approach for ODL


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Bothwell Manyonga & Sindile Ngubane-Mokiwa


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The Organic Crisis and Epistemic Disobedience in South African Higher Education Curricula: Making Political Science Relevant

Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo

Abstract
Post the 2015-2016 student movement calling for higher education transformation and decolonisation, institutions of higher learning in South Africa have continued to grapple with how to respond to these ethical and imperative demands. These challenges include the need to decolonise and Africanise curricula; diversity; foregrounding knowledge as an object of study. Further, responding to what Keet (2014) terms as the ‘plastic knowledges’ in the transformations and stagnations in the Humanities; challenging and deconstructing alienating institutional culture(s) – particularly in historically white higher education institutions; the often forgotten and marginalised experiences of queer, transgendered, students and staff. One of the disciplines that has come under intensive scrutiny has been Political Science, being accused of being ‘irrelevant’ and teaching ‘dead white men’ with no epistemic connection to our local context. In this article, I attempt to respond to the above-mentioned critiques. I rely on Gramsci’s notion of the organic crisis and Quijano’s epistemic disobedience to bring them together in firstly, making sense of the nature of the crisis in South African higher education curriculum in general and Political Science in particular. And secondly, as both theoretical and empirical tools of de-linking the Political Science curriculum from coloniality and making curricula more transformative, socially just and inclusive. I argue that for Political Science to reclaim its relevance in an increasingly transdisciplinary world, it is necessary for us to not only know and understand the disciplinary crisis that confronts the discipline, but it is also necessary for us to begin to propose some of the epistemic solutions that can
respond to the crisis that Political Science is facing. I employ epistemic disobedience to re-claim and re-centre African Philosophy, in particular, ethnophilosophy and nationalist-ideological philosophy – as an attempt at making Political Science relevant to both the African experience(s) and to the broader global community.

**Keywords:** Political Science, organic crisis, epistemic disobedience, student movements, higher education curriculum, knowledge, African Philosophy

**Introduction**

In the beginning of 2015, the then unknown #RhodesMustFall activist Chumani Maxwele and a small group of students from the University of Cape Town (hereafter referred to as UCT), poured faeces at the statue of the arch imperialist Cecil John Rhodes, calling for institutional transformation and decolonisation at UCT (Maxwele 2016). What was powerful and interesting about this ultimate act of defiance was the symbolic link between imperial and the real in Maxwele looking at the Rhodes statue as a totality of the lack of institutional transformation and decolonisation at UCT. Provoked by the actions of Maxwele and others at UCT, widespread protests emerged in institutions of higher learning across South Africa. These protests focused on the need for transformation; the cultural alienation that Black students experienced, particularly in historically white universities; an unresponsive curriculum, among others. I should emphasise that for historically Black universities in South Africa, protest action never stopped post-apartheid (see for example Badat 2017). At the center of the Fallist movement has been the critique that curriculum in South African higher education is untransformed, alienating and marginalising (see Badat 2016; Heleta 2018; Mbmbe 2016). This is seen in how western thought remains dominant and central at the expense of indigenous knowledge systems, local intellectual scholars and others from the Global South (see Badat 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017; 2018). Although the post-apartheid democratic government in 1994 envisioned that we would have an epistemological transformation, one that would entail a ‘reorientation away from the [colonial and] apartheid knowledge system, in which curriculum was used as a tool of exclusion, to a democratic curriculum that is inclusive of all human thought’ (Department of Education 2008: 89), this has not come to fruition.
One of the disciplines that has come under sustained and intensive scrutiny has been the discipline of Political Science, which has been accused of facing an existential crisis because of its irrelevance and refusing to teach local, indigenous knowledge systems (Matthews 2018; Mngomezulu & Hadebe 2018; Tselapedi 2016). In this article, I first begin my outlining my conceptual and theoretical tools of ‘organic crisis’ and ‘epistemic disobedience’ in how they were understood and analysed in this article. Thereafter, I map the nature of the organic crisis within the discipline of Political Science. I then turn to the heart of the article, formulating some theoretical and empirical solutions, through the use of epistemic disobedience on how to respond to the crisis confronting Political Science. I end the article with some thoughts and recommendations for South African higher education in general and Political Science in particular in ensuring that the discipline remains relevant and context-specific both in its philosophy and in curricula.

**Theoretical and Conceptual Lenses**

According to Gramsci, an organic crisis involves the totality of the ‘historical bloc’ - that is, the structure of society and its superstructure (Adamson 1983; Cox 1983; Simon 2015). In explaining what he meant by the notion of “organic crisis”, Gramsci suggests that:

In any country the process is different, although the content is the same. And the content is the crisis of the ruling class’s hegemony, which occurs either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly imposed, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example), or because huge masses (especially of peasants and petit-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which in their disorganic whole constitute revolution (Gramsci 1975: 1603).

This is a crisis of the hegemony in which people generally cease to believe the words of their national leaders, and begin to move beyond and abandon their political parties. Put differently, an organic crisis results from the internal contradictions within a state. This means that an organic crisis is no an
immediate crisis, it is a result of what often is an incurable structural and ideological contradictions prevalent within the state. This often results from the legitimacy crisis that confronts government/state/country, where the ruling/political class no longer commands the respect and authority of the population. The idea of the organic crisis as suggested by Hall (2017), comes from Gramsci’s warning that a ‘crisis is not an immediate event but a process: it can last for a long time, and can be very differently resolved” this is seen in how an organic crisis erupts not only in the political domain and the traditional areas of industrial and economic life, not simply in the class struggle, in the old sense; but in a wide series of polemics, debates about fundamental sexual, moral and intellectual questions, in a crisis in the relations of political representation and the parties’ (Hall 2017:4-5). In this article, I use the notion of the organic crisis to explore the inherent tensions and structural challenges that confront South African higher education curriculum in general and the discipline of Political Sciences in particular. I now turn to the second conceptual lenses of this study, that is, the notion of epistemic disobedience (Mignolo 2013; Mignolo & Walsh 2018; Mignolo 2009).

In order for us to understand epistemic disobedience, it is important that we understand it and locate it within the broader decolonial school of thought, one that is preoccupied with thinking counter-hegemonically against western modernity and Euro-American thought. Decolonial thinking, as suggested by Latin American scholars such as Quijano (2007), Mignolo and Walsh (2018) and Grosfoguel (2007), and theoretically understood in South Africa by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), is premised on the fundamental assumption that colonialism denotes a historical period characterised by military occupation and the exploitation of the mineral resources of a country by another. Coloniality on the other hand, refers to the hierarchy within global knowledge production in how western knowledge is considered universal, rational[e] and superior compared to the local knowledges as inferior, unscientific and illogical. Decolonial scholars thus argue that modernity is underpinned by coloniality and has resulted in the social construction of what Mignolo (2011) has termed the “colonial matrix of power”. This matrix of power is constitutive of interrelated forms of control such as capitalism, racism, sexism, patriarchy, and others as characterised by western civilisation. Thus while colonialism could be said to be gone, the colonial matrix of power could still be said to be felt, lived, experienced and seen in contemporary society (Morreira 2017).
Mignolo (2013) uses the concept of the colonial matrix of power to suggest that ‘such a system of knowledge serves not all humanity but a small portion of it that benefits from the belief that in terms of epistemology there is only one game in town’. This “one game in town”, Said (1978) argues, resulted in the social construction of the Oriental Other in the colonial imagination as a simplistic, uncultured, uncivilised being who needed to be dominated, owned and controlled – both physically through the body and epistemologically at the level of knowledge. Universities and traditional disciplines in general were historically formed in response to the need to reinforce coloniality and understand the colonial subject, their behaviour, culture, economies and religions (see Grosfoguel 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017; Said 1978). According to Quijano (2007), epistemic disobedience leads us to different kinds of projects that all share the common experience of being colonised through the economy (that is, the appropriation of land and mineral resources), authority (that is, historical management through the monarch, state or the church), colonial control through the police and military enforcement (that is, coloniality of power), colonising knowledge (that is, through languages, categories and classification of thought, belief systems) and the colonising of beings (subjective Othering). Thus, de-linking refers to moving away from western thought and beginning to re-centre the Other ways of looking at the world without foregrounding Euro-American lenses as central signifiers. In this article, I de-link from the western thought by calling for Political Science to begin to re-centre African ways of being, seeing and thinking through the re-presentation and re-introduction of African philosophy in the South African higher education curriculum. I suggest that adopting African Philosophy in the Political Science curriculum, in particular, the intellectual work from the ethnophilsophy and the liberation-nationalist philosophy will enable us not only to de-link and provincialize Euro-American thought from the discipline of Political Science, but will allow us to centre knowledges from the global South as valid, legitimate and rational. I now turn to foregrounding the discipline of Political Science, mapping in particular the critiques that have been levelled at the discipline and some of the epistemic solutions necessary to responding to the crisis of relevance.

**Political Science: A Discipline in an Organic Crisis**

Although the organic crisis within the Political Science curriculum pre-dates
the 2015-2016 South African higher education student movement’s clarion calls for transformation and curriculum inclusivity (see for example Hlatshwayo & Fomunyam 2018), the focus on the discipline has increasingly exacerbated. Arguing about the epistemic disconnection in how the discipline refuses to draw from African lived experience and continues to re-centre Euro-American thought and lives, Mngomezulu & Hadebe (2018) argue that it is possible to transform the discipline without necessarily ‘weakening the discipline’s stature’. What this stature looks like or its underlying mechanisms and principles are not interrogated and explained. For Mngomezulu and Hadebe (2018), the colonial history of universities in South African is that of byproducts of imperial and colonial contact which tended to privilege western thought in the curriculum, which continues to manifest itself in contemporary times. One way of responding to this coloniality within Political Science is their call for de-linking western thought and re-introducing African knowledge systems in the curriculum. In other words, Mngomezulu and Hadebe (2018)’s argument for transforming and decolonizing the discipline of Political Studies is the inclusion in curricula, of African knowledge systems and re-centering indigenous knowledge that responds to local contexts.

Unlike Mngomezulu and Hadebe’s (2018) argument for the inclusion of African knowledge systems within higher education curricula as a decolonial ethic, Matthews (2018) calls us to critically reflect upon, and problematize colonial texts, knowledge, assumptions, and values that have developed as part of the ‘colonial encounter and how it is rooted in an attempt by the colonial powers to assert themselves through delineating an ‘other’ which can be unfavourably contrasted with the coloniser’. Matthews suggests that rather than proposing the inclusion of African indigenous knowledge system within an untransformed curriculum, as suggested by Mngomezulu and Hadebe (2018), and to some extent, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), we need to recognize the epistemological entanglement in the colonial library, and how advancing a decolonial project in Political Science would demand drawing both from the colonial library and local intellectual contributions, in fashioning a different intellectual trajectory, rather than committing to an Africana essentialist conception of knowledge. In this argument, Matthews responds to the critique offered by Makgoba (1997), Msila and Gumbo (2016), and others who proposed Africanisation as an alternative framework to decolonization, in the process appealing to the precolonial stereotype of an African individual who is outside of globalization and multinational/multicultural contact (see for
example Samuel 2017). In this article, I echo both Said (1978) and Matthews (2018)’s argument on the need to rather focus on the colonial ‘entanglements’ within decolonial work and in this context, African philosophy as an epistemic response to the crisis of relevance grappling Political Science. This will allow us to fashion a much more inclusive, transnational and transdisciplinary curriculum, one that rejects the narrow, essentialist lenses.

Perhaps the most scathing in their critique of the slow pace of transformation in the discipline of Political Science in South African higher education, Gouws et al. (2013) argue that the discipline is confronted with two challenges: firstly; the need for more transformation within the discipline itself, and secondly; the need to generate what they deem as ‘relevant knowledge.’ For Gouws et al. (2013), the discipline of Political Studies has been reluctant to be at the forefront of South African politics in responding to the challenges that plague the post-apartheid state. What is interesting in the assessment of Gouws et al. (2013), of the discipline, is that rather than locating the lack of transformation and inclusive knowledge within Political Science on the kinds of knowledge that are produced, reproduced and legitimated in our curriculum (that is, colonial knowledge), the blame seems to lie at the altar of pedagogy. This for me, seems to be a misrecognition of the crisis that confronts the discipline, as coming up with new and creative ways of teaching coloniality and Eurocentricity thought does not help in interrupting curriculum knowledge or re-centering marginalized knowledges. In this article, I argue that the organic crisis that confronts Political Science could also be understood as a ‘disciplinary decadence’ (Gordon 2015). This is seen in how the discipline has retreated to being inward looking and largely focusing on ‘methodological fetishism’ rather than coming up with creative and transdisciplinary ways of constructing knowledge and transforming society (see Hlatshwayo & Fomunyam 2018). Political Science has turned away from ‘living thought’ and has at times being obsessed with what we have termed in another article ‘methodological fetishism’ (Hlatshwayo & Fomunyam 2018). This methodological fetishism manifests itself in different ways in how the discipline struggles to adjust to new thought, resulting in people, society, research and the production of knowledge not pushing any of the disciplinary boundaries but rather being forced to conform to the discipline itself. Thus in this article, I re-center African philosophy in attempting to not only de-link Euro-American thought from the Political Science curriculum, but I also begin to explore the new and creative ways that African philosophy offers in offering
us relevant, transformative and inclusive knowledges outside of colonality. I have thus far only re-conceptualized Political Science as a discipline in an organic and decadent crisis. I now turn to exploring the epistemic solutions from African Philosophy that can respond to the above challenges.

(Some) Epistemic Solutions: Re-Centering African Philosophy

African philosophy emerges from the history of colonialism in attempting to dialectically understand its own epistemic logic against the dominance of western intellectual thought. African scholars attempt to draw the connection between biography, reason and social location in suggesting that knowledge and the production of knowledge, cannot be analytically separated from each other (see for example Mudimbe 1988; Wiredu 1980). This racialized inequality within the global production of knowledge has resulted in the emergence of ethnophiilosophy and nationalist-liberation philosophy as intellectual alternatives designed to de-centre and provincialize Euro-modernity and western thought (Chakrabarty 2009).

The term, ‘ethnophilosophy’ was coined by the Beninese philosopher Paulin Hountondji to characterise and to some extent, chastise the intellectual work of scholars such as Placide Tempels, Alexis Kagame, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Marcel Griaule and Germain Dieterlen to demarcate that strand of African philosophy that looked at communitarian ethics and thought (Hountondji 1970; 1995 1997). This refers to the Bantu philosophy, Dogon philosophy, Yoruba philosophy and others, whose scope often looks at the African cultures, their world views, traditional beliefs and others in describing African lived experiences prior, during and post the colonial contact (Hallen 1995; Houtondji 1995; Wiredu 1980). Ethnophilosophy scholars argue that the different African worldviews and their diversity properly constitutes what could be referred to as an African philosophy (Kanu 2016). They argue that the different African worldviews and their perspectives, myths, proverbs and others collectively constitutes what may be regarded as an African philosophy, particular to those communities, societies and villages. For instance, Amadiume (2015)’s classical text, ‘Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society’, offers a detailed ethnophilosophical inquiry into the life of Nnobi people, an Igbo community in south-eastern Nigeria. In the book, Amadiume (2015) offers both ethnographical and intellectual history in looking at the institutional and ideological power of the
Nnobi women and the decline in their power, economic livelihood and gender subjugation with the increasing entrenchment of the colonial project. The intricate and complex manner in which Nnobi traditional society was able to transcend gender and sexual identities, particularly in how an elite, wealthy Nnobi man could name their daughter (‘male daughter’) to function politically and economically as a man in owning and controlling property and taking part in the broader political structures of the community – is illuminating from an ethnosophical perspective. This not only begins to show for us in Political Science that fixed gender and sexual identities could be said to have been introduced with colonial contact in some African communities, but also that gender and sexual diversity was at least, pre-colonially present in African communities and is not a new phenomenon.

For pre-colonial Nnobi society, biological women can be [?] in essence, become fathers and have wives. The history of the Igbo institution, similar with other African ethnic communities who found a way to powerfully destabilise our conceptual understanding of biologically determined gender identities and marriage and sex, is illuminating for the discipline of Political Science that is grappling to re-centre African indigenous knowledge systems, social structure, beliefs and cultural practices in opening up the curriculum to different kinds of knowledges. Commenting on the broader Igbo society and the balance between communitarian ethics and individual autonomy, Ike and Edozien (2001) write that:

The Igbo social structure consists of many small local communities. Within the village itself, power is held by various groups, and social balance is maintained by a system of checks and balances. Igbo society was such that even though there existed a strong community consciousness, the individual’s rights and existence as an entity were not neglected. Free speech, free movement and free action in Igbo society were guaranteed (Ike & Edozien 2001: 155).

The African humanism, that is, Ubuntu, can also be understood as another strand of ethnosophy. This is perhaps one of the most influential philosophical strands in African philosophy that has intellectually survived beyond the colonial period. Ubuntu is a philosophical outlook that focuses on the non-individual in attempting to fashion a much more communitarian, collective ethic (Bewaji & Ramose 2003; Praeg 2014; Ramose 2009).
Ubuntu, or Botho, the community forms an integral part of an African’s identity. Mbiti (1969) and Mbigi (2005) both suggest, - in response to Cartesian reason that foregrounded the mind (or reason) at the altar of the body, therefore creating the early epistemic conditions of possibilities for a rugged conception of individualism in society - the focus for us in Ubuntu philosophy is on the community, rather than the self. In other words, the self within Ubuntu exists as part of the community and not outside of it, as some strands of western thought would suggest (see for example Cohen 1977; Nozick 1974; Wolff 2018). As Turaki (2006) argues, ‘people are not individuals, living in a state of independence, but part of a community, living in relationships and interdependence’. It should be noted that for Ubuntu, this does not mean that the individual does not exist and the self is subordinate to the common good, as is seen with Marxist collectivism (Lutz 2009). Rather, it means that the individual pursues self-interests through a commitment to the common good. Put differently, the self does not die for the common good to emerge. Rather, the self and self-interests are pursued through the common good in society. As Gyekye (1988: 32) puts it:

‘The clan is like a cluster of trees which, when seen from afar, appear huddled together, but which would be seen to stand individually when closely approached.’ … The proverb stresses the social reality of the individual; it expresses the idea that the individual has a separate identity and that, like the tree, some of whose branches may touch other trees, the individual is separately rooted and is not completely absorbed by the cluster. That is, communality does not obliterate or squeeze out individuality.

Similar to Gyekye (1988) above, Nyerere (1987) proposes the philosophical approach of Ujamma, as a communitarian ethic, like Ubuntu, that is premised on the community as central and significant to the African self:

Those of us who talk about the African way of life and, quite rightly, take a pride in maintaining the tradition of hospitality which is so great a part of it, might do well to remember the Swahili saying: ‘Mgeni siku mbili; siku ya tatu mpe jembe’ –or in English, ‘Treat your guest as a guest for two days; on the third day give him a hoe!’ In actual fact, the
guest was likely to ask for the hoe even before his host had to give him one—for he knew what was expected of him, and would have been ashamed to remain idle any longer. Thus, working was part and parcel, was indeed the very basis and justification of this socialist achievement of which we are so justly proud (Nyerere 1987: 6).

To seek to suggest that African cultures are communitarian is not to deny their epistemic diversity amongst themselves. This is similar with suggesting that all European cultures are alike. For instance, in their work, Trompenaars et al. (1998) have shown how some of the Xhosa ethnic communities in the Eastern Cape are more individualistic than the Zulu, Tsonga and South Sotho ethnic communities in Southern Africa. In the same research, they similarly have shown how the Afrikaner communities and families tend to be more communitarian, than the English which tend to more individualistic and less community-inclined. Nonetheless, it is true to a significant extent, that Africans in general tend to be more communitarian and communal than western communities (Trompenaars et al. 1998). In southern Africa, our traditional understanding of community is expressed through the conceptual notion of ‘Ubuntu’, umuntu. For Ramose (1998), ‘Ubuntu’ is simultaneously ‘the foundation and the edifice of African philosophy”, with Tambulasi and Kayuni (2005) agreeing that ‘Ubuntu is the basis of African communal cultural life’. Ubuntu as a philosophical ethic is important for the Political Science curriculum in ensuring that we begin to move beyond Cartesian rationality within the discipline in showing us that the presupposed Kantian consensus regarding the relationship between the mind and the body, with the self is not yet resolved. This will show how for Africans - the mind, body, soul and spirituality are intertwined collectively with the community to produce the African subject.

Incorporating the philosophical approach of Ubuntu in Political Science curricula would ensure that ethnophilosophical approaches that re-center African ways of living and thinking can assist the field in making sure that it remains relevant and context-specific. This translates into Political Science being epistemically inclusive and drawing from the different African communities and their worldviews, perspectives, traditions, myths and spiritualities, in showing how the complex and intricate knowledge system on the continent, all collectively create the African subject. The social construction of the African subject differs fundamentally from Euro-American
notions of what constitutes the mind, body or personhood. African philosophy in general and ethnophilosophy in particular, not only challenges the established norms of what subjectivity looks like in theory, but also presents alternative epistemic ways of looking at social reality in Political Science curriculum. The second epistemic solution that I wish to propose in responding to the crisis of relevance that Political Science is grappling with and that attempts to de-centre western knowledge systems from curricula, is the nationalist-ideological philosophy. The nationalist-ideological philosophy emerges from the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid[s] struggles on the African continent in fighting against colonial occupation and imperialism (Letseka 2013). I should emphasise that I use the term “nationalist-ideological” loosely to refer to a broad category and classification of postcolonial African leaders and thinkers who were focusing on what it means to think through decolonisation politically, economically, culturally, intellectually, and linguistically. Thus the term “nationalist” in nationalist-ideology should not be taken to refer to a narrow nation-state conception of African philosophy as the project was largely transnational and mostly pan-Africanist in nature (see for example Legum 1962; Murithi 2017; Walters 1997).

Linking Latin American struggles with what was happening on the African continent, nationalist-ideological philosophy could be seen as an “empirical philosophy” which rather than focusing on formulating conceptual tools to make sense of colonial conquest and its effect on the continent - most of the leading thinkers have largely been postcolonial leaders such as Nkwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Léopold Senghor, Kenneth Kaunda and others who were interested responding to the pressing needs of the colonial projects and its looting and socio-economic effects on the (Letseka 2013; Nkrumah 1966; Nyerere 1974). The focus for nationalist-ideological philosophy is on tackling colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and its effect in leading Africa and Africans as the Cold War playground for the global superpowers. Commenting on the critical rationale for this school of thought, Nkrumah (1966) argues that:

The neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps most dangerous stage. … The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.
The methods and form of this direction can take various shapes (e.g.) (Nkrumah 1966: 1-2).

In the above quotation, Nkrumah comments on the dialectical shift that has occurred on the African continent in how the military occupation and forced dispossession has now been replaced by the foreign policies that maintain protracted control and influence in ‘independent’ countries. However it would be misleading to simply assume that nationalist-ideological philosophers are only focusing on state and multinational actors and their attempt at controlling the socio-economic resources of African countries (see for example Rodney 1972). This is seen in how broad and overarching focus areas have been tackled, which include challenges of teaching, speaking and thinking in a foreign language, and to what extent this re-enforces Nkrumah’s notion of neocoloniality (see Wa Thiong'o, 1986); the existential crisis that comes with Blackness in a colonial space and the need to re-assert one’s dignity (see Biko 2015; Fanon, Sartre & Farrington 1963; Sharpley-Whiting 1997); the pitfalls of national liberation movements in power and their inability to fashion through new forms of democratic governance and social justice (see Fanon et al. 1963; Mamdani 2016); responding to the colonial archive and re-asserting the epistemology of Africans in relation with the world (see Matthews 2018a); and others.

Thus, the different kinds of nationalist-ideological philosophy can be categorised in the table below:

**Table 1: The different kinds of nationalist-ideological philosophies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of philosophical strand</th>
<th>Focus areas</th>
<th>Key thinkers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pan Africanism</td>
<td>A political and cultural movement that focused on ensuring some form of African unity in moving beyond ethnic identities and fostering transnational ties on the continent in the diaspora.</td>
<td>Carmichael (2007); Legum (1962); Nkrumah (1966); Nyerere (1974); Rodney (1972); Kaunda and Morris (1966); Kenyatta (2015); Mamdani (2016); Mkandawire (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negritude</td>
<td>Historical response against French colonialism. Negritude is a literary and artistic movement that sought to encompass the cultural lives of Black people</td>
<td>Senghor (1964); Rabaka (2015); Césaire (2001); Dash (1974)</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrocentricity</td>
<td>Response to Eurocentricity, a philosophical approach that calls for the re-conceptualisation of theory, history, knowledge systems and others through the perspectives of African people.</td>
<td>Asante (1983); George and Dei (1994); Schiele (1996); Mazama (2002); Cross Jr (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous/endogenous knowledge systems</td>
<td>Focuses on the marginalised African knowledge systems/ beliefs/ spirituality/ medicines/ myths/ ontologies that are central to African communities</td>
<td>Hountondji (1997); Agrawal (1995); Gadgil et al. (1993); Wilson (2008); Battiste and Youngblood (2000); Makgoba (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoloniality</td>
<td>An argument against what is perceived to be the coloniality that still remains within higher education curricula. Argues for epistemic freedom through re-moving Euro-American thought and re-centering intellectual work from the global south</td>
<td>Quijano (2000); Grosfoguel (2007); Gordon (2011); Mbembe (2015); Torres (2007); Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018); Heleta (2018); Mignolo and Walsh (2018);</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All these different philosophical trends still have material relevance for Political Science curriculum in that they continue to re-centre Blackness and Black lived experiences both historically as well as in contemporary society, regarding to what extent, Negritude and Indigenous knowledge can still be relevant and socially responsive in what is often considered a cosmopolitan world. Remarking on some of the South African higher education academics’ tensions with the calls for decolonising of curricula and what this could look like for her in Political Science, Matthews comments that:

Recent calls by South African university students for the decolonisation of university curricula have caused much consternation, uncertainty and bewilderment among many university academics, including myself. We find ourselves and our courses under very critical scrutiny from our students, some of whom insist that much of what they are being taught is expressive of a colonial mindset and, therefore, that we need to decolonise our curricula. Even where academics have not been resistant to this idea – and many have been – there has been much uncertainty about what decolonising the curricula entails (Matthews 2018: 48).

Supporting Matthews (2018) above, I argue that her work in attempting to employ Mudimbe (1988)’s notion of the ‘colonial archive’ in exploring the colonial nature of Political Science curriculum and the challenges of constructing a ‘decolonised curricula’ could be seen as transformative and socially relevant to the current higher education climate. This approach could be implemented in mainstream Political Science curriculum insofar as it enables us to explore in greater detail, how ‘our philosophical fathers’ and ‘founders’ have adopted Plato, Cicero, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu and others at the expense of African indigenous knowledge systems without interrogating the philosophical assumptions regarding what counts as knowledge, truth and reason.

I should emphasize that in table 1, I deliberately locate decolonial thought within the broader focus of national-ideological philosophy as the two are not mutually exclusive of each other, and do relate epistemologically. Decolonial scholars, building from the early work from Nkrumah (1966), Nyerere (1974) and Rodney (1972) in particular, show the dialectical emergence of a new form of neo-colonialism in their work– which they refer
to as ‘coloniality’, in focusing on the colonial nature of knowledge, knowledge production, curriculum and higher education in Africa (Heleta 2016; Heleta 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018b). One of the most significant books to come out of the post-apartheid South Africa within the broader nationalist-ideological philosophy, has been Wa Azania’s *Memoirs of a Born Free* (2014), in which she challenges the fallacy of the “rainbow nation” through a detailed account of the abuse, trauma, poverty, and social dysfunctionality that at times characterises the modern South African life. Wa Azania (2014)’s book needs to be located in the broader critical reflection that have been coming out of South Africa since the late 2014s to early 2015s, as a result of the failure of the Mandelian miracle to live up to the promised ‘better life for all’ and socio-economic development (see for example Mashele & Qobo 2014). Prescribing this text and others in Political Science, not only responds to the crisis of relevance in the field, but actually offers us an opportunity to reflect on the crisis that confronts South Africa in shining a spotlight on the often forgotten township life in all its potentiality, complexities, contradictions, and trauma.

**Conclusion**

In this Article, I tried to do two things. I firstly tried to explore in greater detail the crisis that confronts the field of Political Science in being accused of being irrelevant, socially disconnected and not responding to the challenges that confront society. Secondly, I opted to respond to the above crisis by using the theoretical tools from Gramsci and Quijano to not only diagnose the nature of the crisis that confronts Political Science, but to begin to move the field forward to offering (some) possible epistemic solutions to the crisis. I argued that African philosophy in general, and ethnophilosophy and nationalist-ideological philosophy in particular have expansive and socially relevant tools that we can draw from, that can not only make Political Science curriculum relevant, but can also help make sense of the challenges that we are grappling with in Africa. Thus, I make the following recommendations:

- This article has largely been philosophical in nature. Future empirical research still needs to be done such as Matthews (2018) and to a lesser extent, Le Grange (2016), in illuminating and showing us what a decolonising/ transformative Political Science curriculum may look like.
Making Political Science Relevant

- The intricate relationship between curriculum and pedagogy in thinking through what a transformed Political Science curriculum looks like and how it can be taught has not been explored in this research. Future research needs to be done in exploring to what extent a decolonised pedagogy is possible within Political Science, and how it can be experimented with in practice.

- Although I have tried to respond to this in this article, there appears some epistemic conflation in the literature between ethnophilosophy and nationalist-ideological philosophy. More work still needs to be done in order to gain greater analytical clarity about both the philosophical and historical differences between the two.

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‘Most importantly, it’s like the partner takes more interest in us’: Using *Ubuntu* as a Fundamental Ethic of Community Engagement (CE) Partnerships at Rhodes University

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Abstract

Community engagement (CE) has been noted as an important means of enhancing students’ experiences in undergraduate programmes, because this promotes interdisciplinary conversations. In addition, it has the potential to challenge the colonial forms of disciplinary knowledge that have dominated thus far, and may play an important role as we seek to Africanise the curriculum. The Early Childhood Development (ECD) Residence Programme is a CE programme at Rhodes University, where community partners from ECD centres engage with student volunteers, over a period of one year. Such programmes are co-managed between the Rhodes University CE (RUCE) Division and community partners, as well as between community partners and student volunteers from a variety of programmes of study. This, it is hoped, translates into the building of mutually beneficial relationships. However, what do these relationships actually mean for the students and partners, and what are their benefits and challenges?

Using the ECD Residence Programme as a case study, this paper argues that CE at Rhodes University is centred on the ethics of *Ubuntu*. Findings from an initial round of interviews and a focus group illustrate that the community partners and student volunteers build long-term, meaningful, and mutually beneficial relationships that extend beyond the boundaries of the CE activities in which they are involved. These relationships are based on
values that include communication, respect, love, and care. This paper illustrates how mutually beneficial relationships are key to building and sustaining successful CE partnerships. We further note the potential for *Ubuntu* in CE to be transformative.

**Keywords:** *Ubuntu,* community engagement partnerships, transformative learning, interdisciplinary conversations

**Introduction**
Recognising that higher education institutions (HEIs) play a central intellectual role and are an important economic resource to their communities, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of HEIs investing in community building (Gugerty & Swezey 1996). Therefore, in South Africa, the 1997 White Paper on Higher Education Transformation promoted the inclusion of community engagement (CE) in HEIs’ agendas (Bengu 1997). This has led to HEIs moving away from being ‘ivory towers’ and becoming more socially responsive and involved in their communities; nevertheless, it is recognised that HEIs exist to provide a rich learning environment for students, as well as opportunities to contribute to community development (Gugerty & Swezey 1996). Further to this, in South Africa, particularly at Rhodes University (RU), there has been a shift from seeing CE as the third pillar alongside the teaching/learning nexus and research, to being integrated into both teaching and learning, and research (Preece 2013). D. Hornby (personal communication, January 5, 2016) notes that the long-term aim has been to fully infuse CE across the university, embedding it institutionally.

CE at RU spans the breadth of what is termed the CE continuum, including volunteerism, service-learning, and engaged research. CE can be defined as the process of using teaching, learning, and research to build and exchange knowledge, skills, resources, and expertise, in ‘mutually beneficial relationships with communities’ (Petersen & Osman 2013:4). It is typically expressed in a variety of forms, ranging from credit-bearing service-learning academic programmes to non-credit-bearing volunteer activities. Volunteerism involves students engaging in communities in activities that are of a social and educational nature. An integrated model, with student volunteers from many undergraduate curricula (e.g. on the Engaged Citizen Programme and
Residence Programme), provides great potential for CE to enhance interdisciplinarity (Albertyn & Daniels 2009), as well as the possibility for transformation in students’ learning experiences. In addition, given that CE is embedded in local ‘real-life’ contexts, it has the potential to challenge the colonial theories and forms of disciplinary knowledge that have dominated HEIs thus far. Furthermore, it may play an important role as we seek to Africanise the curriculum (Akhurst, Solomon, Mitchell & van der Riet 2016).

Service-learning, as a form of CE, combines academic studies with service in communities. Mitchell (2008) distinguishes traditional service-learning from a more ‘critical’ approach that explicitly aims toward greater social justice. Traditional approaches to service-learning risk reinforcing existing hierarchies and may be criticised for being paternalistic, simply prompted by charity where students ‘do service for disadvantaged people’ (Parker-Gwin & Mabry 1998:278). Mitchell (2008) proposes that a critical approach is characterised by three aspects: explicit work to redistribute power amongst participants; developing authentic relationships in both university and community settings (re-imagining the roles of partners); and working to both conscientise (Freire 1970) students to the impact of inequalities and aim for social change.

CE can be defined as a process of bringing together different and often multiple stakeholders to build relationships in collaborative ways, with the ultimate goal of improving the collective well-being of all (Maurrasse 2010). According to Mintz and Hesser (1996), there are four critical elements that lend themselves to thoughtful CE. Firstly, orientation and training are important first steps in CE for both community partners and students. It is important to provide sufficient information from the onset about the terms of engagement. Secondly, it is important to incorporate community voices, essential in building bridges, making change, problem-solving, and to combat exploitation or differing expectations. Thirdly, there needs to be meaningful action in all CE activities; all engagement needs to be necessary and of value to both the community partner and the students. Lastly, reflection is a crucial component of the pedagogy of CE, as it places the students’ experiential learning into a broader context; it also enables links to be made between experiences of practice and academic theories, thus enhancing praxis (Gilbert & Sliep 2009).

The principles of CE at RU include working from a strategic model of engagement, which means recognising the capabilities and skills of ‘others’
and allowing them to invest in what they have. This entails working from an asset-based approach to community development (Cox & Seifer 2005), which recognises that all people have knowledge, skills, and capabilities. Within strategic models of engagement, mutually beneficial partnerships, benefitting both community partners and students, are proposed (Gugerty & Swezey 1996).

Joint learning is also an important principle, encompassing an approach to joint planning, joint action, and joint reflection of all CE activities. A co-management model of programmes is promoted as a partnership model. Not only does the Rhodes University CE (RUCE) Division appoint a coordinator to oversee a volunteer programme, it also encourages all community partners to appoint volunteer managers in their organisations. Volunteer managers are in charge of overseeing student volunteers at their organisations, and they run any additional organisation-specific training that they believe is important for the student volunteers.

This research investigates partner relationships within the context of CE at RU. Many international studies on partner relationships have only been at the level of single case studies (Cox & Seifer 2005). Therefore, it has been important to carry out this research since there is limited knowledge, particularly in the South African context, about the features of partnerships as well as processes that need to be followed in not only starting new partnerships but also sustaining them. In addition, historical factors in South Africa might further complicate developing more equal partnerships (Netshandama 2010). There is a need for community partners to be actively involved in construction, delivery, and learning outcomes (Hart & Akhurst 2016).

The ‘voices’ of community partners have not been adequately incorporated into university partnerships, and research done has largely been from the perspectives of students (Akhurst 2016). In trying to work in a participatory way towards greater equality (Mitchell 2008), the roles of community partners in CE activities need to be reimagined for the systems of power to be deconstructed. This research investigates features of partnerships across different partner relationships between RU and community partners, drawing on student volunteer and community partner perspectives. In addition, from the data collected, we illustrate what students learn from each other, what they learn from partners, as well as what partners learn from students and from other partners, towards more transformative learning (Mezirow 1997).

This research also hopes to illustrate that, through CE, democratic spaces of learning are created (Bazana 2019). Community partner voices are
valued, opening up ‘to different bodies and traditions of knowledge and knowledge-making in new and exploratory ways’, this is towards a more decolonised education (Heleta 2016:2). This process is two-fold, consisting of the epistemic project and the personal project, as hegemonic Eurocentric views about knowledge have resulted in a creation of ‘a hierarchy of superior and inferior knowledge and, thus, of superior and inferior people’ (Grosfoguel 2007: 214).

While the epistemic project is about knowledge creation and the valuing of all knowledge, the personal project is a rehumanising approach that allows students, and in the case of this research, community partners, to claim their spaces equally in being part of shaping knowledge. This research demonstrates that, through foregrounding student and community knowledge and agency, strides are made to reduce injustices in knowledge production (Heleta 2016). This, Letsekha (2013:14) argues, can make HEIs ‘relevant to the material, historical and social realities of the communities in which universities operate’. There is thus a valuing of different lived realities (Grant, Quinn & Vorster 2018).

**Partnerships in CE**

One of the strengths of CE is that it brings together people who have varied experiences, who aim to collectively generate questions and seek solutions, through having shared common ground (Fitzgerald, Allen & Roberts 2010). HEIs partner with local communities to jointly improve their access to resources and opportunities (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker & Donohue 2003). Good partnerships have the potential to impact people’s daily lives through making deep community change (Pasque 2010). Partnerships between HEIs and local communities benefit a variety of stakeholder groups. Communities benefit through building their capacities and students benefit through learning in transformative ways and developing their values in relation to social justice issues (Community Partner Summit Group 2010).

HEIs should collaborate with their local communities in mutually beneficial ways, for the purpose of exchanging resources and knowledge (Bringle & Hatcher 2010). In order for such collaborations to be successful, they need to be built on solid working foundations over time (Strand *et al.* 2003). In building an effective community partnership, it is important for all parties to respect the dignity and self-worth of others and be able to find
common ground. There needs to be a commitment to the principle of doing no harm and an understanding of the power dynamics that maintain oppression and injustice (Gugerty & Swezey 1996). In addition, community capacity-building and social justice need to be explicit goals in partnerships (Community Partner Summit Group 2010).

Working from a social justice approach, HEIs partner with communities that have been previously disadvantaged and marginalised, with access to fewer opportunities and resources; HEIs and communities work in partnership to collaboratively improve such access (Strand et al. 2003). For change to take place, partnerships need to not only be sustained, but also institutionalised; this is important for continuity (Community Partner Summit Group 2010). Efforts at social change in a partnership will only succeed if issues of power and diversity are directly addressed, not only within the partnership but within the communities (Pasque 2010).

Collaboration can be defined as creating a shared vision and working together towards a common goal through sharing roles and responsibilities, power, and accountability, thereby building a mutually beneficial relationship (Mintz & Hesser 1996). It is important to note that partnerships have complex dynamics, which are similar to those of interpersonal relationships (Pasque 2010). In a collaborative relationship, all partners bring different expectations; these need to be acknowledged and negotiated at the outset. Importantly, all partners also bring assets, in the form of certain skills and knowledge. In order for expectations and assets to be balanced, when trying to establish a mutually beneficial relationship, power needs to be distributed as equally as possible in the partnership.

For genuine collaboration to occur, partners need to develop an environment of trust, where there is a shared goal and shared responsibilities and authority. To achieve this, explicit discussion of these issues is needed. There also needs to be regular engagement and exchanges of information, sharing resources, and alternating activities while enhancing one another’s capacities. This results in a relationship that is both inclusive and reciprocal (Mintz & Hesser 1996). For genuine partnerships to exist in an integrative manner, there needs to be room created for multiple voices and for the perspectives of all members of the partnership to emerge. Pasque (2010) suggests that this should take place in multiple venues, including community settings and HEI spaces.

Successful collaborative relationships are built over time, on the foun-
The foundation of a working relationship (Strand et al. 2003). For partnerships to work, they need to be ‘developed and implemented in a way that is transparent, equitable, sustainable, and accountable to both community and academic partners’ (Community Partner Summit Group 2010:208). If decision-making in partnerships is unilateral, and there is inequitable distribution of power, resources, and a lack of commitment, the partnership will not work (Community Partner Summit Group 2010).

Seifer (2010:199) states that, from an HEI perspective, ‘communities can and should be hubs for discovering new knowledge, generating and testing theories, translating research into action, and sharing innovations’. This means that spaces existing outside of what are considered formal academic settings should not only be embraced, but also supported as intellectual spaces. Communities need to be at the centre of engagement and learning, in order to achieve social justice and effective partnerships, and build community capacity.

Fitzgerald et al. (2010) propose four key concepts that should underpin an HEI’s approach to community partnership development. The first is community embeddedness. Second, it is important to propose asset-based solutions. This means building on the strengths and assets of community partners. Third, due attention needs to be given to building community capacity. Capacity-building requires community partners to be involved in developing community programmes. Lastly, it is important to partner with collaborative networks that are sustainable.

**Ubuntu as an Ethic**

This paper proposes that principles of CE partnerships at RU are linked to ethics of *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu*, deriving from the Nguni (Bantu) languages of Southern Africa (Mawere & Mabuya 2016), is a social ethic and a people-centred philosophy (Venter 2004). This philosophy is about the building of positive human relationships and developing with others. It is premised on the idea that human beings are united (Venter 2004). Thus, *Ubuntu* can be seen as a goal and a guide for humanity (Mawere & Mabuya 2016).

According to Venter (2004), *Ubuntu* is a philosophy which seeks to promote a society’s common good. It is an essential element of human growth, which includes humanness (Venter 2004), and is at the centre of all human existence (Mawere & Mabuya 2016). Based upon this philosophy, individuals
are seen as existing cooperatively, since they are regarded as interconnected within society. This is not to say that individuality is negated, but it should not take precedence over the community (Mawere & Mabuya 2016). Le Roux (2000:43) writes that characteristics of a person who displays *Ubuntu* include being ‘caring, humble, thoughtful, considerate, understanding, wise, generous, hospitable, socially mature, socially sensitive, virtuous and blessed’. One is not born with these qualities but acquires them through socialisation (Kamwangamalu 1999).

Mawere and Mabuya (2016:98) write that ‘*Ubuntu* aims at building the community as well as bonding people in a network of reciprocal relationships’. This is particularly of relevance to CE at RU, as one of the principles is that of reciprocity and building mutually beneficial relationships. Gade (2012:54) adds that ‘*Ubuntu* is borne [sic] out of the philosophy that community strength comes of community support, and that dignity and identity are achieved through mutualism, empathy, generosity and community commitment’. This speaks to the idea that ways of knowing are conceptualised as circular, organic, and collectivist.

Whilst *Ubuntu* has been promoted in a positive light as outlined above, it has also faced many criticisms. One of these is that it could potentially open up a space of cultural conformism, propaganda reproduction, and control. However, we argue that an *Ubuntu* approach might provide a space for cross-cultural understanding to develop (Gade 2012), particularly within the context of CE. However, we are alert to the ‘caution against the misappropriation of *Ubuntu* for ideological purposes that emphasise conformism and hence exclusion’ (Gade 2012:53).

While many writers agree on what *Ubuntu* as an ethic means, Gade (2012) writes that this dynamic term has taken new meanings in different points in history. Mawere and Mabuya (2016) argue though that, while many variations may exist within different African cultures and languages, the conceptualisation retains the same core meaning. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, we see *Ubuntu* as encompassing partnership, relationship-building, growth and development, and joint learning and mutuality. These largely overlap with one another. Tutu (1999:31) writes that ‘I am human because I belong. I participate, I share’; thus, this understanding of *Ubuntu* could serve as a fundamental ethic of CE at RU. *Ubuntu* has the potential to provide a framework for respectful engagement, which entails reciprocity and community connectedness (Gade 2012).
The Early Childhood Development (ECD) Residence Programme
This research focuses on a volunteer programme at RU termed the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Residence Programme. The primary aim of the programme is to work in a strategic and coordinated way in ECD in Makhanda (previously known as Grahamstown). The programme was piloted in 2016 and encompasses two concurrent processes. These are *Siyakhana@Makana* (S@M) and the Reading Programme. At the time of undertaking this research, 15 community partners were part of the ECD programme, and each was partnered with a different RU hall of residence.

S@M has a 19-week project planning cycle. At the beginning of the year, partners set up to a maximum of three goals that they want to achieve in their organisation for the year. The emphasis is on driving the partners’ agendas. During the S@M process, community partners work closely with students to jointly plan tasks that they will need to do in order to achieve the set goal(s); community partners and students then jointly execute these tasks and jointly reflect throughout the process. The 19-week period ends with a joint evaluation and celebration of goals that have been achieved.

At the time of conducting this research, as part of the Reading Programme, students conducted reading and literacy enrichment activities at ECD centres. They were trained by Community Psychology Honours students in using the Wordworks (2019) *Every Word Counts* programme.

The Research Question
The question that this research sought to answer is: what are the students’ as well as the partners’ experiences of building and managing partner relationships (the co-management of CE activities)? Further sub-questions were: how do students and partners experience jointly planning, executing, and reflecting on CE activities, in which they are involved together? What are the emerging insights and issues over time? How did they report on their learning? The main aim of the research questions is not necessarily to inform changes in practice over time, but rather to provide a space to reflect on these practices.

Research Design and Methodology
This research took a reflective multiple case study approach within a social
constructivist framework, since this provides an opportunity to explore the developing community partnerships in this specific context, as they have evolved over time (Preece & Manicom 2015). This approach was chosen, as opposed to action research, since it was envisioned that, through reflection, this research might inform action, but not encompass it, using the social action model of community psychology to ensure the participation of all research participants. The social action model aims to generate participation and community responsibility (Ahmed & Pretorius-Heuchert 2001), with the aim of bringing about change through mobilising community members (Visser 2012). The data collection was qualitative in nature, aiming to provide answers to questions by exploring a variety of social settings and the individuals within these (Berg 2007). In qualitative research, the aim is not to generalise findings, but instead to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of these partner relationships.

The social constructivist paradigm in which the research is located recognises that individuals make subjective meanings of their experiences. The goal of research is to explore participants’ subjective understanding of situations, and how these are negotiated socially and historically. Research questions were thus broad, enabling participants to construct meaning about situations. As the researchers, we recognise that the interpretation of the research findings is shaped by our personal experiences (Creswell 2007).

The choice of which of the partnerships to focus on was made strategically to try to maximise differences and to generate possible answers to the research questions (Bryman 2012). Sampling was purposive in nature, a non-probability form of sampling. Selected partners met certain criteria, to try to establish the different perspectives of the following two categories: Firstly, some partners joined the ECD Residence Programme from its inception, whilst others joined afterwards. A selection from these two groups aimed to establish whether there might be different perspectives, since they would have had different experiences of the programme as it developed over time. Secondly, some partners self-reported or had done noticeably well in their partner relationships in previous years, whereas others self-reported or had struggled somewhat in developing their partner relationships.

The community partners who are part of the ECD Residence Programme are typically black, middle-aged women. The majority of them have a matric qualification, with some also having completed a post-matric qualification in ECD. They are all residents in the various townships of
Makhanda. Typically, both male and female students are part of this programme. They are in their second or third year of undergraduate study at RU and come from varied socio-economic backgrounds. This programme allows students to have contact with community partners and access to local knowledge in ways they would not normally have.

Since this research was exploratory in orientation, in-depth interviews (both one-on-one and focus groups) were used as a means of collecting information, to allow interviewees to talk about a broad range of issues related to their partner relationships (Boyce & Neale 2006). Findings presented in this paper are from an initial round of interviews and joint focus group discussion conducted with student volunteers and volunteer managers, respectively. Follow-up interviews and a focus group discussion then occurred after a period of six months had elapsed, to enhance reflection over time. This paper, however, draws only on the initial interviews and first focus group discussion. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the transcribed data, to identify and report themes that occurred in the data (Braun & Clark 2006). This process ‘interprets various aspects of the research topic’ (Braun & Clark 2006:79). The six steps described by Braun and Clark (2006) were followed. A summary of these are ‘familiarizing yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report’ (Braun & Clark 2006:87).

This research adheres to ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity (Neuman 1997). It was granted ethical approval by the relevant institutional ethics committee (PSY2017/52).

**Findings and Discussion**

Themes linked to *Ubuntu* that are evident in these research findings are: partnership and relationship-building, and growth and development (which encompass joint learning and mutuality). Excerpts below are direct quotations from interviews and a joint focus group discussion conducted with student volunteers (CE 1, CE 2, CE 3, and CE 4) and community partners (CP 1, CP 2, CP 3, and CP4).

**Partnership and Relationship-building**

D. Hornby (personal communication, February 4, 2019) states that CE at RU
is transformative, with its main aim being to redress inequalities. Both students and community partners who participate in CE activities recognise this. This can be seen in the following quotes:

... so when I got here, I saw the situation, like ya Grahamstown, there’s like a huge division of Grahamstown and ... of the Grahamstown community and the Rhodes community, so I saw that division and I saw that there is CE ... so I found out, oh ok, at least as students, a student can make a difference ... (CE 2)

Uhm, so community itself is very important to me and I think it’s even more important in the Grahamstown sense, uhm, because they speak of Grahamstown East, Grahamstown West, and that conversation itself, as much as people make the best out of it, is also a problematic conversation in itself. The fact that Grahamstown is segregated, and I think got me personally ... [as] ... CE rep is bridging that gap, uhm, you know? (CE 4)

The two quotes above from student volunteers resonate with Mitchell’s (2008:51) ideas of students who ‘see themselves as agents of social change and use the experience of service to address and respond to injustice in communities’. The students demonstrate that they are aware of the very visible inequalities that exist in Makhanda and see CE, and themselves as student volunteers, as important ways of addressing these.

Both student volunteers and community partners recognise that in order to facilitate change within communities, a partnership needs to be established. Work cannot be done in isolation. Most importantly, these partnerships are seen as being between equals, where resources and power are jointly shared. This is explored in the following quotes:

... it’s also building us on even partnership. Say you can’t work alone, you have to work like together into bringing a difference into Grahamstown community. (CE 2)

Together we are partners. We meet each other halfway. It’s a 50/50 partnership. (CP 1)

Additionally, partnership is seen as collaboration:
... we are in a partnership here, not that they get into the gate to do something for me or that they are here for me to do something for them; we are doing this together ... (CP 2)

It’s an ongoing thing ... even when you’re not there, it will still, like, that person has the skill of doing something and you also gained a new skill in doing something. (CE 2)

The above pairs of excerpts, each from both a partner and a student, illustrate a recognition of mutuality and that each contributes to and learns from the other. A partnership model emerges when communities and HEIs seek to intentionally develop one another by joining resources in order to meet each other’s needs, paying attention to both partners’ assets and needs. A collaborative model means that partners become interdependent in meaningful ways and agree on a common agenda to address relevant social issues. What is distinctive in this model is that the HEI becomes a valuable contributor to the community development process, through having a sustained presence in the community (Gugerty & Swezey 1996).

Community partners participate fully in the engagement process and have a say in the design, implementation, and evaluation of CE programmes (Fitzgerald et al. 2010). As collaborative partnerships develop, the sharing of resources occurs (Gugerty & Swezey 1996). Both student volunteers and community partners recognise this, as can be illustrated in the quotes below:

... it was just a partnership ... rather than sitting here and having this great idea: ‘Hey guys, do you think we should do this for the library?’, and we go there and realise that they actually don’t need that. So the first step would be finding what the partner in these spaces would love for us to do for them and then what they can do for us (CE 4).

... we need to sit down with the volunteers and talk about how we are going to work together. Then, therefore, it will depend on how we choose to work together and that is my point of departure. I’m not instructing, but we are supposed to work together (CP 1).

Linked to partnership is relationship-building, the basis of a successful partnership. Relationship-building is an important ethic in Ubuntu, since
Ubuntu as a Fundamental Ethic of CE Partnerships

Ubuntu is premised on the idea that human beings are united (Venter 2004). An example is:

... the partner understands us and I think most importantly, it’s like the partner takes more interest in us ... the partner is more interested in the people that she is working with more than us being there to help out with whatever goals that they have ... and I think it’s safe to say that the partner takes a role of being a mother and she’s constantly checking up on us, even though it’s not related to CE things, but just to make sure that the relationship is maintained, so that its easier for us to actually communicate with her ... (CE 1).

As can be seen in this quote, students see themselves as belonging in the Makhanda community and start to identify their community partners as role models and parental figures. The ‘authentic’ (Mitchell 2008) nature of the relationships are illustrated here. This is noteworthy because in South Africa, as in other countries on the continent, people are taught from a young age that an older person who is in the same age group as their parents is their mother or father. Calling them by their names is strongly discouraged and is considered disrespectful. Similarly, one can refer to females or males who are not necessarily siblings as sisters or brothers (Kamwangamalu 1999). Ubuntu thus links individuals to the collective through ‘brotherhood’ or ‘sisterhood’ (Gade 2012). This Afrocentric viewpoint thus views people from a collective perspective (Venter 2004).

Growth and Development (Encompassing Joint Learning and Mutuality)

Blankenberg (1999:46) writes that ‘[p]articipation is essential for human development, for what your neighbour has to offer in terms of experiences, knowledge and ideas is essential to your own growth’. This speaks to the idea that community partners bring with them experience and knowledge, which they share, not only with their students but with other community partners, for collective good. Thus, Ubuntu is about promoting the common good of society (Venter 2004).

Relationships contribute to the growth and development of participating individuals; this encompasses joint learning and mutuality. This
can be seen in the following:

... it’s not just about myself, there are other people who play a role in my growth. So, volunteering has helped me in that sense, that I know that there are other factors that play a part in my growth ... it’s not just about, uhm, giving back to the community, but also you get to learn and benefit as a student, just as the partners are benefiting from your involvement in the CE (CE 3).

Student volunteers learn from community partners and experience the reciprocity of giving and receiving. They recognise that they are part of a community that they learn from. Community partners recognise this, and see themselves as teachers in community development, as noted below, where teaching and learning are noted by both partners and students:

... this is not about students coming to assist us. They are here to get experience and we are here to teach them about our experience, so we work together .... I teach them that this is how we do things here, then they follow what I am saying ... (CP 2).

... it’s not only about giving up your time; it’s more than that. You can actually learn something from that; you can actually give something as you learn ... (CE 1).

... I learn something new every time when there is, like, a thing happening, and going somewhere, meeting the partners. Every time, I’m learning and gaining something (CE 2).

At the same time, they also learn from us, I also learn from them (CP 1).

HEIs need to view themselves as being in the community, in order to understand that they need to work with community partners to address issues of mutual concern in a collaborative manner (Fitzgerald et al. 2010). Developing effective community partnerships means that HEIs need to realise that they have to work with, as opposed to work for, individuals and communities, thus also mitigating the risks of patronising community partners (Gugerty & Swezey 1996).
In this kind of partnership and relationship, all knowledge is recognised as valid, and each person is seen as an equal contributor:

So, if now we having a partnership with the – like, understanding partnership, every time you, you gain something, the person gains something. It’s an ongoing thing that doesn’t, like, even when you are not there, it will still, like, that person has the skill of doing something and you also gained a new skill in doing something (CE 2).

The belief that both HEIs and communities have something to share is a prerequisite for reciprocal relationship-building. Both parties need to believe that they are equal and that both contribute and gain. In this study, community partners recognised that they have assets that they can share with other community partners who are part of their community, and have developed the confidence to speak out:

At first, when I started, it was not easy, because it is not easy to stand in front of people, you see? Then there was this time I was presenting. There is this lady … she taught me how to stand in front of people; then here I am today, I – I am able to stand in front of people and say anything… (CP 2).

Community partners not only start to recognise, but they also value the assets that each of them bring, and they start to share these. Thus, the emphasis shifts from a relationship only entailing ‘student volunteer and community partner’, to one of further community collaboration, illustrating interdependence as an aspect of *Ubuntu* (Venter 2004). People are thus seen as interconnected (Gade 2012). *Ubuntu* is premised on the idea of formation of relationships (Venter 2004), thus reinforcing unity and solidarity over individual self-reliance (Mawere & Mabuya 2016).

**Conclusion**

Going back to the research question, we can thus conclude, based on these presented findings, that students and partners recognise the value of partnership, working together, and learning from one another. Community partners during this research were given an opportunity to reflect on their role
in CE, and through this, began to recognise that they are teachers in CE. They recognised that students not only have knowledge and skills, but that students also learn at their organisations. In turn, students in this study began to value the knowledge that community partners have and respect this.

Community partners aimed to build solid relationships with students that are sustained over a period of time and go beyond the period of engagement in CE activities. In turn, students value the kind of relationship that they have with their community partners and begin to see community partners as family, often referring to them as parental figures or siblings, from whom they feel comfortable in seeking advice. Whilst the literature highlights the potential for differences in power and positioning to complicate partnership-building (e.g. Mitchell 2008), this was not evident in these initial findings. Perhaps the preparatory work and training assisted these aspects. However, these elements may also be difficult to recognise by those of us too ‘close’ to the work, or perhaps any discomforting responses are difficult to articulate. We therefore need to be alert to subtle references to these challenges in the later round of data collection.

A limitation of this research is that many of the responses are quite positive, which may not be a full reflection of relationship-building in CE. CE can be quite messy, and contestations may exist in the partner relationships. In being critical as the researchers, it will be important to probe more in the follow-up interviews and focus group discussions, on what these could be.

With reference to the critical approach to CE, it is clear that some of the elements mentioned by Mitchell (2008) are evident in the findings: work is done in S@M to redistribute power between partners and students, leading to more authentic relationships in the community settings. However, the extent of generalising of this power in the HEI is not evident. The students and partners each reported learning that goes beyond the programme; however, it is too early to measure whether any social change resulted. We are aware that RUCE is a relatively unique unit in the South African HEI landscape, illustrating the RU investment in such activities. This would encourage other universities to invest more in similar CE activities (rather than at times merely giving lip-service to CE, as noted in Akhurst et al. 2016), given their potential to enhance and transform students’ learning.

Thus, based on the findings and discussion above, one could argue that Ubuntu is the basic ethic underlying CE activities at RU, as both students and partners realise that they are interconnected and are on a journey of not only
betering society together, which is the overarching aim of CE, but of learning and growing together. This is also linked to the potential of these interactions to be transformative (Mezirow 1997); however, we recognise that all the elements of fully transformative experiences are not yet evident. We hope to gather further information about students’ assumptions and beliefs that may have been challenged, as well as ways in which they consciously made and implemented plans towards new ways of making meaning in their worlds.

The support for Ubuntu as an ethic of engagement is also a key proposal of Mkabela (2015), who sees it as a valuable foundation for the decolonisation of knowledge. Mkabela (2015) also sees it as a positive value underpinning the development of more indigenous knowledge systems, and thus better suited to our South African context. CE has the potential to decolonise hegemonic Eurocentric ways of knowing through the acknowledgment of different stories that shape African realities, thereby affirming knowledge that comes from Africa (Oyedemi 2018). Partners can claim that their expertise and local knowledge, and their expertise and standing in the Makhanda community, is valued by students.

To conclude, Jarosz and Johnson-Bogart (1996:83) write that Lilla Watson, an aboriginal leader, is often quoted as having said: ‘If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together’. We conclude with this quote, as we believe it begins to capture the principles of CE that we hope to promote at RU.

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Ubuntu as a Fundamental Ethic of CE Partnerships


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108
Ubuntu as a Fundamental Ethic of CE Partnerships


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Indigenisation and Africanisation of Legal Education: Advantaging Legal Pluralism in South Africa

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Abstract
This conceptual paper navigates a way to ‘indigenise’ law school curriculum to disrupt the centralist legal mind and advance access to justice for all. Literature insufficiently shows how to design and implement curriculum and assessment practice in the decolonisation project. Innovatively drawing upon South African legal pluralism to highlight curriculum development beyond borders, the paper distinguishes decolonisation, indigenisation and Africanisation and shows their interactivity through the gaze of African ontological, axiologies and cosmologies. Through discourse analysis, interpretivism and experientialism grounding, I argue that failure to Africanise legal education perpetuates a justice deficit in breach of the South African Constitution. The paper concludes that hegemonic privileging of rule of law orthodoxy diminishes usefulness of both non-state community-based justice systems and customary justice systems despite widespread use of the latter two systems. Recommendations include use of ‘cultural interface’ and ‘critical standpoints’ (Nakata 2007: 7; Carey & Prince 2010: 207) to generate inclusive strategic law school curriculum development. Assessment practice should involve socio-legal research through indigenous methodologies with findings used to advance epistemic freedom in a transdisciplinary way to spur further curriculum transformation. This can facilitate professional development opportunities for judges and lawyers to allow living African law to develop within its socio-cultural environment and the Bill of Rights.

Keywords: African epistemologies, African indigenous knowledge systems, Africanisation of legal education, cognitive imperialism, decolonisation of legal education, epistemic freedom, legal pluralism.
Introduction
Law school curriculum tends to reaffirm cognitive imperialism (Battiste 2017). This is problematic because law school graduates are trained to perpetuate westernised rule of law orthodoxy even though this so-called ‘formal’ justice system based on English and Roman-Dutch common law is unfamiliar, unhelpful and undesirable to many justice seekers. Westernised rule of law orthodoxy is often inaccessible to many South Africans due to geographical distance, language barriers and socio-cultural and spiritual ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies (Ruffin 2019; Martins 2016; Davids, et al. 2016). African indigenous justice systems (AIJS/ IJS) are part and parcel of a wider array of African indigenous knowledge systems (AIKS/ IKS). AIKS are herein defined as shared ‘long-standing traditions and practices of cultural specific local African communities’ (Kaya 2013: 136). These include value-laden belief systems and language conventions subject to intergenerational and experiential oral transfer. This paper highlights AIJS such as community-based justice systems (CBJS) and customary justice systems in South Africa. The CBJS example is the community advice office model. In other words, these justice systems are not operated by government but by independent community leaders. The focus is upon how such AIJS can be used as a tool for decolonising and indigenising legal education (LE). This tool can begin to undo cognitive damage wreaked upon students by law school curriculum that is currently epistemologically limited. The aim is to advance epistemic freedom of curriculum design and implementation beyond disciplinary borders. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018: 17) opines that epistemic freedom speaks to cognitive justice and is contemporarily on the rise as a result of:

The definitive entry of descendants of the enslaved, displaced, colonised and racialized peoples into the existing academies across the world; proclaiming loudly that they are human beings, their lives matter, and that they were born into valid and legitimate knowledge systems Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018: 17).

Ancient African polities functioned through similar constitutional principles underpinned by consensus democracy. Intricate judicial systems integrated law, politics, morality, ethics and spirituality in socio-cultural context as a way of life (Williams 1974). Today, in the absence or marginalisation of AIJS, westernised legal discourse remains hegemonic in LE. The Constitution of the
Republic of South Africa (RSA 1996) is designed to redress the injustices of the country’s colonial and apartheid past. Customary law is not only constitutionally permissible but also on an equal footing with English and Roman Dutch common law. Yet customary law and Europeanised law are epistemologically distinct. Law schools are the only provider of lawyers in the country but they do not fully integrate contextual and epistemologically sound customary justice systems into LE. This makes such law schools complicit, if not explicit in perpetuating structural inequality and privilege in society, thereby contravening the Constitution. Hence, a cultural interface of indigenisation and westernisation that deliberates critical standpoints in the context of LE is required. Questions often arise as to who should decolonise and indigenise LE, why and how should this be done? This paper helps answer these questions.

To some scholars, the legal profession has a colonising effect on LE (MacDonald & McMorrow 2014). Hence, some studies reflect that non-indigenous law academics are unprepared or unwilling to indigenise LE or both, and that decolonisation of curriculum must be left to indigenous academics (McLaughlin & Whatman 2008). Mere tinkering with curriculum, hiring Black law academics and inviting traditional authorities as guest speakers are insufficient for indigenising LE (Chartrand 2015). In contrast, and as I argue, a radical shift to African onto-epistemologies is critical to decolonising/indigenising LE and assessment practice. This is because settler colonialism is a structure and not an event (Wolfe 1999). The legal profession can be seen as an instrument of coloniality, which sustains after-effects of colonialism (Grosfoguel 2013). To Modiri (2018: 13, 17) even the South African Constitution ‘represents a continuation and reproduction of the constituent elements of colonial conquest’ given the ‘tendency of constitutional scholarship to emphasise notions of rights, political equality, procedural democracy and good governance while bypassing larger questions of land, political economy, culture, identity and sovereignty tied to settler-colonial histories’. In considering the significance of land as a source of capital to colonisers, Tuck and Yang (2012: 5) contend that ‘the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation’. This now autonomously functioning structuralism imposed by colonial settlers is deeply entrenched and ongoing. Such embedded structuralism pertains not just to land but also to other Indigenous relationships, such as ways of accessing justice. The IOTL and its
AIJS were subjugated to centuries of colonialism and apartheid that, *inter alia*, stripped it of its original systems of checks and balances as well as gender equity. Ndulo (2011: 97) complains that this led to the ‘bastardisation’ of AIJS. This was never retracted. Hence, when colonial settlers used and when current-day academicians and scholars (irrespective of race) continue to use a westernised lens to observe and interpret AIJS, their understanding is likely distorted. African and westernised epistemologies of justice – including underlying values – differ (Ndima 2003). A cultural interface of justice systems could allow critical standpoints for deliberation. The deliberation is about equitable approaches that position critical standpoints at a cultural interface of different ways of knowing. This could facilitate epistemic freedom, LE transformation and broaden citizens’ access to justice.

In South Africa, the Bill of Rights (RSA 1996) protects equality under the law (Section 9); human dignity (Section 10) and cultural, religious and linguistic freedom (Sections 30, 31). The institution of traditional leadership (IOTL) along with domestic and international customary law are recognised in the Constitution (Sections 211, 212, 232). Customary law is given equal footing with English or Roman Dutch common law so long as each comports with the Constitution (Section 39). A majority of South Africans rely upon AIJS (Himonga & Diallo 2017). Yet privileging rule of law orthodoxy over AIJS in LE blocks access to justice for the citizenry. This wreaks epistemic, ontological and cosmological violence on wider society generally and on law students particularly. Therefore, I further argue that failure to Africanise LE amounts to epistemicide, which violates the Constitution. African indigenous justice systems should be studied, interpreted and applied on their own merit and through African ways of knowing (AWOK). As subsequently discussed, AWOK advance non-dualism and community collective consciousness amongst other aspects. This paper provides guidance for lawyers, judges and the legal fraternity as a whole. For law academics and students, the paper suggests trans-disciplinary-oriented yet legal profession-specific pedagogy that embraces complex legal problem-solving activities on an emancipatory trajectory. This is inclusive of socio-legal research through indigenous methodologies (Chilisa 2012), which can in turn inform LE curriculum development beyond borders.

This article is organised as follows. Firstly, this introduction is followed by research methods. Then, the results and discussion section is divided into three subparts. Epistemic freedom as an unfolding imperative for indigenising LE is discussed. Next, selected aspects of South African legal pluralism are
presented as a tool for indigenising or Africanising legal education. The article then goes on to answer the query of who should Africanise LE, why and how? Finally, the article provides conclusions and recommendations.

**Methods**
This conceptual study is based on discourse analysis and interpretivism. Discourse analysis is a useful tool for the critical study of power and inequality as a social problem (Van Dijk 1997: 32). Here, the problem revolves around the hegemony of the westernised legal system and profession that tend to colonise law schools. This is a social problem in a legal pluralist country like South African where millions of citizens select non-state justice systems to administer disputes. Yet these justice systems are not taught in epistemological and socio-cultural context during LE. This perpetuates the structure of settler colonialism and inequality of African indigenous legal traditions. Interpretivism deals with concepts ‘of everyday talk, lives, and written or depicted record of situational actors and/or embedded within a literature, as a histori-cised backdrop for scholarly thinking’ (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2010: xix). Towards that end, AIKS, legal pluralism and decolonisation of LE were key words used to obtain secondary sources. Literature was accessed through electronic search engines based on law and humanities through African Journal Archives, Digital Access to Scholarship at Harvard, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, Hein-online, Ingenta Connect, JSTOR, Lexis/Nexis, and Sabinet. Hence, this study used the interpretive method and discourse analysis to examine how legal pluralism could be used to decolonise LE. In line with indigenous methodologies, the interpretation was done in a subjective but scientific manner (Zhang & Wildemuth 2009) and in light of experientialism, including the author’s more than three decades as a lawyer and AIKS practitioner and more than a decade as an academic. The results and discussion follow.

**Results and Discussion**

**Epistemologies as Unfolding Imperatives**
A law degree is a gateway to the legal profession. The legal profession is held in high esteem in most countries throughout the world. LE is not developed in isolation. Rather, law schools must be accountable to an array of professional bodies and oversight organisations that determine and hold the ‘keys’ for admission to the legal profession. LE must prepare students for national board
examinations that may, in part be specific to subnational contexts such as provinces and states. This education is largely built on westernised rule of law orthodoxy. Rule of law orthodoxy is perpetuated by law schools and law professors, and executed by lawyers, judges and other actors in the dominant legal system. However, in global North and global South countries alike, the dominant or so-called ‘formal’ justice system is not the sole justice system by which individuals and organisations handle their legal affairs. In countries such as Australia, Canada, Iraq, New Zealand and the United States, people still abide by long-standing IJS that are socio-culturally informed and take into account ways of knowing that predate rule of law orthodoxy (Borrows 2016; Chartrand 2015; Hamoudi 2014). Ancient justice systems existed in global South countries long before the onset of colonisation, chattel slavery, imperialism, apartheid and other such impositions (Asante 1965).

In higher education (HE) generally, there has been a call for decolonisation of curriculum (Maldonado-Torres 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). Legal education, not unlike other HE curricula is based on tenets of westernised ontologies, epistemologies, axiologies and cosmologies. Westernised and African worldviews differ (Teffo 2011). This is why critical standpoints should be positioned at a cultural interface of deliberation to advance curriculum transformation. The reader is cautioned not to essentialise, valorise or demonise any worldview. Rather, the purpose is to grasp an understanding of different worldviews as a bridge to inclusivity and social cohesion. From a westernised perspective, ontology, epistemology, axiology and cosmology are perceived as distinctive relatively standard concepts that play different roles in compartmental ways – just as disciplines are separated in the academy (Nabudere 2011). Nabudere explains that:

Plato ... created a hierarchisation and distinction between ideas or forms and things, and between the inside and outside of things – and hence virtue and knowledge. From now on in the Greek understanding, the thing and its form (the idea) were no longer organically linked. This was a characteristic of the European mythoform, in which things were viewed dualistically as opposites .... A duality between the inside and outside was created, and this is how dualism entered the whole structure of European thought through the Christian religion (as per St. Augustine) as well as the academic disciplines in the form of dialects (Nabudere 2011: 27) (e.i.o.).
In contrast, African worldviews conceive these concepts as a dynamic oneness that signals a transdisciplinary approach (Nabudere 2011; Ruffin, Teffo & Kaya 2016). Therefore, AWOK, as used herein, includes African ontologies, epistemologies, axiologies and cosmologies. McDougal (2014: 236) contends that AWOK entail the character of realism, definition of truths and interrogation of the relationship between ‘the knower, knowing and the known’. This includes what can be known, what is considered knowledge and how such knowledge can be applied. AWOK encompasses humanistic and societal factors (Wa Thiong’o 2009) as well as the socio-cultural environment (Mungwini 2013: 87). AWOK unites theories and the knower’s character (Teffo, 2011: 24); and advances non-dualism and community collective consciousness (Masolo 2012: 25). AWOK should be used to study AIKS which are ‘long-standing traditions and practices of cultural specific local African communities’ including ‘skills, innovations, wisdom, teachings, experiences, beliefs, language and insights’ generated by and beneficial to these communities for their sustainable livelihoods (Kaya 2013: 136; Dei 2012). AWOK are further distinguishable to Western epistemologies in law and values as subsequently explored (Cobbah 1987: 330). These points suggest that AIKS should be rigorously studied and taught on their own merit and not simplistically as dichotomous to westernised ways of knowing and being. Failure to study AIKS on their own merit amounts to committing epistemicide, which is oppressing varied worldviews (Sandoval, Lagunas, Montelongo & Díaz (2016: 19) and upholding cognitive imperialism (Battiste 2017). This the South African Constitution forbids.

Scholars, researchers and professors, including anthropologists, archaeologists, and sociologists as well as jurists, missionaries and other actors in the European-driven imperialist project postulated their theories and beliefs about what they perceived to be AIK and AIKS. These theories and beliefs are now embedded, for example, in westernised education systems across disciplines and countries – based on colonial settler observation and westernised ways of knowing. The IOTL and its AIJS were stripped of their original mechanisms of checks and balances as well as gender equity, at the behest of and domination and control of colonial settlers (Ruffin 2018). This was never retracted. Therefore, the IOTL and its AIJS should likewise be critically interrogated to advance them as systems of epistemic freedom (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). The so-called ‘official’ customary law was imposed
and is distinguishable from living African law (Ndima 2003; Himonga & Diallo 2017). Ndima (2003) explains:

“Official” African law represents a distorted system devoid of social context in that it was pruned of its essence in an official bid to rid it of those aspects of indigenous tradition that were viewed as repugnant to Christian and Western values (Ndima 2003: 344).

The ‘official’ codified African or customary law was not indigenously constructed, but drawn by colonial and apartheid architects. Examples are the Black Administration Act 38 of 1927 and a series of other codes along with construction and treatment of case precedents to serve the interests of colonial settlers. Even until today some aspects of that Black Administration Act regulate certain aspects of customary courts. Himonga & Diallo (2017: 5-6) term these examples ‘old order’ customary law with the ‘new order’ being post-1994 legislation ‘aimed at transforming indigenous institutions within African constitutional frameworks’ such as customary marriage and customary law of succession reforms. Unlike ‘official’ customary law, living African law is indigenously driven, dynamic and reflective of African values and traditions with its socio-cultural context intact. The epistemological challenge comes when ‘official’ customary law and/or living African law cases come before rule of law orthodoxy jurists who may or may not interpret these cases with due regard to socio-cultural and socio-legal contexts pursuant to AWOK (as shown in section 3.2). This is one of the reasons for advantaging legal pluralism to Africanise LE. Law students become lawyers and jurists who should be well-versed in AWOK to meet constitutional mandates of ensuring human dignity, equality before the law and so on. Globally, indigenous knowledge and IKS are still seldom approached, studied, contemplated or written about using indigenous ways of knowing. Rather, not unlike the IOTL and its AIJS, educational, health and other systems were altered and disjointed from AWOK (Williams 1974). Therefore, these systems too must be epistemologically liberated in a way that incorporates AWOK into the contemporary era, alongside other knowledge systems in the interests of complementarity.

In this article, decolonisation, indigenisation and Africanisation are distinguishable yet interactive. Bolivia’s example of rejecting neoliberal educational reforms postured by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund but devoid of input from teachers and civil society provides a useful example
Indigenisation and Africanisation of Legal Education

(Lopes, Cardozo & Strauss 2012). Bolivia used an endogenously-driven amalgamation of inter-culturalism, intra-culturalism, pluri-lingualism and communitarian approaches to indigenise curriculum that sustain reflection and growth of one’s identity in relation to others throughout the educational experience and toward pluri-national citizenship (Lopes, Cardozo & Strauss 2012). In other words, the ‘intra-culturalism’ required introspection of students without diminishing their own ancestral-inspired ways of knowing while contributing to and growing from other bodies of knowledge. Hence, decolonisation meant rejection of neoliberal approaches to educational reform and indigenisation became growth and development of one’s ways of knowing, including use of indigenous languages, in relation to others. This shows interactivity between decolonisation and indigenisation. This demonstrates how to undo cognitive damage done to students by global North-centric curriculum design and implementation.

The ‘intra-culturalism’ component is particularly insightful for this discussion on indigenising LE. It is not inconceivable that black African students whose ancestors are indigenous to the continent – such as Zulu and Xhosa people – could be embarrassed by AWOK that, for example, include slaughtering of animals to appease ancestors in resolution of legal disputes. It is not unrealistic to even presume that a westernised LE could be seen as a way to improved economic and professional status; that AWOK are backwards and unworthy; that AWOK should be abandoned in favour of westernised religion, practices and belief systems built on individual-based human rights as well as animal rights. The ‘intra-culturalism’ component applied in Bolivia would require such law students to, for instance, introspectively reflect on the role of ancestors in their culture. Since AIJS demonstrate reconfiguration of systems advanced by colonisation and apartheid, such law students may perceive traditional leaders as individualistic and inhumane and AIJS unfit for handling legal disputes. Tribunal members may appear more concerned with personal gain than community sustainability, growth and development. In other words, black African law students may be unaware of or even devalue their own historical socio-cultural values that existed in pre-colonial Africa. The same is true for African indigenous law academics. This situation complicates indigenisation and Africanisation of LE but need not hinder it with the ‘intra-culturalism’ component in place. The ‘intra-culturalism’ component could begin to unravel the African origin of constitutional principles and consensus democracy (Williams 1974) or the link between the Egyptian Mysteries
System and Hugo Grotius’ development of International Law (Ruffin 2009). This could in turn help decolonise and Africanise LE.

Returning to the interaction between decolonisation, indigenisation and Africanisation, decolonisation is concerned with dismantling the hegemony of westernisation. To speak only of decolonisation is to continue a reactive focus on colonisation. Indigenisation denotes a global linkage to indigenous peoples and cultures all over the world (Gilbert 2017). Africanisation is a process of honouring, remembering, building, fortifying and continuing to discover AWOK. Neither indigenisation nor Africanisation, for the purposes of this discussion involve elimination of westernised epistemologies. Rather, a proactive approach through indigenisation and Africanisation of LE may open avenues for AIJS to contribute to the global pool of jurisprudence alongside other bodies of legal knowledge. Such avenues are closed by current LE which is steeped in legal positivism and designed to inculcate law students with a centralised legal mind (Hamoudi 2014). This is discussed next.

**Selected Aspects of South African Legal Pluralism**

Legal pluralism is subject to a number of meanings and what constitutes law is controversial. Legal pluralism is often constructed as social fact legal pluralism or normative pluralism (Merry 1988; Tamanaha 2008; Twining 2010). This is seemingly done to acknowledge existence of non-state justice forums, but to avoid characterising these systems as legal. Roberts (1998) advocates against legal pluralism. Twining (2010: 48–49) bases his social fact view of legal pluralism on legal positivism and includes ‘coexistence of two or more autonomous or semi-autonomous legal orders in the same time–space context’. Pimental (2011) contends that, in post-colonial Africa, there are at least three conceptual approaches to legal pluralism: namely the colonial, superior state and equal dignity approaches. The first means the restructuring of the customary justice system to meet the needs of colonisers. The second denotes constitutional acknowledgement of customary law but rule of law orthodoxy reigns supreme. The third indicates distinct systems whereby AIJS include socio-cultural contexts in administering justice. While aspects of the colonial approach arguably remain in South Africa, the superior state approach is prevalent. However, if LE was adequately Africanised, treatment of the customary justice system could encompass an equal dignity approach consistent with the South African Constitution. This would mitigate legal centralism.
Legal centralism ensures ‘that only law made by the state or specifically allocated to others by the state’ is conclusive (Hamoudi 2014: 145). Twining (2010) acknowledges that state-centrism and legal centralism are recent, existing largely in the global North for less than 200 years. Long-standing non-state legal systems across the global South and North, even if destructed or tainted during colonisation, continue to function (Williams & Klusener 2013; Skelton 2011). When legal scholars are at a loss to perceive non-state legal systems as such, but can only envisage rule of law orthodoxy as law, there is another level of colonisation – intellectual colonisation. Hamoudi (2014: 136) highlights ‘the need to decolonise the legal mind away from legal centralism and reacculturate the rule of law community to the realities of legal pluralism’.

Decolonisation of the centralist legal mind can begin to occur with an awareness of AWOK and epistemological distinctions that underlie diverse justice systems. South African legal systems are found at least in the IOTL, the Islamic Shari’a, community-based legal advice offices, and westernised rule of law orthodoxy. Millions of South Africans exercise forum shopping when faced with legal matters and some choose non-state justice systems. Simultaneously, LE provides little or no exposure to such non-state justice systems. Table 1 depicts two non-state justice systems and the westernised state justice system. The characteristics underlying the systems help reveal underlying epistemologies.

Informal CBJS exist throughout the world (Maru & Gauri 2018; Wojkowska 2006). In South Africa, community-based paralegals (CBPs) operate in various forms, including those in community advice offices (CAOs). CBPs are trained in public LE and administration, live in the communities where CAOs are located, speak the local language and practice local cultures (Martins 2016; Ruffin & Martins 2016; Dugard & Drage 2013). Similarly, amakosi (traditional leaders), izinduna (headmen/women) and community elders are closely linked to local communities, language and culture. In contrast, proponents of rule of law orthodoxy, such as lawyers and judges are generally not as culturally and geographically linked to the populace served as compared to non-state justice system implementers. Thus, Table 1 suggests that, as to the leadership characteristics of the three justice systems, the interactive relationship between ‘the knower, knowing and the known’ (McDougal 2013: 236) is more closely aligned with non-state justice systems and communities served than with judges, lawyers and litigants served by the latter.
Table 1. Selected distinctions in parallel justice systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Community-based justice system</th>
<th>Customary justice system</th>
<th>Nation-state justice system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Mediation by paralegals</td>
<td>Traditional court, <em>amakosi, iziduna</em>, community elders</td>
<td>Legislators, judges, lawyers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Case-by-case decisions, socio-cultural context</td>
<td>Case-by-case decisions, socio-cultural context</td>
<td>Statutes and case precedents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-cultural context</td>
<td>Ancestral relevance in decision-making</td>
<td>Ancestral relevance in decision-making</td>
<td>Devoid of socio-cultural/spiritual context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>Parties to dispute make ultimate decisions</td>
<td>Public participation in proceedings with consensus decision-making by Traditional Court</td>
<td>Non-participation of litigants in ultimate decision, judge as decision-maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual or collective context</td>
<td>Families may be involved in decision-making</td>
<td>Community considerations matter</td>
<td>Individual rights-based claims of litigants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedies</td>
<td>Remedies determined and agreed upon by disputants</td>
<td>Fines or penalties paid to the wronged party</td>
<td>Prescribed fines or penalties paid to the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes/aims</td>
<td>Forward thinking sustainable solutions</td>
<td>May include animal sacrifice for resolution</td>
<td>Decision appealable or terminal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Martins (2016); Williams and Klusener (2013); Ntlama and Ndima (2009).
The two non-state justice systems are connected to AWOK whilst rule of law orthodoxy is bound to westernised neoliberal discourse (Ruffin & Martins 2016; Krever 2011). Rule of law orthodoxy is governed by the concept of adversarial judicial proceedings and an impartial judiciary, whereas CBPs serve as neutral mediators and AIJS strive for consensus-building, guided by a presiding officer. Hence, the non-state justice systems are more concerned with restorative justice as opposed to winners and losers in the state justice system (Ruffin 2019). Nevertheless, for decades, rule of law orthodoxy conventions have been increasingly expanding into various forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms (Edwards 1986; Hensler 2003; Menkel-Meadow, Porter-Love, Kupfer-Schneider & Moffitt 2018). A Canadian study on cost implications of ADR found that, inter alia, it takes twice as long and costs twice as much to resolve disputes through litigation instead of ADR. Whilst lawyers surveyed preferred ADR, litigation remains widely used (Paetsch, Bertrand & Boyd 2018). In that respect, it seems that westernised epistemologies of justice tend to prevail. Unlike rule of law orthodoxy, the socio-cultural context applies in both non-state justice systems and AIJS are somewhat historically informed. However, as scholars point out, official customary law is distinguishable from unofficial living African law. Living African law was deconstructed and reconstructed, with the help of amakosi, to meet the needs of colonial settlers and the apartheid regime; thereby ensuring that, where underlying epistemologies and values differed, the westernised version would prevail over Indigenous law (Ndima 2003; Skelton 2011). On the one hand, rule of law orthodoxy metes out justice through application of statutes and case precedents in a compartmentalised way. On the other hand, these two non-state justice systems deliver services through fluid case-by-case decisions that are embedded in the socio-cultural context of communities: through AWOK (Mungwini 2013). This comparative analysis highlights a range of critical standpoints for deliberation at a cultural interface of justice systems, justice providers and justice seekers.

Cobbah (1987) indicates that whilst the rule of law is projected as value-free and objective, African epistemologies of justice are embedded with values, culture and custom. A value-based distinction between the two non-state systems shown in Table 1, juxtaposed against the nation-state justice system, is that the former systems are more concerned with communal duties to avoid collective shame. Decision-making in CAOs operated by CBPs revolve around disputants determining the outcome and may include families
in decision-making to build sustainable futuristic solutions to which parties and their families independently commit (Martins 2016; Dugard & Drage 2013). Customary courts include not only community elders on the tribunal but also public participation from onlookers and disallowance of legal representation of parties in favour of consensus-building (Ntlama & Ndima 2009). Studies show that CAOs and the customary justice system regularly interact with each other through case referrals and dispositions (Martins 2016, Drake & Drage 2013). These two systems suggest incorporation of humanistic and socio-cultural factors in dispute resolution (Ruffin & Martins 2016), unity of jurisprudence and character (Teffo 2011), and advancement of holism and community collective consciousness (Masolo 2012). All of these are typical characteristics of AWOK. In contradistinction, rule of law orthodoxy is based on individual-rights claims where parties’ individual interests are advocated by argumentatively persuasive lawyers and ultimately determined by a judge. Nevertheless, there is a weight of literature that contends that customary courts are self-serving, and traditional leadership corrupt and discriminatory toward women. This article does not engage this debate. The point is that official customary law should be decolonised and indigenised with living African law. As subsequently discussed, this could be done in part through law school assessment practice to prepare future lawyers and jurists.

Spirituality is a basic tenet of AWOK. Generally, AIJS such as the two discussed here consider the role of spiritual/supernatural forces in procedure, outcome and restoration objectives (Cobbah 1987). As to remedies and outcomes, customary courts seek to restore wholeness by the perpetrator paying fines to an aggrieved party or offering animal sacrifice to appease ancestors. Ancestors are participants in restoring holism and healing human-made psycho-social wounds. In rule of law orthodoxy, statutory fines are paid to the state. Although damages may be paid to the winning party in, for example, personal injury or contract cases, there is no spiritual healing component. These are the types of epistemological distinctions that should be taught and researched in LE. Decisions in customary courts may be appealed to the state courts and state court decisions are appealable up the hierarchy of that court system.

However, appeal of AIJS cases to the state court evidences consequences of epistemological distinctions. South African courts have either emphasised the need to develop Indigenous law in line with the Bill of Rights or refrained from doing so. See, for example, Bhe v Magistrate, Khayelitsha
Indigenisation and Africanisation of Legal Education

(Commission for Gender Equality as Amicus Curiae), Shibi v Sithole, and the South African Human Rights Commission v President of the Republic of South Africa (2005); Mabena v Letsoalo (1998); Nkabinde v Road Accident Fund (2001); Ramoitheki v Liberty Group Ltd t/a Liberty Corporate Benefits (2006). At times, even when the court applies Indigenous (or customary) law, it insufficiently interrogates cases to allow Indigenous law to develop. The court has been known to retreat to legal centralism and positivism and apply Europeanised common law to Indigenous law cases; such as the above mentioned Bhe case (Ndima 2003; Himonga & Diallo 2017). Similarly, as Ntlama (2009) contends, the court failed to consider past practices of ‘official’ Indigenous law or further back into living African law when deciding the customary law of a succession case, Shilubana v. Nwamitwa (2009). In that case, ‘the essence of the customary law rule of succession to chieftancy was completely undermined by the lack of a proper understanding of the rationale and authority of customary law and the manner in which it operates’ (Ntlama 2009: 354). The court is inconsistent in showing an awareness of the role of ancestors in AWOK. For instance, the court declined to interpret indigenous spirituality and burial practices as part of ‘family life’ in Nkosi v Bührmann (2002). However, the spiritual practice of interment of deceased family members in close proximity to the family homestead was acknowledged by the court in Dlamini v Joosten (2005). This brings to bear one of two factors. Firstly, jurists and lawyers either lack knowledge about AWOK underlying Indigenous law from time immemorial and the IOTL as a whole – pre-colonialism, during or post-colonialism. Or, secondly, lawyers and jurists are unwilling to use Indigenous law to decolonise the rule of law orthodoxy system. Both scenarios perpetuate privileging westernised epistemologies over AWOK. This also deprives Europeanised common law from growing through the use of Indigenous law.

Sections 39 and 173 of the South African Constitution vest courts with the power to develop Indigenous law and common law. Section 211 provides in pertinent part that the court ‘must’ apply Indigenous law when applicable. Yet, externally imposed Europeanised common law by colonial settlers seems to take precedence over Indigenous law, even though there are constitutional obligations and case precedents obliging courts to allow Indigenous law to develop on its own merit within the Bill of Rights. Section 235 substantiates the ‘right of self-determination of any community sharing a common cultural and language heritage’. How common is Europeanised common law to
millions of South Africans who rely upon customary justice systems that are more consistent with their values and culture? To allow Europeanised common law to speak for Indigenous law sustains coloniality. It is analogous to Madlingozi’s (2010) point that exogenously driven well-meaning transitional justice experts speak about or on behalf of victims in reckless disregard of underpinning worldviews of victims’ stories. Indigenous law should not be treated as dependent on or a victim of English common law. In effect, the court’s unawareness or obliteration of the socio-cultural context of Indigenous law raises grave concerns. These could begin to be addressed by Africanising LE. Highlighting epistemological distinctions underlying plural legal systems could be both a tool for decolonising and Africanising LE and a source of continuing professional development for lawyers, judges and law societies. This requires studying Indigenous legal traditions and CBJS on their own merit (Chartrand 2015). The cultural interface of emerging critical standpoints within different justice systems can help facilitate the process. The question is often raised as to who should decolonise/indigenise LE, why and how? This is next discussed below.

Who Should Africanise Legal Education, Why and How?

Thus far, it seems that decolonisation and Africanisation are required at various levels. These include the centralist legal mind, LE, legal profession, westernised justice system, IOTL and official customary law. The concern here is with the centralist legal mind and LE. Borrows (2016: 795, 807) opines that ‘teaching of Indigenous peoples’ law should be done in culturally appropriate ways that open rather than confine fields of inquiry within Indigenous law and practice’ and highlights the ‘requirement of working with communities…and of paying Indigenous legal practitioners at appropriate law school scales’. A group of professors at the Canadian Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa, with expertise in Indigenous law, set an intermediate goal of including an Indigenous law stream in its LE. They did so without sacrificing unique epistemologies inherent in Indigenous legal traditions such as Algonquin, Haudenasoanee and Innu. They established a long-term goal of offering common law, civil law and Indigenous law of various traditions (Chartrand 2015). The Law and Justice Faculty at the Australian University of Queensland implemented an Embedding Indigenous Perspectives project, which was hindered by non-Indigenous academics being unable to move beyond
whiteness and privilege (McLaughlin & Whatman 2008:144). That study therefore found that Indigenous educators must ‘champion the struggle against colonial forms of domination within academic institutions’ and with their supporters, ‘decolonise constructed knowledge of the ‘other’. Intellectual colonialism should not be an excuse for non-participation in decolonisation and indigenisation of curriculum. Rather, this effort should be epistemologically-driven, not race-based. AWOK can be learnt by non-Indigenous people just as most people in the world have learnt westernised ways of knowing. In both the Canadian and Australian efforts, inclusion of Indigenous peoples in curriculum development was recognised.

According to Chartrand (2015: 9), ‘law is much richer and deeper than Western legal thought’. To plan and deliver an emancipatory LE, decolonising and indigenising/Africanising LE and assessment practice should be a collective endeavour. This would include onto-epistemologically equipped academics (even descendants of colonial settlers who remain privileged by colonial and apartheid legacies), traditional leaders, AIKS practitioners, living African law knowledge-holders, and AIKS researchers skilled in socio-legal studies and indigenous methodologies. This epistemologically based activity brings to the fore ‘cultural interface’ and ‘critical standpoints’ of this array of actors (Nakata 2007; Carey & Prince 2015). Hence, irrespective of national origin or whether of indigenous or settler colonial realities, an interactive cultural interface of knowledge holders is required whereby one moves beyond binaries and does not seek to replace or valorise one’s culture or knowledge system over another. Instead, the need exists to honour critical standpoints undergirded by various epistemologies, interrogate knowledge systems and work together so that all knowledge systems contribute to the global pool of knowledge. As uncomfortable as this may be to some law academics, it is necessary to decolonise/indigenise/Africanise LE, particularly in a legal pluralist society like South Africa.

Legal education should be indigenised/Africanised for a number of reasons. Firstly, a recognition and acceptance that colonisation, apartheid, imperialism and neoliberalism have managed to obscure and denigrate legitimate AIJS is necessary to move forward. Secondly, a self-motivated interest in upscaling jurisprudence to meet justice delivery requirements in a contemporary knowledge economy is a driving force. Thirdly, the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples entitles justice seekers to access Indigenous legal institutions (UN DRIP 2007). Fourthly, the South
African Constitution and Bill of Rights protect customary law underpinned by the desire for democratic governance and legal empowerment of all is another reason. Simultaneously, there is a growing body of work that contests South African constitutionalism (e.g. Modiri 2018). Such deliberate critique advances Africanisation of LE. Finally, expanded legal careers for lawyers could be achieved. Synergies emerge from sharing different legal philosophies and epistemologies across cultures and legal traditions. Failure to do so ignores ideals of education, lessens competencies of legal professionals (Chartrand 2015); and derogates from the Constitution. Decolonisation of the legal academy offers opportunities for consensual relationship-building (Barrows 2016). Tinkering with curriculum and hiring indigenous/black academics is insufficient. Decolonisation of the centralist legal mind requires willpower and applies to anyone who experiences westernised LE. Nation-state centrisn and legal centrism/positivism are endemic to the compartmentalised tendency of westernised ways of knowing. Yet, the majority of the world’s population are of non-westernised origin. Such hegemony disempowers citizens seeking legal traditions that recognise socio-cultural and socio-spiritual elements of life force.

In South Africa, Modiri (2016) and Himonga and Diallo (2017) provide insight into decolonising/Africanising LE as shown in the first two columns of Table 2. The third column depicts contributions from this article.

**Table 2 Strategies for Decolonisation/ Indigenisation/ Africanisation of LE**

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critically engaged pedagogical approaches</td>
<td>Teach living African law</td>
<td>Advantage legal pluralism through student-driven research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple intellectual paradigms and epistemologies</td>
<td>Paradigm shift from legal positivism/centralism to legal pluralism</td>
<td>Apply onto-epistemologies to assessment practice and Nakata’s (2007) ‘cultural interface and critical standpoints’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogate and address socio-political context</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary research</td>
<td>Transdisciplinary research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 2 reveals, different scholars in three universities across as many provinces have similar ideas. This article further interjects steps for stakeholder engagement for cross-border curriculum development and emancipatory assessment practice. The ‘cultural interface’ and ‘critical standpoints’ calls together previously mentioned actors to help facilitate the Africanisation of LE project (Nakata 2007; Carey & Prince 2015). Cultural and critical interchange and exchange across disciplines and between the university and society are paramount. All views are valued and consensus-building encouraged. This would help decolonise the centralist legal mind and enable recognition that the univocal (Modiri 2016) and monism (Himonga & Diallo 2017) tendencies of the discipline of law are ripe for dissolution. Consistent with AWOK, this collaborative endeavour could also include relevant provincial offices of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), which would attract the House of Traditional Leaders. The Department of Science and Innovation and the DST-NRF Centre in Indigenous Knowledge Systems could likewise be involved as they are nationally committed to protection, co-production and application of AIKS pursuant to the South African Indigenous Knowledge Policy (RSA 2004) and the Indigenous Knowledge Act 6 of 2019 (RSA 2019). Actors in this proposed working group for Africanisation of LE would set agendas and execute shared tasks. This collaboration would require more time than financial resources.

Finally, turning to assessment practice, Africanising LE can include complex legal problem-solving assessment activities on an emancipatory trajectory. Emancipatory education entails multi-inter-transdisciplinary and pluri-paradigmatic approaches to co-produce knowledge. Examining critical standpoints at the cultural interface juncture is useful. An example is ethnographic approaches to law (Darian-Smith 2016). Rigorous student engagement revolves around interrogating real-life scenarios requiring transdisciplinary enquiry and varied innovative legal remedies. For example, socio-legal research problems investigated with indigenous methodologies move students beyond law in books to the dynamism of living African law. Actors involved in the LE Africanisation project are likewise rich sources of research. Research findings can offer fresh real-life perspectives on living African law and AWOK can then be funnelled into further curriculum development. Grounded research outcomes can help create professional development curriculum for lawyers, judges and law professors. Then knowledge of living African law is acquired and thereafter interpreted within
its socio-cultural context during judicial review of AIJS cases. Similarly, research outcomes can enable law academics to equip themselves and law students with AWOK and legal pluralist versatility so as to undo cognitive damage. Such assessment practice could also begin to decolonise the IOTL and AIJS through action research so that Indigenous law can develop on its own merit yet consistent with the Bill of Rights. Moreover, this assessment practice can enable living African law to inform Europeanised common law. Collective duties inherent in AWOK could enhance legal dispositions as opposed to individualistic proclivities that spur winners and losers. This could likewise advance social cohesion in the country.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Legal pluralism is more than just a social fact in African countries. It is a socio-cultural-legal reality for those who choose non-state justice systems to resolve disputes. This article highlighted onto-epistemological, axiological and cosmological distinctions underlying CBJS, the customary justice system and westernised justice systems. Several conclusions are drawn. Firstly, the hegemonic privileging of rule of law orthodoxy diminishes usefulness of AIJS, requiring a radical shift to African onto-epistemologies in LE and assessment practice. Secondly, legal pluralism, taught in relevant onto-epistemological contexts can be a tool for decolonising and Africanising LE. Thirdly, failure to epistemologically study and critically historicize and interrogate South African legal plurality perpetuates cognitive damage to professors and students alike whilst generating a justice deficit for South African citizens. Finally, indifference to Africanisation of LE flouts the Constitution.

It is recommended that:

- Law professors of different ethnic backgrounds embark upon ‘cultural interface’ and ‘critical standpoints’ with each other and with AIKS legal practitioners (including the IOTL) and indigenous methodology researchers to design curriculum that fits the South African context, grounded in AWOK.

- Modules that incorporate Indigenous law or that are independently created must protect the socio-cultural and overarching spiritual context inherent in the dynamism and fluidity of living African law.
Assessment practice should move beyond law and sociology of law in books to socio-legal research through indigenous methodologies, with research problems designed to interrogate living African law so that it develops on its own merit.

Findings from socio-legal research and indigenous methodologies should be used to decolonise and indigenise LE.

LE should aim to decolonise the centralist legal mind, the IOTL and eventually the legal profession through production of a new cadre of law school graduates who would in turn facilitate decoloniality of the legal profession and law schools.

LE should set the tone for establishing portals of continuing professional development for lawyers, judges and lawmakers; underpinned by AWOK.

The liberation trajectory espoused is not for the faint at heart, but requires willpower to begin to introspectively unshackle one’s own centralist legal mind.

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Creative Meaning-Making through a Multimodal, Interdisciplinary Exploration: Lessons for Higher Education Curriculum Enhancement

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Abstract
Within the context of the neoliberal managerialism that is pervading higher education in South Africa, academia is driven by a stringent set of prescriptions. Teaching within this environment can constrain opportunities for creativity and lateral thinking by students and staff alike. Student protests in 2015 and 2016 provided a challenge and provocation to academics to think about the transformational nature of their curriculum design, content and pedagogy. This paper explores the collaboration between three senior academics as they engaged in a process of professional academic development. This experience opened up generative spaces for them to think in new and creative ways about their teaching and curriculum design. A collaborative autoethnographic methodology, informed by a social constructivist approach, was used to explore their experience. The authors trace their interactions with different mediums and each other as ‘a continuous process of making and unmaking’ (Jackson & Mazzei 2013: 262). The lenses of Touch (Barad 2012), an Ethic of Care (Tronto 2013) and Slow Pedagogy (Bozalek 2017) were used to make meaning of their experiences. Key lessons they identified as enhancing their teaching were: ‘space of (for) becoming’, ‘academic praxis’, ‘deconstructing and reconstructing entanglement’, ‘learning-by-modelling’, and ‘decolonising thinking and meaning-making’. This paper holds lessons that can inform curriculum development in higher education, especially in a
time when strong calls are mounting for ‘disruptive shifts to revitalise higher education curricula’ (Dhunpath & Amin 2019: 1).

**Keywords:** multimodal pedagogy, interdisciplinary collaboration, creative meaning-making, professional academic development, curriculum enhancement

**Introduction**

This paper explores our collaborative experience as we journey toward transforming our teaching and learning through two professional academic development courses, as well as our ongoing engagement in a community of praxis (Burke 2018). It highlights key shifts we made in our thinking about our own teaching and learning practices, and provides extracts from lessons that can be used to address issues of transformation in the wake of student protests for decolonising the curriculum.

The position we represent in this paper is that of three female, senior academics from different disciplinary fields, namely urban planning, educational leadership and information systems, from two different higher education institutions in the Western Cape. We shared the need to collaboratively explore how we can transform our teaching and curriculum design and respond to the needs of our students and our disciplines by first expanding our own knowledge, skills and value sets through professional academic development (PAD).

Our need to revitalise and re-imagine our professional practice stems from the numerous shifts and pressures in the higher education landscape in South Africa that call for meaningful and ‘responsible’ pedagogy. Student protests in South African higher education institutions (HEIs), with their associated shifts of recurriculation, renewed focus on throughput rates (as a measure of academic quality) and changes in the power dynamics created pressure points that we attempt to start addressing through the writing of this paper.

The student protests bear testimony to the urgency for pedagogy and curricula to address issues of inequality, injustice and misrepresentation in higher education. Bozalek and Zembylas (2017: 64) argue that more theoretical and methodological tools are needed to ‘envision and enact socially just pedagogies in higher education’. We find ourselves in a position where
‘the ground is in motion’ (Jamal & Gets 1995: 188), which challenges academics to question their curriculum content and delivery.

Heleta (2016: 2) argues that higher education institutions require fundamental epistemological change in the curriculum and continues to perpetuate epistemic violence through ‘a curriculum which remains largely Eurocentric and continues to reinforce white and Western dominance and privilege while at the same time being full of stereotypes, prejudices and patronising views about Africa and its people’.

We argue in favour of a new way of thinking and being as academics, as the impetus for repositioning and rethinking our curriculum. Using a collaborative auto-ethnographic methodology informed by a social constructivist approach, we explore our collective experience in PAD courses and the journey of transforming our thinking. The different lenses of Touch (Barad 2012), an Ethic of Care (Tronto 2013) and Slow (Bozalek 2017) are applied to explore the constructive engagements across disciplinary boundaries to engage with the multiple insights of multiple fields. The paper concludes by exploring how ‘space of (for) becoming’, ‘academic praxis’, ‘deconstructing entanglement’, ‘learning-by-modelling’ and ‘decolonising thinking’, as revealed by our data analysis, can inform new ways of engaging with curriculum design, content and pedagogy in higher education.

A Social Constructivist Orientation

A social constructivist orientation informed the way in which we engaged with the processes of meaning-making towards our own professional academic development. This also informed the thinking of possibilities for transforming our curricular design, content and pedagogy.

A relational epistemology and ontology informed our understanding and interpretation of our experience. A relational epistemology acknowledges the fluid and multidimensionality of knowing and becoming, ‘a continuous process of making and unmaking’ (Jackson & Mazzei 2013: 262) through engagement with each other and our environment. Meaning-making in our academic development process was enacted through what Deleuze and Guattari (1988) refer to as a rhizomatic assemblage of ceaselessly established non-linear and multi-layered connections.

Our engagement with and through PAD courses enabled us to think collectively about ways to attentively review and reimagine our curricula.
Through this process of interacting with each other on the PAD courses and engaging with multimodal ways of learning, we experienced new ways of becoming and thinking about our world and work.

**An Interdisciplinary Community of Praxis**

We understand a community of praxis to mean a grouping (people) and a space (material) that assist in developing and enriching our teaching and learning praxis. Burke (2018: 19) describes this understanding as follows: ‘A praxis-based, pedagogical methodology makes time and space for collaborative, reciprocal, critically reflexive and ethical ways of researching collectively across’. It is thus not merely a reflection on what and how we do things, but is also a way of enhancing our practice through critical engagement with theory and further enriching practices. We did this through a process of weekly face-to-face writing sessions, attending PAD courses as a group, and co-presenting at seminars and conferences.

Our community of praxis is defined by our professional lived experiences as three female, senior academics from two HEIs in Cape Town, in the Western Cape province of South Africa. We specialise in the professional disciplines of urban planning, educational leadership and information systems. This specific combination of areas of speciality has a profound impact on the nature of our interdisciplinary community by focusing on both the social-environmental as well as the techno-human interfaces. The combination of perspectives from the socio-environ-techno-human enriches our process of meaning-making by drawing on a diverse range of pre-knowledge, and thus vantage points of understanding.

It should be noted that, up to now, students have not been part of our community of praxis. Although we have introduced many of the practices we have learnt and developed in our teaching and learning strategies, we have not formally included students in the deeper conversations. We have now come to a point in our own professional academic development where we feel capable of opening up the conversation to allow ‘multiple voices in the construction of truth(s)’ (Gergen & Gergen 1991: 80).

Gergen and Gergen (1991) refer to the concept of relational reflexivity as a critically important method of engaging within a community of praxis. The idea that the ‘subjects become the participants’ (Pedler 2012: 273) applies to this paper, where the site of the research is our community of praxis.
The Lenses of Touch, an Ethic of Care and Slow

We applied the lenses of Touch (Barad 2012), a Political Ethic of Care (Tronto 2013) and Slow scholarship (Bozalek 2017) to the reading of our experiences. This enabled us to explore our pedagogy and find new ways to generate creative meaning. Our process of concept development unfolded over time, in what Schatzki (as cited in Kemmis et al. 2014: 33) describes as ‘activity time-space, in which an activity unfolds in time, and in which objects in physical space are linked together and arranged by a particular activity’. We engaged with the concept of touch and how our journey enabled us to find new meaning and to explore being in touch through different mediums. Barad (2012: 208) posits that ‘experimenting is about being in touch…touch moves and affects what it effects’. Our collaboration has enabled us to be in touch and this evoked responsibility and attentiveness to the emergency of new ideas (Barad 2012; Tronto 2013).

This responsibility for the other, as the other in our community of praxis, was strongly grounded in an Ethic of Care (Tronto 2013). We functioned as a community of praxis both during the PAD courses and when we met to work on our collaborative project. Tronto (2013) identifies five phases of care, each building upon the next. Phases of care include caring about; caring for; caregiving; care receiving and caring with. Being attentive and responsible for and with each other and our environment infused the way in which we made new meaning (Van den Berg, Verster & Collett 2018). Bozalek and Zembylas (2017: 67) argue for a response-able pedagogy that pays attention to ‘the engagement across differences and the way in which they happen are very important – this means the ability to apprehend’.

We believe that this cannot be explored without the addition of Slow, which requires an attentive and deepened engagement in our professional academic development (Collett et al. 2018). Slowness calls for calm, careful, receptive, still, intuitive, unhurried, patient and reflective quality over quantity. It is about making real and meaningful connections with people and places (Ulmer 2018). Part of the attraction to Slow learning and pedagogy lies in its ability to encourage ‘time to plan, fail, retry, and reflect’ (Shaw, Cole & Russell 2013: 320).

We argue in favour of a multimodal approach using a range of mediums and ways of engaging (clay, books, sculpting, colour, nature and setting, human interaction and technology). Engaging through different mediums assisted us in slowing down the process of meaning-making. This
was done through paying attention to the patterns of difference that emerged. Bozalek and Zembylas (2017: 65) provide the following elaboration on mattering: ‘For Barad, matter is not just of the head but also of the heart and hands; it has to do with a scholarly engagement with care, social justice and seeing oneself as part of a world’.

These lenses highlight the notion of curriculum design, content and pedagogy as engaged processes of making and unmaking, which hold possibilities for empowerment and enrichment for both students and academics.

Methodology
A collaborative auto-ethnographic process was used to generate data to allow meaning to emerge through our analysis. Collaborative [auto] ethnography is defined by Chang, Ngunjiri and Hernandez (2013: 22) as a ‘method in which researchers work in community to collect their autobiographical materials and to analyze and interpret their data collectively to gain a meaningful understanding of sociocultural phenomena reflected in their autobiographical data’.

It is a qualitative approach that positions self-enquiry at the centre (Chang et al. 2013). The authors give four considerations that define collaborative [auto] ethnography (CAE): self-focused, researcher-visible, context-conscious and critically dialogical.

It should be noted that, although we find resemblances with CAE, we are also confronted with differences to the approach advocated by Chang et al. (2013). We did not engage in this process of meaning-making as individuals, but as a collective, thus the self is not the focus anymore. The researcher is replaced by the community of praxis. For this reason, we use the [ ] to distinguish the [auto] from autoethnography.

We subscribe to Burke’s (2018: 16) definition of a community of praxis. It resonates with our experience of meaning-making, which includes:

The bringing together of critical reflection and action – to ensure that those taken-for-granted meanings that unwittingly perpetuate inequalities are challenged and eradicated at both the individual and institutional levels. Through this cycle of praxis we are enabled to create more refined, sensitive and nuanced strategies for equity.

A further difference lies in our engagement with data, as we do not see data in
Creative Meaning-Making in Higher Education Curriculum Enhancement

its traditional configuration – as something that is captured and then analysed and interpreted. We continuously create data and make meaning from data. We do not consider data creation as something that is external to our community of praxis.

Table 1: The four collaborative [auto] ethnographic considerations, and our application of and divergence from them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAE Considerations</th>
<th>Key Text (Chang et al. 2013)</th>
<th>Application and divergence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-focused</td>
<td>‘the researcher is simultaneously the instrument and the data’</td>
<td>The data sources we interrogate are notes, voice recordings and artefacts we produced as individuals and as a collective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher-visible</td>
<td>‘the researcher turns the lens inward to make personal thoughts and actions visible and transparent’</td>
<td>We pick up on the nuances of the process of collaborative meaning-making because of our location as both researchers and subjects of the inquiry. The frameworks we subscribe to (Touch, Ethic of Care and Slow) sensitised us to these traces and nuances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context-conscious</td>
<td>‘studying the self in context’</td>
<td>As a community of praxis, we engage with our activities as academics in two differently positioned</td>
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HEIs and different disciplines.

The context further includes our involvement in PAD courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critically dialogical</th>
<th>‘the researcher ... an active instrument and participant in creating meaning and constructing values’</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘building on each other’s stories, gaining insight from group sharing’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our data is the result of a multimodal engagement in a community of praxis that represents multiple entry and exit points.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Our data is always in the process of becoming, as we are.</td>
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We understand multimodality as the ‘forms of representation through which students make their meaning’ (Stein 2008: 1). As a collaborative community of praxis, we consider ourselves as the students in PAD courses and reflect on our activities from multiple perspectives and through the use of multimodality. The multimodal ‘forms of representation’ we engaged with included sculpting with clay, writing poetry, interacting (tearing, folding, extracting) with old books, developing concepts, using walking as research methodology, using free and creative writing, finger painting, and creating stories and narratives through stop animation. We engaged in these multimodal methods over an eighteen-month period and in two PAD courses, entitled Multimodal pedagogies and post-qualitative scholarship in higher education teaching and learning, and Reconfiguring scholarship: Doing academic writing, publishing and reviewing differently.

Continuous weekly reading and writing sessions within a community of praxis deepened our engagement not only with text, but also with our data and the generation of new data. Our data came to be through a ‘continuous process of making and unmaking’ (Jackson & Mazzei 2013: 262). Figure 1 illustrates extracts from the multimodal process.
Figure 1: Examples of our artefacts
In addition, we used theory related to pedagogy to inform and deepen our analysis. We allowed our reflexivity to open up our methodology in a collaborative manner using the lenses of Touch, an Ethic of Care and Slow. In reconnecting with our data through the writing of this paper, we stepped back and once again focused on what ‘glowed’ for us (MacLure 2013: 661). This enabled us to focus on those things that resonated with us.

Data was drawn from two professional academic development courses presented by the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC). The first layer of data consisted of voice recordings, as well as individual and collective visual and written artefacts arising from the multimodal forms of representation, as discussed above. This was followed by a collaborative process to design a book (CHEC 2018). The next step was to merge our learning experiences into a poster presentation at the 2018 conference of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of South Africa.

Our data analysis and presentation thus reflect the complex and multi-layered nature of the process in which we engaged. In order to think within this complex process, we used a spiral to show the entanglement, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.
It should be noted that our engagement with methodology was an emergence in itself. It was not predetermined. We followed the suggestion of St Pierre (2018: 619): ‘read, read, read and then ‘do’ the next thing that makes sense and keep doing the next thing and all that doing is a methodology’.

**Emerging Insights and Recommendations**

In this paper we describe our journey in exploring creative ways to enable different insights to emerge through our collaboration. In this space, we became aware of the shifting nature of our individual and collective understanding as we continued to hold that uncomfortable ‘space of becoming’ (see 4.1).

This ‘space of becoming’ through and with each other involved us recognising the need for shifts in our ways of thinking about our teaching and learning. For example, some of our challenges and uneasiness were:
Belinda Verster, Karen Collett & Carolien van den Berg

- Having the courage to explore and find our own voices, rather than just drawing on traditional academic language and conventions.
- Working collaboratively and tapping into the resourcefulness of the collective, rather than individualistically.
- Recognising the influences and value of engaging with multimodality to find new ways of knowing and being.
- Trusting more in the process of attentive engagement with depth of learning, rather than a superficial covering of content.

Our experience as a community of praxis created a supportive context for us to occupy this uneasy ‘space of becoming’.

The following key insights into our curriculum design, content and pedagogy emerged through our processes of meaning-making and engagement with texts related to Touch, an Ethic of Care and Slow, namely:


The structure or topography used in this section is an attempt to represent the emerging nature of our meaning-making. The sections presented in bullet points, are extracts from our weekly, collaborative reflective sessions. It depicts a natural flow of thought and our engagement with the data as it glowed and new insights emerged. Insights and recommendations about our curriculum design, content and pedagogy are elaborated upon under each of these aspects.

Space of (for) Becoming
We found ‘pause’ or ‘stoppage’ (Slow) to be an important, active part of affirming, recognising and becoming. The idea of the space in between structured activities was experienced as a fertile ground for emergent meaning-making and becoming. This created space for an authentic and deep level of engagement in order to find and create new meaning through the process:

- Space between – not focus on the activity but what lies between…
Creative Meaning-Making in Higher Education Curriculum Enhancement

- That space is what we need to think about what extent did the creative concept development hinge on the ‘negative spaces’-that space between buildings … design with these pauses in mind …
- It does not mean that the invisible space is empty …
- Importance of incubating, to process, to internally reflect and to be quiet and hold stillness. Being and not doing all the time …
- The void assists us to be creative, being on the edge of becoming …
- Our ability to create requires the stillness …
- Not filling up [the curriculum] but letting go…

Insights toward Curriculum Design, Content and Pedagogy
Through our engagement with a Slow pedagogy, we experienced the deep value of affirming processes of collaborative meaning-making. The purpose and structure of higher education will need to shift to keep pace with change. The industrial model of education, with a prescribed timeline and curricula delivered largely in formal classroom settings, will have to transform to a more flexible model. Issues of social justice should be addressed, both in the curricular content and in the pedagogy. Recognition of the role of the student as a key agent in the meaning-making process is required. In addition, the space for collective engagement with issues of prior knowledge, values and identity needs to surface and be engaged with critically in the meaning-making process. Factors supporting and constraining student access and agency in the knowledge-generation process need to be acknowledged and worked with consciously.

One of our key insights was the need to experiment more with ‘time-space’, to ‘pause’ and not fill up the curriculum. There needs to be space for students to fill the void, reflect and add to the curriculum. Curriculum planning requires us to plan actively and attentively for pauses in order for new knowledge to be generated and for this knowledge to be deepened and internalised. There needs to be space for others to be recognised as co-creators in the knowledge-generation and meaning-making process. Pause requires a focus on process and deepening learning, rather than a superficial covering of content and outcomes.
A Multimodal Shift
Through our collaborative engagement, using different modalities to make meaning, we experienced a shift in our thinking about what counts as knowledge, and who and what are recognised in the meaning-making process:

- Part of the discomfort is that linear did not work for us …
- Vulnerable …
- Move on …
- We are bending away from the norm and the norm is not shifting …
- Shifting, entangled and fluid …
- The challenges of occupying space outside the academic norm.
- Creativity sits in this space of the unknown and unchartered and multimodality holds this space of allowing to be.
- Creativity asks of us to let go … let the new emerge …
- The discomfort of multimodality pushed me over the threshold to explore new things…

Insights Toward Curriculum Design, Content and Pedagogies
Engagement with multimodality served to heighten our awareness of the intra and interrelationships and potential for new forms of meaning-making. It required us to view, in a more complex, interrelated and sensitive way, how we experience our world and generate new knowledge. This has had an impact on our pedagogy and where we see ourselves, our students and the shifts in individual conceptions of Eurocentric ideals. Furthermore, technological change has also had an impact on our concept of what it means to be human and how we encompass this in our pedagogy with curriculum imperatives that lie in the tangible realms and in cyberspace.

We are in the process of exploring, experimenting and testing ways in which to transform our teaching. Not being afraid to experiment and venturing out into an unknown world are elements that we should instil in our curricula. We need to cultivate life-long learners who will be able to function and succeed in an uncertain and changing world.
Deconstructing and Reconstructing Entanglements
We became aware of the centrality of entanglement between ourselves and our world through interplay between time-touch-voice-wonder-space-mattering. This creative and generative process gave rise to becoming through one another, and of everything being fluid, with the past and the future in the present:

- The continuity and texture that time-space-mattering brings …
- Being in touch – a form of realignment, redefining and rediscovery and expanding the self …
- Touching, reaching out (our checking-in sessions), opening up, allowing in and out … enriching … touching is a way of letting go …
- Transport the learning to a different space-time to unlock creativity. Creativity does not sit in the everyday or the mundane …
- The process of making and unmaking is pulsating like a heartbeat … it never stops …
- Touch-time pays attention to process, to the unfolding and refolding of meaning-making through multiple opportunities …
- The link between touch and voice and touch as voice, for babies touch is voice. A way of being felt and heard …

The importance of recognising that the process of becoming with and through each other created a situation in which meaning is continuously on the move and fluid. The activity of RE- becomes essential in RE-reading, RE-thinking, RE-positioning, RE-turning.

MacLure’s (2013: 229) insights when considering ‘wonder’ resonate: Wonder is ‘relational’. It is not clear where it originates and to whom it belongs. It seems to be ‘out there’, emanating from a particular object, image, or fragment of text; but it is also ‘in’ the person that is affected. We have experienced ‘wonder’ numerous times in our collaborative endeavours and have come to rely on it to develop new insights:

- Again … again … you need something to hold and re-fold back – use one article as opposed to many…
The voice changes with time-touch, your voice and your arguments change and Slow allows you to extract this voice and nurture the changes and sit with them…

Re-fold, relook and re-engage …

**Insights toward Curriculum Design, Content and Pedagogies**

Making space for the deconstruction and reconstruction of ideas through the process of engaging with multimodality helped to enhance creativity and new and different ways of knowing our worlds, or new ways of being in the world. We implemented multimodality in our curricula and explored its ability to allow expression through different mediums that give students a voice. In a caring community we did not position things as good or bad, but acknowledged different ways of knowing.

**Learning-by-Modelling**

By engaging with our own professional development, opportunities were created to deepen our curricula and learning experiences through the appreciation of Touch, an Ethic of Care and Slow:

- The voice changes with time-touch, your voice and your argument shift and Slow allows you to extract and nurture this voice …
- What enabled the emergence of the new: Touch, Ethic of Care, Slow…
- Ethic of Care increased the learning …
- Through one’s pedagogy, you can allow people to see the world through different lenses …
- By what you model – a new way of being and seeing and mattering …
- Pedagogical competence model is influenced by time-space-mattering…
- The collaborative, communal entity enabled me…
- Ethic of Care (EoC) lens enabled an awareness … if I did not live EoC, I would not have been sensitised to think about what I did in this way…
• Multimodality provided the scaffolding to shift the process …
• Gave us a way to engage with complex theories…

**Insights Toward Curriculum Design, Content and Pedagogies**
Collaborating in a multimodal and multidisciplinary environment enabled us to create a space for applying different lenses to our practice. We discovered a need for the different lenses to be applied within curriculum design, content and pedagogy, but also the requirement for greater sensitivity towards the timing and pacing.

**Decolonising our Thinking and Meaning-Making**
Our experience of generating new meaning and understanding through multimodality reinforced the key role of the participants in the meaning-making and knowledge-construction process. One of the key insights we had was how engagement in collaborative, multimodal processes put the agents (students) at the centre of the meaning-making process in co-constructing knowledge and legitimising different forms of knowing. There was thus no ‘silencing of other knowledge and way of creating knowledge’ (Motta 2013: 97). There also was an acknowledgement of the importance of surfacing indigenous knowledge, affirming our lived experience in Africa, and grappling with our African identity:

• It must be hard for our students to have this instrumentalist notion of this is what we need to learn and they have no agency in the whole process. We give then [students] the rules, assignments, rubrics, etc. We are not touching their humanity …
• Let students engage with process … we as students were selecting the focus we were interested in … and built the relevant theory into our own practice…
• We are transformed by creativity and translating this transformation to our classroom…
• Being uncomfortable is transformational … intense discomfort allows something new…
• Being in community holds us up and counters the discomfort…
• We cannot go back …
The power of co-creation and participating in knowledge construction and generation is undeniable. Heleta (2016: 2) argues that the ‘colonial and apartheid curriculum in South Africa has promoted white supremacy and dominance, as well as stereotyping of Africa’, and that the current curriculum still reflects colonial and apartheid worldviews. Through our engagement in the process of co-constructioning knowledge, we gained insight into how the curriculum content and process could be opened up and transformed. Collaborative engagement in the active generation of new knowledge created space for decolonising the curriculum by drawing on and recognising multiple sources and processes of knowledge generation. It also affirmed the need for a focus on Africa, and to acknowledge and generate new knowledge and insight from an African perspective.

**Insights Toward Curriculum Design, Content and Pedagogies**

Recognising how the material and structural conditions in our institutions both enable and constrain learning and student agency was a key insight. Heleta (2016: 7) argues that academics need to involve students in decolonising the curriculum and pedagogy through the process of creating environments that are anti-hierarchical and promote critical and collaborative engagement and critique. Our collective engagement with a multimodal, Slow pedagogy informed by a Political Ethic of Care and Touch enabled us to reclaim the space to create and recreate knowledge that was both critical and creative. Motta (2013: 88) argues for the need to reclaim these spaces as ‘a critical act of opening possibility through developing pedagogies (as method and content) with students’. We need to be attentive to other’s lived experiences within a particular environment, but furthermore need to become conscious of our own existence and identity as Africans and co-inhabitants of this planet. Decolonisation implies being the other. Exploring these spaces and identities raised new insights and challenged us to reflect on our current practice as lecturers preparing students for the 21st Century and beyond.

**Conclusion**

This paper has shown how our thinking shifted as new pedagogical possibilities were imagined and enacted. It highlights the shifts we made in
our thinking about our own teaching and learning practices as a result of our participation in professional academic development and continued engagement in our community of praxis. It demonstrates how the experience of collectively and Slowly engaging with related theory (lenses) and multimodal pedagogy enabled us to think in new ways about our curriculum content, design and pedagogy. Our experience may hold lessons for academics engaging with the call to decolonise the curriculum.

We recommend a ‘space of (for) becoming’ in curricula to create the necessary space and time for students to reflect and deepen their learning, by planning for pauses so that knowledge can deepen and be internalised; and pauses to allow the process to unfold as opposed to an overreliance on the outcome in order to allow for shifts in learning.

The value of ‘deconstructing and reconstructing entanglement’ via the implementation of multimodality provided different ways to explore concepts and suspend judgement. We discovered a need for the different lenses to be applied within curriculum design, but also the requirement for greater sensitivity towards the timing and pacing of what students are expected to master.

Our collaborative engagement in the active generation of new knowledge created the space for us to deconstruct our own judgement and allow for creative meaning-making. This experience opened up generative spaces for us to think in new and creative ways about our own teaching and curriculum design.

**Disclosure statement**

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‘No Borders’ and Complexity

Bert Olivier

Abstract
This paper scrutinises the idea of ‘no borders’ – ultimately in relation to the question of curricula design – in the light of complexity theory, that is, the theoretical complex predicated on the unmitigated complexity of the interconnected systems that comprise the planetary ecosystem of the earth. Such ‘systems’ include all social and biological systems and subsystems – in a word, all living as well as inorganic things, to the extent that the latter affect the lives of the former. In this sense a forest is a complex ecosystem, as is a community of people, or even a family. These are instances of complex (eco-) systems because of their being ‘open’ to the environments in which they exist; that is, they change as totalities of interconnected individual components, at the same time as the individual components change in relation to changes that occur in their environments. This is easily demonstrated, first, by means of a discussion of modernism, postmodernism and poststructuralism – the latter of which recognises complexity – and secondly with reference to socio-economic subsystems, such as families, living in certain economic environments (which comprise, in their turn, larger subsystems of which the families form a part) – if economic conditions in the latter deteriorate, they affect the former detrimentally, and vice versa. The same is true of natural eco-subsystems, and here the example of an entomological eco(sub)system explored in literary fiction – that is, fiction rooted in biotic reality – is employed to drive the point home of the intimate interconnectedness of all complex eco-subsystems in the world. The point of this demonstration of the character and implications of complex interconnectedness is to provide a powerful incentive for the transmutation of curricula in South Africa (and by implication the world) in the direction of design that recognises and presupposes such complexity, so that no item in a curriculum will blindly suggest its isolation from everything around it, but, on the contrary, acknowledge its unavoidable interconnectedness.
Keywords: borders, complexity, ecology, interconnectedness, poststructuralism

Change is ubiquitous, and stability and certainty are rare. Complexity theory is a theory of change, evolution, adaptation and development for survival. It breaks with simple successionist cause-and-effect models, linear predictability, and a reductionist approach to understanding phenomena, replacing them with organic, non-linear and holistic approaches respectively … in which relations within inter-connected networks are the order of the day … (Keith Morrison 2008: 16).

Introduction: What is a Complex System?
It is probably true that most people do not know what complex systems are, and that these systems presuppose constant change across the board, despite the fact that everyone one is enmeshed in several such complex systems every minute of the day and night. In fact, the human body is a complex system, given that there is constant interaction between all its physical and neural constituent parts, and that it also interacts with its environment in complex, often unpredictable ways. The very consideration that the human brain comprises billions (about 100 billion) of neurons (nerve cells), among which old and new neural pathways are constantly activated, already demonstrates the complexity of the body in question. When one approaches this ‘body’ as an ‘embodied human being’ the complexity only increases, because then the brain becomes the basis for what is called ‘mind’ (or ‘spirit’, in an older idiom) as its ‘function’, and its ‘environment’ becomes multi-dimensional – not just physical, but social, psychological, cultural, and so on, in all of which contexts the embodied person is inserted in complex, open-ended ways. As will be argued below, this link between complexity and open-endedness is of decisive importance for understanding the world in which we live. This is one of the chief reasons why curricula in contemporary schools and universities should be designed with complexity in mind – not only the complexity of every student as a human subject (see the section on Lacan, below) and of each discipline that they are taught, but the complexity of the multiple interactions
between students (and between teachers or lecturers) and disciplines, students and teachers or lecturers, and between the (open-ended) disciplines and the constantly changing world which they reflect scientifically and intellectually. In what follows I shall examine the question of complexity in various contexts, to be able to demonstrate that it is imperative for school as well as university education to incorporate the study of complex, interconnected systems into curricula in the natural as well as the social sciences and the humanities. My reason for saying that this is imperative should be obvious: if education of the young is broadly the systematic preparation of young people for their entry into the world of adult responsibilities at several levels – social, moral, political and professional, to mention only some – then educators would renege on their duty, unless the world they introduce these young people to were presented in all its complexity as the world of the 21st century. By ‘complexity’ I don’t only mean something numerical, such as a world with a total population of more than 7 billion people, although this adds to its complexity. What I have in mind is that the total (and constantly changing) number of living beings in the world (humans included) are all interconnected in systemic ways, including economically and biologically, and these are interconnected, in turn, with inorganic natural elements such as air, soil and water. The consequences of complex interconnections amount to continuing changes taking place all the time, as different elements and actors continually affect one another. For example, human economic activities affect the quality and composition of the air, soil and water on the planet, which affect all living beings in turn, in an ongoing reciprocal process. In total, as will become apparent in the rest of this paper, all these mutually connected subsets of elements comprise the planetary ecosystem, which is an almost incomprehensibly complex system. Importantly, global educational systems in all countries, and in every distinguishable country, comprise a complex system with many variables. The argument of this paper is that these educational systems should reflect the complexity of the world – of a ‘borderless world’ – in which they are situated and of which they form a part, lest the beneficiaries of the system – the students – be left uninformed and unprepared for the complex events and processes that they are likely to experience as adults.

Another such complex system is language, which we use more or less all the time, except when we sleep, and even then, should we dream, we are enmeshed in another such system, that of the unconscious (which, according to Lacan’s [1977: 234] famous dictum, ‘is structured … like a language’). It
should be easy to grasp the complexity of language if we consider its so-called ‘diacritical’ structure, that is, the fact that, as Ferdinand de Saussure (1959: 65-70) noted, language, considered as a system of ‘signs’ – with each sign consisting of a ‘signifier’, like a printed or spoken word, or an image, and a ‘signified’, or concept – has no ‘positive’ terms, but only ‘differences’. This may seem counter-intuitive, but just consider that the meaning (or signification) of a word (or signifier) such as ‘cat’ does not depend – as it may seem to – on its ‘reference’ to a furry creature that utters the sound ‘miaow’; this ‘connection’ is entirely arbitrary and conventional. The word ‘cat’ might just as well have denoted an animal that barks, which just happens to be called ‘dog’ in English, again arbitrarily, and vice versa. The ‘meaning’ of ‘cat’ is a function of differences – between ‘cat’, ‘sat’, ‘that’ and ‘mat’, for example, but also between ‘cat’, ‘tiger’, ‘leopard’, ‘dog’, ‘lion’, ‘jaguar’, ‘panther’, and so on – insofar as every word might be said to carry the (invisible, but implied) ‘trace’ of every word that it is not. This insight on Saussure’s part was a stroke of genius, because it explains many things about language, for instance why the word ‘Brontosaurus’ has meaning even though none of the creatures that it names exist any longer, or have ever been seen by any human, and also why words called ‘abstract nouns’, like ‘love’, or ‘anxiety’, have meaning despite lacking corresponding ‘things’ they supposedly ‘refer’ to. They have meaning because of the differential relationships between each word and all others in the system of language, particularly words that are related to such words, including (in these cases) ‘feelings’, ‘affects’ and ‘emotions’, which interact reciprocally with them to generate meaning.

To make this clearer, and simultaneously clarify the claim, that language is a complex system, consider that one of poststructuralist Jacques Lacan’s metaphors for the way language works, that is, for the ‘signifying process’, is his image of language as a train (Lacan 1977a: 152) moving across the landscape with people in it – which is a way to show that, as speaking beings, we ‘inhabit’ language, or are ‘in language’. The advantage of this metaphor is that it allows one to grasp the positioning of the subject within language, here envisaged as a boy and a girl sitting opposite each other in a train compartment, and therefore ‘seeing’ things from their respective ‘angles’ through the train’s (that is, language’s) ‘windows’. As the train pulls into a station, the boy sees a sign on a public toilet, ‘Men’, erroneously as naming the town station where they have arrived, while the girl, making the opposite mistake because of her position on the opposite seat, sees it as ‘Ladies’ and
No Borders’ and Complexity

‘corrects’ him accordingly. The moral of the story is that individuals all understand things from the perspective of their position on or in the ‘train’ of language, and moreover, that our gender makes a difference in the way we understand things linguistically. In addition, the fact that language is conceived of as a ‘train’ – something that travels or moves through time and space – accommodates the fact that language, like everything else in the world, is subject to historical change. This image of a train occupied by passengers, used by Lacan to represent language, gives a good impression of the complexity of language as an open system: it consists of different, but connected, coaches and compartments (the words or signs), to which new ones can be added; it is open to new ‘occupants’ (the speakers of a language); it moves from place to place in time (language is open, or subject to historical change); and, depending on the human subject’s gender, the world is perceived and understood differently (which probably gives rise to more problems and misunderstandings in inter-gender communication than between individuals of the same gender). Therefore, if we imagine language as an impossibly colossal train, with all the world’s inhabitants on it, incessantly travelling through time and space (history), the number of ‘perceptions’, and corresponding linguistic utterances to articulate these perceptions, on the part of innumerable people of different cultures and genders, would be utterly unrepresentable, because of their complexity and open-endedness in numerical as well as semantic (meaning-related) terms.

A complex system (mentioned earlier) in which all living beings are inescapably enmeshed is nature (Kovel 2007: 95-120), or more broadly, the planetary ecosystem, which itself consists of numerous ecological subsystems. Most people have probably heard about the so-called ‘butterfly effect’, that goes more or less like this: ‘If a butterfly flaps its wings in China, it causes a hurricane in Brazil’. This saying is paradigmatic of the dynamics of complex systems; what it captures, is the ecosystemic interconnectedness of everything on planet Earth (an ‘ecology’ is an interconnected totality of components), as well as the fact that one tiny event may lead causally to a much larger event or events. If this sounds far-fetched, consider that signs of radioactive contamination of the sea after the Fukushima nuclear industrial accident in Japan a few years ago were detected on the American coast sometime later. It is not only human trade and culture that are globalised; everything that happens on the planet, from such accidents to natural occurrences, have effects that reverberate around the globe. This represents what one understands by
‘complexity’. The reason for such occurrences is – as already intimated above – that complex systems comprise interconnected totalities of elements and are characteristically ‘open’, instead of closed. As I learned years ago from my friend and complexity theorist, Paul Cilliers of Stellenbosch University – one of the most talented of South Africa’s philosophers until his untimely death not so long ago – one should distinguish between ‘complex’ and ‘complicated’ systems (Cilliers 1998: 3). A complicated system is something like the internal combustion engine of a motor car – it consists of many moving parts that work together ‘systematically’, so that if one breaks down, the operation of the machine as a whole would be negatively affected. But it does not change in relation to its environment by ‘adapting’ to it when the latter changes; that’s what makes it a ‘closed’ system. In fact, it would have been extremely beneficial to the planet if such machines did represent ‘open’ systems that respond to changes in their environment, and accordingly, adapted spontaneously to global warming by switching to the use of water as fuel, instead of petroleum! Cilliers (1998: 2-5) also provides a handy list of features encountered in complex systems, such as that they are open to their environment, comprise a large number of interacting elements, which change in the course of this non-linear interaction (so, the sand on a beach does not qualify as a complex system), that they have a history, and they function under conditions that are not in equilibrium – the latter, he points out, is synonymous with death (1998: 4).

What is important for the theme of this paper is that what makes complex systems so special, is not only that they usually comprise a large number of elements or components, but that they are ‘open’ in a double sense: first, they are open to the ‘influence’ of their environment, and secondly, every one of their component parts is open to changes in the system (even if it ‘is ignorant of the behaviour of the system as a whole’; Cilliers 1998: 4) – that is, it is affected by such changes. This is truly a case of ‘no borders’. So, for example, a social ecological subsystem such as a family (consisting of several individuals) is embedded in broader subsystems such as schools, urban, suburban or rural areas, which are (in their turn) situated in certain socio-economic contexts and specific kinds of culture. An individual in a family will unavoidably be affected by all the differences and changes in the broader subsystems in which they live – this is easily understood. Urie Bronfenbrenner’s well-known ecological theory for human development (so-called ‘develecology’; Shelton 2019), which focuses on the kind of relations involved
in social systems and subsystems like the ones referred to here (which, in their totality, he labelled ‘microsystems’, ‘mesosystems’, ‘exosystems’, ‘macrosystems’, ‘chronosystems’, and ‘ecosystem’, respectively; Shelton 2019: 11), encompasses human or social ecology, situated within an overarching ecological system, and shows how everything in (and ‘surrounding’) an individual’s life co-determines his or her relative well-being in complex ways. The complexity of a person’s insertedness in these overlapping subsystems can be gauged from Shelton’s succinct account of Bronfenbrenner’s schema for understanding it (Shelton 2019: 10):

Bronfenbrenner’s scheme is a system of concepts: the person exists in a system of relationships, roles, activities, and settings, all interconnected. Individual development takes place as the developing person ages, constructs an understanding of his or her experience, and learns to act effectively within the system in which she or he is participating. Simultaneously, the development of the person changes the system. The system changes because as a person develops, his or her actions change, and other people in the system therefore respond differently to the developing person. At the same time, the settings the person participates in are interrelated with each other and with other settings. As well, the settings are part of the culture in which the whole system of settings and the roles, relationships, and activities within them are embedded.

It is not difficult to grasp the virtually untraceable, constantly changing and increasing, number of interactions (and their effects) among people and settings that this involves. As in the case of the weather, where the principle of ‘sensitivity of initial conditions’ functions – which means that if one variable, for example temperature, or wind-direction, in existing weather conditions changes, the entire forecast for an area changes – Bronfenbrenner’s account of complex social conditions implies that every individual action in a social context has an effect on the actions of others, which, in turn, change the social context, and the latter, again, influences future actions of people involved. The current (February 2019) actions on the part of Donald Trump (the ‘president’ of the United States) regarding his obsession, to have a wall built between America and Mexico, are having a series of ‘effects’ on Democratic lawmakers, insofar as his actions provoke reactions on their part, which, again,
Bert Olivier

provoke reactions on his (and other Republicans’) part, as well as on members of the public in America and on politicians and the public in the rest of the world, and so on, and so on…Who can trace the complex, ever-growing web of actions and reactions in this process? And this is only one instance of an action on the part of one – albeit prominent – individual in the world!

One could refer to this complex phenomenon as an instance of the ‘social sublime’ too, which functions as an index of the general ‘complex’ structure of social relations in a community (and more broadly, society) (Olivier 1998). Unless those responsible for curriculum design were to consider the implications of such complex social interactions – and the implications of these with regard to the encompassing natural world, which is unavoidably affected by what human beings do, and reciprocally affect humans again in its changed condition (and so on, and on) – they would not do justice to the demands of a thorough, socially and naturally oriented education for the youth. So, for example, neither curricula in agriculture nor in sociology should/would be designed in a vacuum, but with full cognisance of the changing terrestrial climate, which is already affecting agricultural as well as social practices. The same goes for the problematical interface between university management and curricula in economics, which still tends to be predicated on an outdated neoliberal model that does not take endemic poverty into account, and which therefore fails to explain the grounds of student protests concerning economic exclusion. Only if it is recognised that there are ‘no borders’ between the various fields of human (and other living beings’) activities, can curricula be designed that would yield insight into desirable ways of negotiating these.

Poststructuralism and Complexity

One way of understanding complexity is to take note of the differences between modernism, postmodernism and poststructuralism, which are rooted in the ancient quarrel between Parmenides and Heraclitus. Parmenides argued that only being is, and becoming is not. Things of the world of perception, the world of the Many, of time and change, are subject to becoming, and therefore are not in the true sense. Only being, or the One, which cannot be perceived by the senses, but is apprehended exclusively through thinking, truly is. Heraclitus is reported as having argued exactly the opposite, namely that everything is subject to becoming, or change, as expressed in one of his
sayings, namely, ‘*panta rei*’ – ‘all is flux’. But they nevertheless *are*, according to him, because they are held in existence by what he called the *logos* (Melchert 1991: 17-26) – the way that the two ends of a bow are held together by the bowstring, and without which it could not be used in archery. Corresponding to these two extremes, modernism is a mode of thinking that attempts to locate *being* or a sense of permanence *within* the flux of existence by finding the One there, while postmodernism is content to abandon any sense of being in favour of the Many, *becoming* or flux. Poststructuralism steers a path between the two, ‘thinking them together’, or negotiating a course between the Scylla of sterile permanence and the Charybdis of incessant change, demonstrating in different ways that *being* and *becoming* cannot, or should not, be separated, and that each is limited by the other, in this way allowing change and stability to enter into a life-giving contract. This bringing-together, without synthesis or reconciliation, of *being* and *becoming* by poststructuralist thinkers has introduced complexity into the human sciences (because strictly speaking the two concepts are mutually exclusive), and it bears a resemblance to the so-called ‘indeterminacy (or uncertainty) principle’ in quantum mechanics, which states that one cannot measure, precisely, the velocity and the position of an electron orbiting the nucleus of an atom *at the same time*, not even in theory – the one excludes the other, and yet, both can be ‘thought’ together (see *Encyclopaedia Brittanica* 2019).

In the 19th century Charles Baudelaire formulated the difference between the modern and the postmodern (probably unwittingly) when he pointed out that what he called the ‘modern artist’ has a twofold task: *firstly*, to be receptive to all the endless change, particularity and transformation (the Many) around him or her, but *secondly*, to find and articulate that which is essential, permanent, lasting or universal (the One) *within* the perpetual flux of modern existence (Harvey 1989: 20). Although he did not use the terms, what he described corresponds to what are known, today, as the postmodern and the modern, respectively: poets, filmmakers, novelists, architects or artists who record, stress or capture incessant change or *becoming* in their work in innovative ways (absent any attempt to stabilise such becoming), are by that token postmodernists, while those who look for elements of *being* within the flux, or arrest it by different means, are by that token modernists. Needless to stress, there are many ways to effect either of these strategies in the different arts — in literature John Fowles used multiple endings (*The French Lieutenant’s Woman*; 1977) and telescoped narratives within narratives
Bert Olivier

*(Mantissa 1997)* in his novels as postmodernist devices, for example. It is true, however, that a closer inspection of a novel such as his *The Magus* (1983; see Olivier 2008) reveals a poststructuralist structure that interbraid being and becoming, not allowing either to prevail over the other. On the other hand, Virginia Woolf reveals her modernist temperament by using images of becoming, like the intermittent flash of light from a lighthouse (*To the Lighthouse*; 1994), or waves (*The Waves* 1959), in conjunction with preponderant ones of being, such as the never-changing nature of light itself, or of the ocean, which reveals itself in the epiphany of the recurrent lighthouse-beam, or the regularity of the waves breaking on the beach.

Søren Kierkegaard, too, generously gave us ‘models’ for conceptualising modernism, postmodernism and poststructuralism. In *Either/Or* (Volume 1, 1971: 281-288; Melchert 1991: 432 - 433; Olivier 2005) he distinguishes (and elaborates on) what he calls the ‘aesthetic model’ and the ‘ethical model’ (Kierkegaard 1971a: 141-142, 229, 276; Melchert 1991: 433-436), each of which corresponds to the structure of postmodernism and modernism, respectively. The aesthetic model is postmodernist, structurally speaking, in so far as Kierkegaard describes a mindset and corresponding practices that revel in identity fragmentation (becoming) and aesthetic enjoyment for its own sake (to combat boredom), with no ethical thrust towards a sense of identity (being). The character of A (the aesthete) learns that the method of ‘rotating crops’ is the best way to overcome the greatest enemy, namely, boredom, not by changing one’s surroundings as much as by changing one’s mindset. For example, instead of taking anything seriously, aesthetic ‘play’ is recommended — if you are at the opera, and by chance it is the same opera being staged as the one you saw elsewhere last week, you can change your pattern of enjoyment by coughing in time with the tympanum, or humming along with the strings, and if other members of the audience throw you glances of dismay, so much better; it makes things more interesting.

However, as the character of Judge William tells A in a series of letters (Kierkegaard 1971a), this approach to life means that one is different in every situation, and that your personality has no unifying integrity: you are no one, except a series of masks: the Many. This is the structure of the postmodern. Then Judge William goes on to recommend to A that, instead of this disintegrative lifestyle, he should marry, to combat the worst enemy of all, namely time (Kierkegaard 1971a: 141-142), by renewing your relationship.
with your spouse every day in an inventive way, which would not only prevent you from becoming bored with each other, but would impart a unifying integrity to your personality: the One. In short, you would make your life into a work of art, according to Judge William. This is the model for the modern work of art, as it is structurally characterised by unity, integrity and beauty.

But importantly, as far as complexity goes, Kierkegaard (1971a: 341-356; Olivier 2005) also anticipates, in an ingenious manner, the structural outlines of poststructuralism, where he talks of the ‘religious model’, although he does not follow it through, but eventually makes the switch to faith as a kind of ‘leap into darkness’. The suggestive part of the religious model emerges where he writes about how, no matter how much one tries to either practise the aesthetic enjoyment of the aesthetic model (postmodern) by distancing yourself from everything in order to manipulate it fragmentarily for the sake of ‘the interesting’, or (alternatively) dedicate oneself to the elaboration of a unified self through commitment to one’s loved one, integrating all experiences into a single, coherent totality (modern), you always fall between two stools in the ashes. In other words, in either case, as Kierkegaard intimates, you are guaranteed to find that you cannot practise the chosen way of life ‘perfectly’, without sometimes failing in your intentions. He points out that, as compared to God (who is infinite), we find that we are woefully fallible and finite, and that we cannot perfect whatever we set out to do. This marks the point where Kierkegaard introduces ways to accept one’s finitude in relation to an infinite God. However, I (for one) believe that we do not have to leap into faith (as Kierkegaard does), but simply learn the poststructuralist lesson, that we have to interbraid or negotiate what has usually been seen as binary opposites (being and becoming) between which we must choose (the ‘aesthetic’/postmodern or the ‘ethical’/modern way of living). In this way we do justice to the complexity of life, insofar as we acknowledge that no absolute choices between alternatives construed as ‘binary opposites’ (such as black and white, man and woman, heterosexual or homosexual, language or images, culture or nature) are possible; we have to ‘think them together’ insofar as they comprise different, but inescapably related, aspects of the complex fabric of social and natural reality.

Kierkegaard’s glimpse of complexity is recognisable here in his recognition that, regardless of which route one prefers to follow – the aesthetic (postmodern) or the ethical (modern) – in practice one ineluctably acts in accordance with both (poststructuralism) at different times, and our action can
therefore be understood in terms of the complex interweaving of structural elements of both the modern and the postmodern, even if, logically speaking, they are mutually exclusive. Anticipating complexity theory, such a proto-poststructuralist move acknowledges that what makes humans the beings they are, is their capacity to practice strategies of ‘becoming’ (flux, fragmentation, the Many), while simultaneously alternating between these and countervailing strategies of ‘being’ (stabilisation, coherence, the One) – or better, negotiating these two positions creatively. In other words, don’t choose – as Derrida (1978: 369-370) says, we are not in a position to – between the aesthetic (postmodern) and the ethical (modern) as if one is absolutely better than the other – or between the One and the Many, black and white, male and female, sensibility and intelligibility, writing or speech, the engineer or the bricoleur – something our culture has always encouraged us to do, believing that one of these pairs of opposites is somehow ‘better’ than the other, and establishing axiological hierarchies as a result. Learn to think them together, or approach them in a creative, re-configuring manner. Do not choose between nature and culture, for example, because that way death lies: we need both. This is a poststructuralist way of thinking — not the One or the Many, but the One and the Many. This way we learn to do justice to the richness of life. And this is what students have to discover through curricula structured in a manner that not only teaches them about such complexity, but in addition allows them to experience it in inventive ways, one of which is discussed below in relation to a novel that thematises social and natural complexity.

**Lacan and Human Complexity**

Thinking opposites together also enables one to do justice to human complexity, as one learns from psychoanalytical theorist, Jacques Lacan’s poststructuralist account of human subjectivity. According to Lacan (Evans 1996: 19-20), human subjectivity is not unitary, but precariously stretched between three registers or orders – those of the ‘real’, the imaginary and the symbolic. The first (the ‘real’) marks that order which surpasses language and iconicity (in which the infant subject is immersed ‘before’ it enters the imaginary and the symbolic). Secondly, the imaginary register is acquired when the subject starts recognising images (for instance the mother’s face, and crucially, its own image as her- or himself in the mirror). In the third place, the symbolic register of language as discourse (that is, language in the service of
power) is acquired by exchanging the ‘unary’ signifier of the imaginary (an image, that is) for the binary signifier of the symbolic (when one grasps that the world is linguistically structured in terms of binary relations such as empty/full, woman/man, black/white, intelligible/sensible, speech/writing, being/becoming, and so on). The complexity of Lacan’s theory emerges from the insight that, while every ‘healthy’ subject is psychically structured by the interlocking relationships among these three registers (if one lacks one of them, you would be psychotic by definition), they represent very different ‘conditions’, ‘positions’ or ‘states’ of subjectivity, and yet they all co-function through the psychic orientations and actions of the subject.

What I mean is this: the imaginary register is that of the ego or moi (me) – that is, where the subject’s sense of a more or less stable ‘identity’ (being) is located, while the symbolic (social) register instantiates that of the ‘I’ or je, from the perspective of which the subject speaks, which means that it does not reflect the ‘stable’ identity of the ego or moi, but instead the constantly shifting position (becoming) of the unconscious, un-objectifiable position which is presupposed by speaking. After all, the moment we try to focus on the ‘I’ who speaks, we transform it into the objectified ‘me’. The ‘real’, in turn, is that (in each subject) which is not susceptible to either the imaginary (being) or the symbolic (becoming), but surpasses both in an unpredictable fashion – it could be the ‘savage soul’ of childhood (Lyotard), or the ‘monster’ in you, but it could also be the unexpected ‘saint’. The human subject is therefore an amalgam of all three these irreconcilable psychic positions, which means that he or she is simultaneously ‘stable’ (being) and subject to the flux of language (becoming), as well as to something ineffable (the ‘real’). This represents a complex conception of humanity, given the tensions among these three registers of subjectivity.

How would it work in practice to understand individuals in these complex terms – which is the only way to understand them that does justice to being-human, and thus one that should be factored into the humanities’ curricula? It is therefore immensely relevant to curriculum design. Needless to emphasise, a study of psychology or of psychoanalysis (the two disciplines are not the same), as well as of literature, philosophy, sociology and anthropology would help students recognise the complex structural dynamics on the part of humans, and it is therefore imperative that curricula be designed with a view to accommodating these; even natural science-courses should be designed with this in mind, insofar as people would benefit from an awareness of being
inserted in complex natural ecosystems. In practice this would mean that – in addition to what was said earlier about the complex interactions among various subsystems in society, and picking up the initial thread of the complexity of a person – armed with Lacan’s three registers (but also with other models of thought that are predicated on complexity, such as Deleuze and Guattari’s; see Olivier 2017), the individual subject should be approached as a very complex entity indeed. In the course of the everyday existence of a person, she or he negotiates the differences and tensions among the three registers comprising their unique subjectivity in unpredictable ways, because every day brings new events, even in the course of a familiar routine.

For example, Elize, a second-year humanities student at a university, and doing well in all her subjects, meets an interesting young guy, Anthony – a third-year student in the biological sciences – in the student cafeteria. In the course of getting to know him better, she learns from him about the effect of climate change on species extinction, and starts looking at her own subjects with different eyes, for example Mary Shelley’s 19th-century Gothic novel, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (1818), which she no longer reads as an example of the genre of Romantic literature only, but as a prognostication, on Mary Shelley’s part, of the causal effects of modern science and technology on nature (Olivier 2018). Sharing this with Anthony, the two become conscientised, and join Greenpeace as well as other ecologically oriented organisations, which events, in turn, affect their relationships with their families, either affirmatively or negatively. In Lacanian terms, Elize’s ego or self, located in the imaginary register, was transformed by what she learned at the level of the symbolic, first through Anthony’s involvement with biology, and then through its effect on her reading of literature. This stirred in her a deep-felt, but in itself inexpressible affinity for nature at the level of the ‘real’, which, in turn, impelled her, as well as, under her influence, Anthony, to become conscientised and actively involved in promoting ecological interests, which they do at the symbolic (socially oriented) level of ecological discourse. And it does not stop there, because they are enmeshed in social subsystems from the level of the family and the community to that of the university, local as well as national (and perhaps even international) ecological organisations, and so on, at every level of which they influence people regarding action and activism, and are, reciprocally, influenced by the latter. The ever-increasing complexity of such a situation should be obvious.
Returning to the question of the curriculum in this regard, unless the complexity of individual subjects, as well as the complex interactions among individuals and different social subsystems be kept in mind in their design – treating them, including individual students and lecturers, in simplistic terms instead – the curricula involved would reflect a misleading (supposition of) simplicity, or even complicatedness, but would not do justice to the complex connections and transformations that occur daily in society as well as in nature, as the next section will illustrate. Unless the complexity of existing and future relations among all living beings, and between these and inorganic nature be factored into curricula, what students would learn, whether at school or at university, would be a serious distortion of the various aspects of the world that different disciplines pertain to (geography, economics, biology, physics, literature, sociology, psychology, or law, to mention only some).

Humans, Nature and the Dynamics of Complex Systems
All of the subsystems referred to above, including individual subjects (each of which instantiates a ‘[sub]system’ in the larger subsystem, society) are embedded – as intimated earlier – in the encompassing planetary ecosystem which we usually call ‘nature’, but can also be called the planetary bio-system if living beings are foregrounded (keeping in mind that these cannot be separated from inorganic nature’s meteorological and chemical properties). Not everyone in complexity studies seems to be keenly aware of the importance of recognising the unavoidable interface between human, social subsystems and non-human, natural subsystems as well as the most encompassing ecosystem, or what one can simply call ‘nature’, however, as is evident from what Peters writes about complexity and knowledge (Peters 2008: xiii):

Complexity as an approach to knowledge and knowledge systems now recognizes both the growth of global systems architectures in (tele)communications and information with the development of open knowledge production systems that increasingly rest not only on the establishment of new and better platforms (sometimes called Web 2.0), the semantic web, new search algorithms and processes of digitization but also social processes and policies that foster openness as an overriding value as evidenced in the growth of open source, open
access and open education and their convergences that characterize global knowledge communities that transcend borders of the nation-state. This seems to intimate new orders of global knowledge systems and cultures that portend a set of political and ethical values such as universal accessibility, rights to knowledge, and international knowledge rights to research results especially in the biosciences and other areas that have great potential to alleviate human suffering, disease and high infant mortality. Openness seems also to suggest political transparency and the norms of open inquiry, indeed, even democracy itself as both the basis of the logic of inquiry and the dissemination of its results.

Peters does allude to ‘the biosciences’ here, but the overall impression is one of preoccupation with ‘knowledge systems’ that are supposedly divorced from what they reflect or pertain to, namely social and natural reality. This creates an erroneous impression – the last thing that can be divorced from natural ecosystems is a ‘knowledge system’, of whatever kind. What better way to explain the functioning of complex systems – their dynamics – than with recourse to a specific work of fiction (a novel) that does acknowledge the complex connections or intertwinnings between social and natural ecosystems, which I have chosen to do for the additional reason of demonstrating how literature can be harnessed in the course of teaching a curriculum that is predicated on complexity. With misleading simplicity, the novel is called Flight Behaviour (2012), written by one of the world’s outstanding novelists, Barbara Kingsolver, also author of the powerful anti-colonial novel, The Poisonwood Bible (1999; see Olivier 2018a), which I could also have used here to demonstrate the workings of complex systems. Why ‘misleading simplicity’? Because both words, ‘flight’, and ‘behaviour’, like the visible tips of icebergs, hide a world of complex relations beneath or behind them.

On the one hand the title refers to the attempt, on the part of the main character, Dellarobia Turnbow – a gifted woman who never had the opportunity to go to college – to ‘flee’ from her suffocating housewife-life on a struggling (‘hillbilly’) farm in rural Tennessee with her husband, Cub, and two young children, Preston and Cordelia, despite her love for whom she still feels unsatisfied. In the first place the ‘behaviour’ indicates the way in which this initial attempt at ‘flight’ happens – a would-be assignation with a sexy telephone technician, in a hut on a forested mountain, which Dellarobia knows,
with a certain ‘rapture’ (or recklessness), would probably tear her and her family’s life apart, but does not really care as she struggles up the mountain side dressed in the most inappropriate (because chosen for sex-appeal) clothes.

Only…the tryst does not happen, because of an exemplary enactment of Lacan’s dictum, ‘The letter always arrives at its destination’ (Evans 1996: 103), meaning: under certain circumstances an event, functioning as if it were a (mute) ‘letter’, will appear to be addressed specifically to the person experiencing the event, which demands interpretation because of the ‘structural’ position of the recipient, in this case Dellarobia. In Dellarobia’s case this ‘structural position’ (or cause) of experiencing the event as a (mute) ‘letter’ to be interpreted, is unconscious guilt as a married woman, for what she is about to do, and she experiences the event, when it overpowers her, like a ‘Moses and the burning bush’ kind of happening. The event addresses her as a transfixing ‘interpellation’ (a peremptory ‘legal interruption’ of sorts, or perhaps as an instance of the Kantian ‘mathematical sublime’, which defies imagination; Kant 1969: 99-107 ), and assumes the guise of what seems like a forest being aflame in its entirety, and yet not burning, ostensibly emitting undulating orange waves. This has the effect on Dellarobia of inducing in her the firm belief that it is a kind of quasi-divine ‘message’ or command, addressed specifically to her, to turn around, ditch the sexual assignation with the hunk, and go home, which is what she does. The ‘structural position’ on which Dellarobia’s interpretation of the event as a divinely sanctioned forest ‘aflame’ is predicated, and which is an index of the complex relations in which her life is inscribed, is evident where Kingsolver (2012: 19-21) writes that:

No words came to her that seemed sane. Trees turned to fire, a burning bush. Moses came to mind, and Ezekiel, words from Scripture that occupied a certain space in her brain but no longer carried honest weight, if they ever had. Burning coals of fire went up and down among the living creatures…

She was on her own here, staring at glowing trees. Fascination curled itself around her fright. This was no forest fire. She was pressed by the quiet elation of escape and knowing better and seeing straight through to the back of herself, in solitude. This was not just another fake thing in her life’s cheap train of events, leading up to this day of sneaking around in someone’s thrown-away boots. Here that ended. Unearthly beauty had appeared to her, a vision of glory to stop her in
the road. For her alone these orange boughs lifted, these long shadows became a brightness rising. It looked like the inside of joy, if a person could see that. A valley of lights, an ethereal wind. It had to mean something.

What it turns out to mean, in the end, after an initial perception of the phenomenon as being some divine revelation – as its ‘presence’ on the Turnbow farm gradually filters through the religious (and superstitious) little community of the surrounding area – is that it is a colossal migrating column of about fifteen million Monarch butterflies, displaced from their usual area for overwintering in Mexico, to the cold Appalachian mountains of Tennessee. This is the second meaning of the eponymous ‘flight behaviour’. (It is possible that Kingsolver wrote this novel on the topic of migrating butterflies to hint at complexity, because of what is called the ‘butterfly effect’, referred to earlier.) What Kingsolver therefore deftly weaves into the narrative, so subtly that some readers may not comprehend that it constitutes the indispensable ‘spine’ of the plot, as it were, is the phenomenon euphemistically referred to as ‘climate change’, but whose more accurate name is ‘global warming’. The latter is virtually a swear word in certain quarters, including that of Donald Trump, the current presidential embarrassment of America. And one of the strongest ‘messages’ of the novel – one most pertinent for curriculum studies – is that human beings are doing their children a grave disservice by not making an awareness of, and thorough information on, the causes and likely effects of global warming the mainstay of the curriculum. This applies first of all to the science (particularly biology) curriculum, of course, but ultimately across the board to all disciplines. This novel by Barbara Kingsolver should be taught in every school in the world, given its lucidity, its passion, and its canny focus on the oft-denied effects of ‘climate change’.

Returning to *Flight Behaviour*, the point about the butterflies bears repeating, given its symptomatic significance: *they should not be there*, so far away from the places where they are usually found – somewhere between relatively warm Mexico, where they hibernate in winter, and cold Canada, a distance of about 4000 kilometres, that they fly annually (see ‘Millions of Monarch Butterflies’ under References). Their arrival in the cold Appalachians, instead of the warm forests of Mexico, could mean their extinction, a possibility that gives Dr Ovid Byron – the leading lepidopterist (an entomologist specialising in butterflies) authority on Monarchs in the
world, who travels to Tennessee to study the incongruous appearance of Monarch butterflies on the Turnbow farm – and Dellarobia (who gets to know, understand, and identify with him) sleepless nights. To highlight its human import, Kingsolver has set this tale of two kinds of ‘flight behaviour’ in the context of the most consistently ignored – despite being increasingly evident – phenomenon of our time, namely climate change. She dramatically weaves the fate of the butterflies together with that of Dellarobia, her children, husband, parents-in-law and extended community of Feathertown, and by implication, the rest of all living beings in the world, which comprises precisely the kind of overarching complex system discussed earlier. In the process of reading this riveting novel one discovers the contrast between denialism, represented by the largely ignorant community of Feathertown (but also further afield), and informed, albeit revisable (because of the complexities involved) scientific knowledge, represented by Dr Byron and his entomological colleagues. The latter eventually include Dellarobia, whose life changes fundamentally because of her incremental involvement with the Monarchs and their fate. If parents or teachers want to employ outstanding literature to teach students about the implications and consequences of climate change (a ‘complex’ phenomenon), this is the kind of literature they should teach. It would contribute to erasing ignorance (like that of Donald Trump and his ilk) in favour of openness to knowledge, which will, in turn, help one prepare for an increasingly uncertain future.

To demonstrate what I mean by this, consider that, at one point in the narrative, Dr Byron ‘loses his cool’ altogether because of the tendency of the media to distort accurate scientific information about the effects of climate change in order to assuage its possible alarming impact upon viewers, and affect their own ratings negatively to boot. This occurs when he is interviewed for a television programme by a person who wants to share only the ‘beauty of the butterflies’ on the Turnbow farm with viewers (in her quest for good viewer-ratings), instead of bringing them insight into what the butterflies’ anomalous presence in the Appalachians are symptomatic of. When she finally concedes that ‘something new is happening here’, following this admission with the obvious question, ‘do you think it might possibly be a sign of some deeper problem with the ecology?’ he can restrain himself no longer, and shouts at her (Kingsolver 2012: 504):

Yes! .... A problem with the environment, is what you’re trying to say.
Pervasive environmental damage. This is a biological system falling apart along its seams. Yes…

Unseasonable temperature shifts, droughts, a loss of synchronization between foragers and their host plants [A reference to the Monarchs; BO]. Everything hinges on the climate.

Still intent on rescuing the interview for her television programme, the interviewer, Tina Ultner, attempts to insert the usual disingenuous, neoconservative uncertainty or doubt into the interview by remarking that (Kingsolver 2012: 505): ‘Scientists of course are in disagreement about whether this is happening, and whether humans have a role’. However, Dr Byron is quick to repudiate her (2012: 505-507):

I’m afraid you’ve missed the boat, Tina. Even the most recalcitrant climate scientists agree now, the place is heating up. Pretty much every one of the lot…

What scientists disagree on now, Tina, is how to express our shock. The glaciers that keep Asia’s watersheds in business are going right away. Maybe one of your interns could Google that for you. The Arctic is genuinely collapsing. Scientists used to call these things the canary in the mine. What they say now is, The canary is dead. We are at the top of the Niagara Falls, Tina, in a canoe. There is an image for your viewers. We got here by drifting, but we cannot turn around for a lazy paddle back when you finally stop pissing around. We have arrived at the point of an audible roar. Does it strike you as a good time to debate the existence of the falls?

Needless to say, the interview is not aired on the television station concerned, but Dellarobia’s techno-canny friend, Dovey, who recorded the whole affair audiovisually on her smartphone, promptly posts it online on YouTube for the whole (connected) world to witness what the true position of science on global warming amounts to. This is a bow, on Kingsolver’s part, to one of the advantages of the internet (not used sufficiently), namely, to utilise it for critical purposes, instead of exclusively for the dominant, overly narcissistic indulgence of personal ‘profile enhancement’ by posting selfies on one’s Facebook page, for example (sometimes with pathological consequences; see Yahoo Lifestyle Team 2019).
In sum, what the novel orchestrates in fictional terms – fictional, but rooted in social and natural reality– amounts to the narrative enactment of complex relations: those between Dellarobia, her husband, children and other family members, her best friend (Dovey), and the community members with whom they interact; between Dellarobia and Dr Byron, as well as his graduate students (which is a life-changing interaction for her); between the endangered butterflies and their incongruous new environment, as well as, by implication, their ‘natural’ environment (in Canada and Mexico) where they have flourished for millennia, but which has been thrown out of kilter by climate change; and between these butterflies and the humans who marvel at them, and study them, and learn from their plight that their own (human) destiny is intricately and intimately intertwined with that of the butterflies via the complex planetary causality that enmeshes them all. Moreover, the lesson Kingsolver teaches one – if you don’t already know it – is that through all these interactions, everyone and everything involved is changed.

Conclusion: Literary Fiction and the Curriculum
As this discussion of Kingsolver’s novel shows, literary fiction is an exemplary genre for highlighting something as critically important as climate change or global warming – not only because it demonstrates the dynamics of complex subsystems, but also of their interaction in an even more encompassing ecological arena – in this case the interaction of human social systems with natural ecosystems involving insect migration and bio-degradation (pertaining to the milkweed the Monarchs need for feeding and procreation, as well as the forests where they hibernate, which are often destroyed by logging practices). This may be fiction, but it dramatises the dynamics being enacted on a daily basis in the extant world, and because it exudes passion at various levels of character engagement, it is likely to address students more powerfully than a scientific textbook, regardless of the latter’s accuracy and informational value. It should be supplemented by scientific study, and vice versa, of course – that goes without saying. And curricula should allow for such supplementation.

Unless curricula are systematically designed with a view to accommodating an awareness, and recognition, of the fact that human lives are ineluctably inscribed within complex systems which interact in (often untraceable) complex patterns, the teaching of an exemplary novel such as *Flight Behaviour* would perhaps impart a consciousness of such complexity to
students, but would not serve its purpose fully. Such an aim would, or should, be to demonstrate that it dovetails with the manner in which other disciplines are (also) taught – an approach that is predicated on the complex interrelations among disciplines, in the first place, which, in turn, mirrors the complex interrelations among all the various subsystems comprising the overarching ecosystem on the planet which is our home, and which is in imminent peril. The reason why it is in peril is the same as the reason for the urgency of introducing complexity systematically into curricula: because there are no borders. Everything is (inter-)connected, and therefore affected when change takes place in any subsystem of the totality of systems.

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ARTICLES

Nyna Amin and Rubby Dhunpath  Editorial: Curriculum without Borders: Transdisciplinary, Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Teaching in Higher Education .................................. 1

Desire Chiwandire  Universal Design for Learning and Disability Inclusion in South African Higher Education Curriculum ................................................................. 6

Bothwell Manyonga and Sindile Ngubane-Mokiwa  Curriculum Development: An Enriched Approach for Twenty-First Century Open Distance ........................................ 37

Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo  The Organic Crisis and Epistemic Disobedience in South African Higher Education Curricula: Making Political Science ......................... 65

Benita Bobo and Jacqueline Akhurst  ‘Most Importantly, It’s Like the Partner Takes More Interest in Us’: Using Ubuntu as a Fundamental Ethic of CE Partnerships at Rhodes University ........................................................................................................ 88

Fayth Ruffin  Indigenisation and Africanisation of Legal Education: Advantaging Legal Pluralism in South Africa .................................................................................. 111

Belinda Verster, Karen Collett and Carolien van den Berg  Creative Meaning-Making through a Multimodal, Interdisciplinary Exploration: LC Enhancement ................................ 139

Bert Olivier  ‘No Borders’ and Complexity .............................................................................. 161

Contributors .......................................................................................................................... 185

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