

Curriculum transformation: A case in South Africa

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Abstract

Despite the worldwide interest in transforming curricula, there have been limited case study examinations of what really happens within an open distance and e-learning (ODEL) South African university context. By using the psychosocial and social identity theories, we highlight the complexities involved in transforming decades of teaching and learning practices. The reports from five colleges highlighted three key themes, namely curriculum responsiveness, decolonisation and identity issues. From these we developed a framework to help capture some of the complexities, identified implications and charted a new direction for future studies within the South African post-colonial and post-apartheid arena.

Keywords: ODeL; curriculum, transformation, social, identity, teaching and learning.

1. Introduction

Whilst the important role that universities play in contributing to developed and developing countries citizens' educational, socio-political and economic emancipation has been highlighted (Freire, 1996) previous studies have noted South Africa's educational development in this area (Botha, 2002). The challenges of curriculum transformation are global (West, 2014) but the educational crisis in balancing teaching and learning content and its transformation have received limited attention (Mendy, 2018b; Spaul, 2013). Despite research highlighting the usefulness of curriculum transformation in society, localised higher education (HE) settings in which such renewal occurs have mostly gone unnoticed (Denson & Bowman, 2013). The South African ODeL education context is one of the key neglected examples.

Curriculum transformation, referred to as curriculum reform or renewal, includes changes made to teaching and learning content (Esakov, 2009; Clark, 2002; Shay, 2015). The term/concept also refers to the practices and processes that higher education institutions (HEIs) use as part of their social responsibility, engaging with and responding to concerns and problems such as the need for Africanisation (West, 2017). However, the extent to which curriculum transformation really affects the lives of people in localised contexts and addresses the Africanisation problem remains an undeveloped area. Although one would like to think that aspects such as teaching and learning (T&L), research and innovation (R&I) and community engagement (CE) and partnership may resolve curriculum transformation-related problems linked to capacity development and identity issues (Alderuccio, 2010), there is no available framework in the education transformation literature to show how this can be done in an ODeL situation in South Africa (see Figure 1 as an attempt to capture the various aspects).

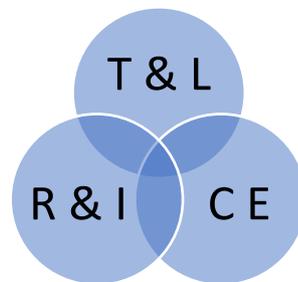


Figure 1. South African University's teaching and research plan

The implementation of curriculum transformation lies at the heart of Figure 1. It involves teaching and learning, research investment and engagement and curriculum emancipation for all stakeholders (Watson *et al.*, 2011; Jongbloed *et al.*, 2008). Some reasons for reforming teaching and learning include addressing the wider challenges faced by the country, the market environment and education stakeholders clamouring for change. Such an approach is expected to address a (potential) developmental crisis (MacKinnon, 2011; Nakabugo & Siebörger, 2001) both locally (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Chisholm, 2005) and internationally (Savage & O'Connor, 2015). Despite the plethora of research on human resources and governance issues that also need to be developed within HEIs (Igwe *et al.*, 2019; Ramrathan *et al.*, 2016; Phillips *et al.*, 2013), the “communities of transformation” that are being advocated for are not resource proof (Kezar *et al.*, 2018) to achieve what is being wished for if such transformation is to have significant value in its reach and scope (Lotz-Sisitka & Lupele, 2015; Higgs, 2016).

By using the theoretical foundation of the psychosocial theory, we examine curriculum reform in the context of South Africa to see what Africanisation (i.e. a renewed focus on using the curriculum to transform Africa (Horsthemke, 2004; Chikoko, 2016; Msila & Gumbo, 2016)

means in the South African context and how it has been used to extend Erikson's (1963) and Karkouti's (2014) psychosocial identity development theory. By so doing, we contribute to Hogg's (2016), Jenkins's (2014) and Burford's (2012) social identity theory (see literature review for details). To contribute to the literature, a framework is developed to better understand the process of implementing curriculum reform in a local African context. We contribute to a deeper understanding of psychosocial theoretical issues in teaching and learning by showing how infusing African epistemologies and philosophies into programme and qualification mixtures (PQMs) helps in demonstrating the creation of a new post-colonial and post-apartheid South African social identity through various transformations in 1) pedagogy; 2) scholarship; 3) epistemologies; 4) student-centredness and 5) monitoring and evaluation practices (see the driver-outcome-based curriculum transformation framework in Figure 2). This socio-education framework is the paper's main contribution to the contested and fragmented nature of curriculum transformation within the South African environment (Lockett, 2016; Mendy, 2018a; Banks, 2001; Msila & Gumbo, 2016).

2. Literature review

This paper's theoretical foundation is based on curriculum transformation issues, some of which partly include, but are not restricted to, an infusion of culture, customs, practices and languages into curriculum design and implementation (Nakabugo & Siebörger, 2001). Although scholars such as Webb (2017), among others, believe that the attempt to deliberately ignore these issues led to the marginalisation and exclusion of African epistemologies and knowledge systems from educational practices and HE systems in Africa, others opine that such omission should not be misconstrued to imply that Western and European epistemologies should not still be incorporated in African epistemologies and curriculum transformation (Kayira, 2015). Those who subscribe to this inclusivity approach therefore believe that education provision is firmly anchored in the intellectual and cultural environment of the communities in which they are situated (Odora-Hoppers, 2002; Le Grange, 2004; Maweu, 2011). However, we do not know whether a framework that helps in understanding the complexities and potential ways of resolving them within a localised environment exists. Msila and Gumbo (2016) postulate that infusion of indigenous African epistemologies into the curriculum will enable educators and learners to gain confidence and a sense of pride in what they do especially in contexts with a colonial past such as South Africa's. However, infusing African epistemologies in curricula does not necessarily highlight the extent to which local citizens show inclusivity nor does it identify a localised transformation. Highlighting the benefits of ideas such as Ubuntu and communalism (Kaphagawani, 2000; Moruve 2009) has not totally addressed the challenges associated with Africanisation and localised inclusivity nor has it clarified some of the complexities of curriculum transformation. Additional recommendations

such as humanism (Mabovula, 2011), for example, have not fully explained the difficulties faced by curriculum transformation implementers, including how people cooperate (Karlberg, 2004) or even whether spirituality (Donald *et al.*, 2012) might play a role in developing what is essential: that is, a framework to help practicalise the Africanisation and inclusivity recommended. In order to examine what else might help answer the research question and achieve the study's aim, the authors examine curriculum transformation using Erikson's (1963) psychosocial perspective to ascertain the nature of the curriculum developmental process to achieve change and see whether identity plays a role in this transformation. Other aspects related to our main theoretical anchor are also captured using the cognitive-structural and social identity theory from a pedagogic and change perspective (Mendy, 2018b). Such a theoretical selection has been made based on the need to understand what the local issues are and how these have been addressed to achieve curriculum transformation and Africanisation simultaneously.

2.1 Psychosocial theory

Erikson (1963) was the first among a group of successive scholars to develop a psychosocial model highlighting the importance of being able to surmount conflicts, similar to the challenges associated with Africanising and localising teaching and learning within curriculum transformation. He introduced a stage approach to personal growth and linked identity development with broader community values and culture, history and way of life (Hoare, 1991). Psychosocial theory has been extended to focus on personal and interpersonal issues influencing learners' life (Evans *et al.*, 1998). The theory proposed the need for internal psychological change to occur as individuals respond to conflicts/clashes between external social demands and internal capacity to deal with challenges. Some of the external demands associated with curriculum transformation include, for example, the need to decolonise the South African curricula by infusing African methodologies and epistemologies in line with Africanisation and inclusion. However, proponents of the theory have been quick to point to a psychological crisis because of change, leading to a positive or negative impact on behaviour, feelings, thinking and interpersonal interactions (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Similarly, Erikson (1963) and Evans *et al.* (1998) view these as vital stages of development and adopt a sequential approach to transformation as a way to understand some of the apparently conflicting issues raised. Although they noted wider societal cultural influence in bringing about the changes needed for localisation, they missed students' development of competence, the way learners manage emotions and changing identities as they navigate curriculum transformation (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Most proponents of psychosocial development focus on the effects of the support needed on challenges such as transitions, career

development changes and interpersonal relationship hurdles (Elder, 1995) but neglect local identity issues that cultural interference could evoke.

Implied in psychosocial theory are aspects of equality and equity in education although these are not explicitly enunciated in the concept. Some students have unique personal and societal issues and need institutional as well as personal support to succeed as they deal with identity and psychosocial problems. It has been ascertained from literature that students with disabilities or from certain disadvantaged communities face unique challenges that can be addressed through universal instructional design (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The possibility for such students to exhibit lower competence in some areas compared to their colleagues is greater especially when the required support or a strong sense of agency are lacking. However, the identity, psychosocial and competency related issues of students from more advantageous backgrounds and communities are not included in the theorising. Therefore, psychosocial theory highlights the importance of inclusion in curriculum transformation implementation but only from a single (i.e. non-complex) perspective. Next, we examine cognitive-structural theory.

2.2 Cognitive-structural theory

Cognitive-structural theory focuses on individual reasoning/thinking processes to describe changes experienced at the individual level (Evans *et al.*, 1998). According to its proponents, intellectual development is influenced by heredity and environmental factors. In other words, the individual must have some innate capability to deal with challenges including universities' curriculum transformation. In this respect, this aspect of the concept has sought to develop psychosocial theory's lack of explicit emphasis on individual competence. Evans *et al.* (Evans *et al.*, 1998) identified sequences that individuals go through as they try to (re)organise and (re)shape their environments in their individualised effort to become competent in order to deal with the challenges that Africanisation and inclusivity may pose.

Cognitive-structural theorists suggest that people first endeavour to make sense of the current situations when confronted with new information before developing new strategies for their change and competence development (Evans *et al.*, 1998). However, other developments, namely intellectual, epistemological, moral and the ability to reflect (Magolda, 1992; Kohlberg, 1976) has been the extended focus of other scholars who believe that students' complexity of cognitive reasoning influences their learning and ability (i.e. the competence) to change (Magolda, 1992).

Proponents of the theory who lean towards the moral strand ascertain that students make sense of moral dilemmas that may be associated with curriculum transformation in different ways (Kohlberg, 1976) thereby highlighting why some students may cheat for grades (Evans

et al., 2004). Although achieving higher grade bands may show a student's mastery of a new curriculum and their competent development in it, proponents who highlight the importance of a person's spiritual development such as Fowler (1981) underscore why some people within an instructional design or learning environment change might develop a greater sense of self-acceptance rather than self-competence as others. However, researchers leaning towards self-evolution suggest that people develop a sense of self as a result of interacting with others (Banks, 2001), thereby explaining how students deal with situational challenges and their broader expectations within fluctuating situations (Watson *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, individuals rely heavily on others for their self-worth in the earlier stages of their development rather than on a structured curriculum transformation. Cognitive-structural theory proponents point to mechanisms of support needed to embrace change whilst self-actualisation/worth could be dependent on other aspects that have not been captured by cognitive structural theorists. The social aspects related to actualisation are discussed next.

2.3 Social identity theory

Social identity theory reminds us about the broader frame through which people understand their wider social identities (Hogg, 2016) via constructs such as gender, culture, race/ethnicity and class and what roles these may play in multiple identities (Atkinson *et al.*, 1998; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; D'Augelli, 1994; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). Given their variances and contextual dissimilarities, national, geographic and cultural environments have been used to explain why identities may change especially in transformation contexts (Jones & McEwen, 2000). However, structural hierarchies (i.e. in terms of privilege and oppression) such as the ones that existed in apartheid South Africa are not fully accounted for in explaining identity construction and change within a localised curriculum transformation context. In order to help explain this anomaly, power relationships between and amongst individuals are examined although the shaping of people's perceptions within their wider socio-political contexts has only been partially explored (Nakabugo & Siebörger, 2001). Proponents of the theory signal multiple identities influenced by socially and individually lived experiences and the way these may be of benefit to change processes (Jenkins, 2014). As such social identity theory provides us with insights into wider socio-cultural processes that may influence individual identity development and how transformation may occur (Kezar *et al.*, 2018). One such example is Atkinson *et al.*'s (1998) minority identity theory that focuses on how minorities measure their capability against those considered as the majority. Again, Atkinson *et al.* (1998) adopt the stage/sequential approach to highlight attitudes needed for identity recognition but the emphasis is on a non-complex, individualised competency development. However, on their own, these theories do not actually indicate what type of framework might resolve curriculum transformation issues within a localised context.

3. Methodology

In 2018 the University of South Africa (or Unisa) conducted a curriculum renewal programme with the aim of reshaping students' learning. The University of South Africa is the largest in the country with the bulk of its students from South Africa while a minority of students come from other parts of the world. The slightly more than 30% academics come from seven colleges namely Law; Accounting; Education; Life, Science, Engineering and Technology; Business, Economics and Management (the largest with over 25% of total student numbers). All staff representing all the institution's schools, with the exception of the School of Business, were involved in the education renewal exercise because the university wanted to obtain as wide a spectrum of viewpoints on curriculum transformation as possible to gauge impacts of reforms (Higgs, 2016), internally and externally (Niehaus & Williams, 2016).

The study's research design is a qualitative case study. This is described in the literature as investigating a real-life or organisational phenomenon (see Yin 2003). Yin's (1994) proposal to initially identify a research question before proceeding to propose a research objective has been adhered to in this study (see introduction). Such research procedure compliance has also been acknowledged by Miles and Huberman (1994) as part of a necessary step that can lead to the identification and analysis of appropriate and relevant literature in order to contribute to the issues relating to curriculum transformation. This paper's research question and objective pointed the authors to the examination of the psychosocial theory to see what it can contribute to a localised curriculum transformation context (MacKinnon, 2011; Msila & Gumbo, 2016). The socio-political aspects of curriculum transformation and South Africa's colonial and apartheid past (Nakabugo & Siebörger, 2001) warrant the selection of the theoretical and methodological frameworks. Such a combination necessitated collecting data of a case study type (i.e. the study's set of curriculum transformation reports from seven colleges) and identifying the analytical frame best suited. This procedure helped in contextualising the information received iteratively (Lewis, 1998) and in meaningfully (Husserl, 1965) developing themes following such a case study protocol (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

A case study affords the opportunity to probe deep into a situation to find out how people experienced (Jones & McEwan, 2000) or are experiencing a problem (e.g. a HEI confronting the challenges of curriculum transformation (Darcy *et al.*, 2014) and the stages for maintaining some identity (Erikson, 1963). The justification of the case study is further premised on the desire to investigate the fundamental factors behind the South African university's quest to break from its past pedagogic orientation to an Africanised one (Higgs, 2016). To do so we examined seven colleges' commissioned curriculum reports in April 2019 to understand what the curriculum transformation issues were (Mendy, 2018b). The meaning-making process

included a process of interpreting the reports obtained from the colleges as part of what Schutz (1967) highlighted as fundamentally crucial in case study methodology and finding the subjective meanings of individuals/participants involved (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). These subjective meanings are the ones that motivate and trigger people's actions on a wider social issue that has the potential of transformation (Freire, 1996) or in Higgs's (2016) words "renaissance". Qualitative data analysis helped in exploring subjective meanings within natural, real-life settings. The aim of adopting a qualitative research approach was to explore the social meanings of individuals and groups on phenomena in situ. Qualitative research facilitated the explanation of subjectivities and was therefore appropriate for case studies and secondary sources of data (college reports), where people may have chosen to interpret their immediate realities. In the present study, the reports provided the springboard for our education transformation process and framework contribution within a local context. However, the case study methodology does not allow for generalisations to other contexts.

Content analysis was used to give readers an impression of what happened at the university. The aim of doing so was to identify the intentions of the respective colleges' staff members and how the emerging areas signalled actions taken to deal with the challenges. By using the two predominant content analyses of concepts (i.e. how often a concept appears in the reports) and their relation (checking whether there are any relations between the ideas/concepts) a framework was developed to help understand the curriculum transformation issues. However, concepts outside of the paper's methodological and theoretical frame could not be used to make sense of the localised data. Each type of analysis may lead to different results, conclusions, interpretations and meanings. Based on Driscoll *et al.* (2007), qualitative data analysis through content analysis was adopted because of its appropriateness in raising contextual issues within a specific ODeL case at the University of South Africa to see whether a thematic pattern may arise. This is fundamental to this study as previous studies have not done so in the South African context.

3.1 South African context

Curriculum transformation research is a global issue (Watson *et al.*, 2011). Most of it has focused on attempts to deal with challenges locally or globally (Alderuccio, 2010; Webb, 2017). Whilst certain HE providers have enjoyed some success as a result of the positive steps taken in reconfiguring a nation's identity through curriculum transformation (Pollard *et al.*, 2013; Hogg, 2016), a good number still struggle owing to poor management (Coleman *et al.*, 2003) and a framework-lag. When changes to pedagogy and teaching and learning content are being executed, it is anticipated that universities and colleges will have identified a process of resolving their wider socio-economic and political challenges irrespective of where they may

be located (Phillips *et al.*, 2013). Research in this area seems to suggest that this can happen in emerging economies (Higgs, 2016) with massive constraints on resources although we are yet to be enlightened how this happens locally (Hong & Lu, 2016). These aspects are of crucial importance, especially in South Africa given its political and historical legacy of colonialism, apartheid and the emerging multicultural, developing environment with heavy dependence on services provided by the third sector, including universities and colleges. The findings from universities and colleges in developed countries are not used in this paper as they are not considered advantageous in achieving our study objective (Botha, 2002). However, due recognition is given regarding research that looked at attempts to resolve curricula crises more broadly although localisation and inclusivity are generally neglected (Spaull, 2013; Le Grange, 2016).

Whilst the challenges faced by the respective colleges are highlighted, an attempt is made to note the types of reforms in each of the colleges in the South African ODeL institution under study in efforts to see the extent to which an Africanised curriculum may have led to developing further understanding of Africanisation and inclusivity. A framework highlighting the key issues was developed to show what has been contributed to the open distance and e-learning university context (Erikson, 1963; Karkouti, 2014, West, 2014; Hogg, 2016) (see Figure 2).

Although the South African context has unique political, economic, social and cultural needs due to its history to provide justification for curriculum transformation, it still has to deal with fundamental psychosocial, identity and pedagogical issues identical to Erikson's (1963) and Freire's (1996). South African HEIs have begun to implement curriculum transformation partly because the educational system the country inherited from its colonial legacy has been thought not to be responsive to the needs of the country and its students' teaching and learning experiences. Additionally, the transformation being yearned for in the South African educational system has, historically speaking, not accommodated or kept pace with changes in technology, the role of the student in the implementation of pedagogies that are aligned with the country's changes in politics, the type of language, history and student participation to be included as part of the change. Although South African academics are developing teaching and learning curricula that contribute to their society, achieving and sustaining a dignified life for all Africans is beset with fundamental political and social constraints. Such transformation involves decolonising the curriculum (i.e. reforming teaching and learning to address local and current economic and socio-political challenges).

4. Data analysis

We conducted content analysis of the collected data to ascertain what the themes were, how recurrent they became and what relationships may have emerged (if any). Overall, there were

three themes derived from the data via an iterative research question-research objective-qualitative case study material analysis process involving three other independent researchers. This was done for data credibility and reliability purpose as advised by Guest *et al.* (2012). In order to conduct the analysis, the researchers looked at the drivers for curriculum transformation, including the various colleges' renewal of teaching and assessment practices, African epistemologies and philosophies, being student-centred, and monitoring and evaluation strategies in each of the colleges.

4.1 Limitations

This paper's limitations include the fact that only one South African HEI was part of the study and thus the study findings and analysis are non-generalisable to other HEIs faced with similar challenges in developed countries for example. The authors examined psychosocial, cognitive and social identity as a theoretical foundation although other education models and theories abound (Thomas *et al.*, 2016). Their analysis could have led to other vistas into curriculum reform (Watson *et al.*, 2011) although the social aspects needed highlighting and exploring given the contextual setting of South Africa.

5. Findings

The paper's findings are reported here. The case study methodology of the previous section provides the basis for relative analytical depth. The meaning-making entails what the respective colleges did as they responded to the need for curriculum reform in the South African context in the tradition of Schutz (1967) and Husserl (1965). Three themes are reported that highlighted the actions of the colleges in responding to their challenges (see Table 1) and the form that the curriculum reforms took (see Table 2 below). The initial analysis of the reports revealed the following seven themes, namely, 1) decolonising the curriculum, 2) student support, 3) technology-enhanced teaching and learning, 4) reinventing assessment through alternate assessment systems, 5) excellence in quality assurance, 6) student retention and throughput and 7) student access and accessibility. The themes were narrowed to three, namely 1) curriculum responsiveness, 2) decolonising curriculum content and 3) practical pedagogy, as these encapsulated the nature of the reforms and the overall process for its successful implementation (see thematic categorisations and process involved hereunder).

The reforms were initiated to achieve pedagogic renewal and review of respective college programmes. At the same time, academics were tasked with an intensification of research into their teaching and development of novel assessment and feedback mechanisms in such ways that helped boost graduate employability and enhanced the Africanisation of the learning content (Higgs, 2016). These activities invited greater scrutiny in the form of monitoring and

evaluation from the management to ensure relevance of programmes delivered and collaborative partnerships among faculty as well as between academics and their immediate local communities. Activities such as supervision and mentoring of academics constituted a new type of internal scholarship development that all colleges were expected to carry out. It could be discerned from these responses/actions that each college was developing a new language that they thought might help communicate their willingness to cooperate with the management whilst signalling individual college responses to the challenges they each faced internally and externally (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Challenges faced by colleges and actions taken during curriculum transformation

Colleges	Challenges	Actions
Law	Encourage collaboration & inclusivity	Offer new undergraduate modules, monitor & evaluate progress
Accounting	Make curriculum Africa-relevant & boost employability	Teach employability skills, infuse African content in teaching materials
Education	Greater teaching-informed research, encourage peer teaching	Review teaching and learning practices, assessment and feedback & develop new glossaries
Economics & Management	Change modules & college operations & facilitate student-led approaches	Introduce variety of assessment methods, develop new modules and change delivery patterns
Life, Science, Engineering & Technology	Adopt a mixed approach & ensure quality programmes	Review doctorate provision & introduce quality enhanced programmes

The themes appeared to highlight a new type of social identity that the university, through its seven colleges, was adopting in line with Hogg's (2016) and West's (2014) notion of transformative learning via social identity. The reports suggested that the university appeared to adopt a moral anchor in its education provision as part of their new identity development (Nakabugo & Siebörger, 2001) and in recognition of the need to act for society's benefit when the latter has been challenged by a complex range of socio-political factors as highlighted by Webb *et al.* (2017) and Msila and Gumbo (2016).

However, the activities and actions to deal with the challenges indicated something more transformative than Kezar *et al.*'s (2018) transformative communities identified earlier. This is the fact that the colleges were using curriculum transformation to communicate how they wished to be viewed by their competitors and the wider society in line with Camaioni (2017) and Berger and Luckmann's (1966) communicative sociology (the fact that communication entails a sociological process of meaning-giving and meaning-making by respective parties). Although the various aspects involved are captured in a three-stage process identical to Erikson's (1963) psychosocial development, it highlighted something more complex, which

was that curriculum transformation involved the extent to which the participants wished to be included in pedagogic renewal as part of the social transformation process. Additionally, our framework is proposed to show what this may lead to in terms of developing education content that could address the internal and external challenges faced by the respective colleges effectively (see Figure 2). The study's results and the proposed framework serve as an extension of Hogg's (2016) and Karkouti's (2014) social identity theories by presenting a more complex nature of how seven colleges went about reshaping not only their individual but collective identity as a university via a transformative process of teaching, curriculum redesign and implementation and student, staff and community (re)engagement. The various intentions to do so are communicated via the development of a new, multilingual set of glossaries (see Table 2) and the study's three major themes reported hereunder.

5.1 Curriculum responsiveness and digital identity

The colleges reported their attempts to ensure curriculum content that is relevant to and equipped the students to succeed in life. The curriculum transformation was primarily responsive to the needs of the contemporary and future community at large and the global changing market the university was increasingly serving. It was reported how increasing demands of global competition from other providers heightened by advancements in digital technologies has pushed the colleges to implement distance learning through the MyUnisa platform. This involved the use of recent advancements in technologies that each college acknowledged as vital to transform the curriculum. This facilitated the potential to reach a wider audience. Utilising cutting-edge technology in the most effective and innovative way was considered essential to the efficient transfer of knowledge in an active and collaborative way although plans to do so were still at an initial stage. The university was in the process of creating a new digital identity of itself and its learners and communicated this initiative through its renewed pedagogy.

5.2 Decolonised curriculum content and African identity

The analysis of reports also showed that colleges were offering a more decolonised learning content. This meant the removal of education content that had been characterised in the past by language, culture, political views, knowledge and traditions that mirrored a minority's dominance over the wider South African population. Such one-sidedness in the seven colleges' curricular content and teaching over the decades resulted in the incorrect belief that indigenous culture and an Africanised curriculum was inferior. Such decolonisation included the Africanisation of curricula whereby learning content is considered to have a distinctively African feel to foster an African curriculum identity (i.e. infused with African epistemologies and philosophies whose aim is to advance knowledge systems considered to be indigenous).

5.3 Practical pedagogy and employability identity

Each of the colleges thus far provided diversified educational content in the different disciplines (Law, Accounting, Education, Economics, Management, Life Science, Engineering and Technology). Such an approach was geared to meet a practical necessity, which was higher graduate numbers and employability that enhanced meeting external demands from statutory and other agencies. The academic faculty were inspired to design and implement pedagogies that support the achievement of these goals and be seen responding to the pressures. When they did, they were enhancing overall human welfare in the forms of employment growth, income equality and eradication of poverty. They took practical steps to make learning content accessible to all, recruited diverse student groups from a multitude of cultural backgrounds, physical disabilities and levels of access to technology and educational backgrounds. By adopting these measures, the colleges ensured inclusivity in the transformation of the curriculum as the change would have been seen by the wider communities and external agencies to be cognisant of race, age, gender, faith, sexual orientation, language, culture and disability issues. In the university colleges' view, developing and transforming curricula should be non-judgemental and non-political. There is another discovery though. The transformation of curricula focused on the development of critical thinking and ethical creative problem-solving skills as these were considered necessary for a new student identity and aligned to resolving the country's wider socio-economic challenges. The colleges' programmes needed student-centred methodologies and models that boosted students' graduate numbers as well as employability and personal development.

Table 2. Findings from the various colleges

Colleges	Pedagogy	Scholarly activities	Knowledge creation	Student-centredness	Monitoring
Law	Renew and/or review all programmes	Offer all undergraduate modules applying emerging and established pedagogies	Development of multilingual glossaries	Collaborative learning	Ongoing monitoring and evaluation
Accounting	Renew and/or review CAC programmes	Development of an OER in conjunction with the professional body SAICA to provide a multilingual glossary to students	Learning content is Africanised	Teaching in a way that assists students to graduate and become employable. Inclusivity	Ongoing monitoring and evaluation
Education	Renewal of methodologies in teaching	Academics and support staff to research on	Development of multilingual glossaries	A student-centred approach is	Ensuring the material is suitable,

	and assessment	their teaching, assessment, tutor involvement, markers, supervisors and mentor involvement in teaching and learning.		followed in the college	relevant, transformed and that a framework for team approach is followed
Economics & Management	Renewal of methodologies in teaching and assessment	Departmental transformation plan in line with new modules.	Incorporate Africanisation into module development	A student-centred approach is followed in the college	Formative and summative assessments
Life, Science, Engineering & Technology	Review of doctoral programmes and module development for blended teaching mode	Quality assurance in the programmes	Multilingual glossaries; Infusion of African epistemologies	Not available	Not available

6. Study contributions

Figure 2 below has been developed from the previous three-stage process and highlights the multiple identities created as a result of the reforms. The process is further broken down into fundamental causes/drivers and actions to deepen understanding of the various activities undertaken at different levels for pedagogic transformation and incorporated into a new framework. This framework also highlights the nature of the relationships/interactions between key aspects and agents in an education environment that were missed by psychosocial theorists earlier (Erikson, 1963; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; West, 2014). Our framework identifies the way a set of policies, stakeholder engagement and changing mind-set interact to lead to faculty and student development in order to holistically deal with the internal and external challenges compared to previous attempts to do so (Alderuccio, 2010; Chisholm, 2005). As part of the analysis, it appeared that “adapted mindset” (identical to Erikson’s [1963] psychosocial theory) and “concise policy framework” were considered by participants as key if transformation and inclusivity were to happen in local practice.

Identifying a framework and its essential aspects for such operationalisation, where it has been lacking, has been derived from the earlier three-stage thematic categorisation process in the sense-making tradition of Yin (2003), Schutz (1967) and Husserl (1965) respectively. The nature of the changes and the various themes can therefore be summarised as the way the participants instituted a new mindset or a multiplicity of identities to deal with curriculum transformation issues requiring “holistic stakeholder engagement”. Although the focal finding of the framework points to “faculty professional development” as the glue, other aspects such as a change in perceptions/thinking, the adoption of appropriate policies, a sensitivity towards

context and students' learning needs are pivotal for successful curriculum transformation (Mendy, 2018b). The comprehensive nature of our framework that captured what each college did to successfully achieve education reform has not been attempted in the South African and e-learning context before (see Chisholm, 2005; Le Grange, 2016; Webb, 2017).

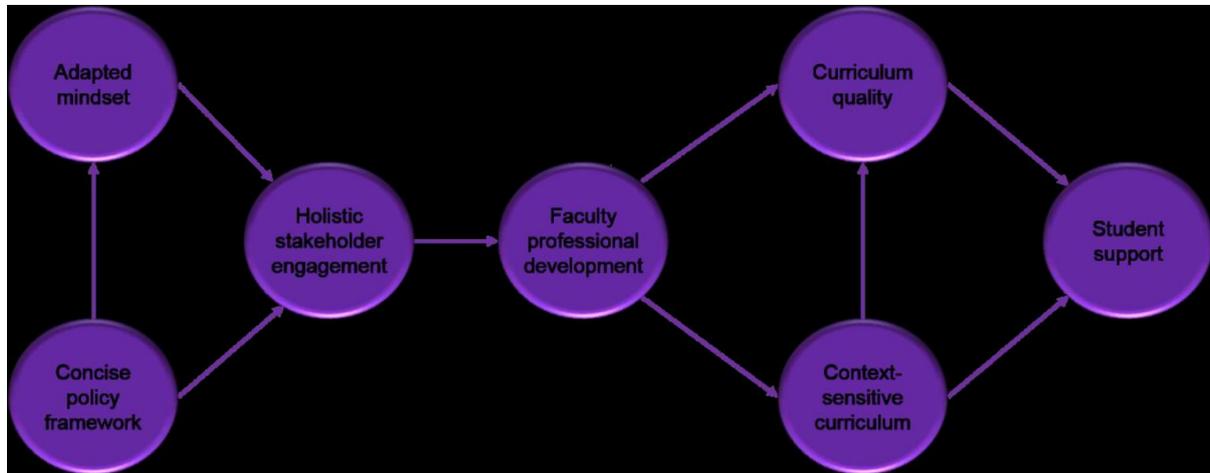


Figure 2. The curriculum transformation framework

Analysis of the framework

We have developed a framework and identified its characteristics using the contextualised challenges and actions taken by participants from seven colleges at a South African open and distance e-learning provider. We have identified not only the individual colleges' respective difficulties but also the activities and communicative strategies used to resolve their local and more collective problems associated with curriculum reform. A socio-educational framework that takes into account the social (stakeholder engagement, new identify, change in thinking, decolonisation) and educational (curriculum reform, professional development, quality enhancement, student support) aspects is proposed to add to the earlier analysis of the psychosocial, political and historical contextualised factors faced by the institution as it tasked its members with achieving a new plan (see Figure 1). The results of our three themes should form part of a revised and improved "psychosocial" and "social identity" theory contributing to the works of Erikson (1963), Pollard *et al.* (2013), Hogg (2016) and Nakabugo and Siebörger (2001) among others.

7. Discussion

The importance of curriculum transformation at the University of South Africa is precipitated by sectoral and wider demands in society (see Ramrathan *et al.*, 2016; Watson *et al.*, 2011). The transformations include changes in technology, a practical pedagogy responding to unemployment, student support, the implementation of African pedagogies in line with corresponding changes in the politics of language, history and student participation. These

changes are consistent with the student and educator development and identity theories outlined in psychosocial theory (Erikson, 1963), sense-making (Yin, 2003) and Higgs's renaissance (2016).

Colleges appear to be Africanising their curricula not only via content reform but also through student inclusivity. Unisa's seven colleges under study have taken steps to address students' race, age, gender, faith, sexual orientation, language, culture and disability in the development of curricula. This is consistent with the study's main theoretical framework but differences between this study and others abound as follows. Although there is empirical and theoretical evidence suggesting that intellectual and other developments (i.e. epistemological development, moral) is influenced by heredity and environmental factors (Evans *et al.*, 1998) and that educators should provide opportunities (Magolda, 1992; Fowler, 1981; Gilligan, 1982; Kegan, 1994; Kohlberg, 1976) for moral (Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1976), special needs (Evans *et al.*, 2004) and self-development (Kegan, 1994) we have shown a process and framework for doing so in practice and within a specific context.

It has become important to address curriculum transformation challenges and Unisa chose to do so through decolonising teaching and learning content leading to Africanisation. However, this concept has also encouraged multiple social, educational, employability and digitisation identities as highlighted in the study's three-stage process. Atkinson *et al.* (1998) highlighted that social identities are constructed within hierarchies of privilege and oppression although they missed to address the capacity development that Nakabugo and Siebörger (2001) suggested for curriculum transformation. We have gone further by developing a framework that showed characteristics of localised education transformation suggested by Denson and Bowman (2013) thereby achieving the Africanisation that West (2017) and Msila and Gumbo (2016) called for. Ultimately, the implementation of student-centred education in institutions of higher learning should focus on not only the personal competency development that influences students' lives (Banks, 2001; Evans *et al.*, 1998) but also recognising the need to deal with potential psychological crises as a result neglecting everyone's developmental needs (Ramrathan *et al.*, 2016; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Although it is the university's civic responsibility to support a student's career and interactional development needs (Elder, 1995; Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990; Sanford, 1966; Super, 1990), implications for theory, practice (including management issues) and research abound as follows.

8. Implications

8.1 Theory

The theoretical implications of this paper's findings highlight that curriculum transformation is central to addressing the social and educational challenges faced by a developing country

such as South Africa. Transforming the curriculum is also part of how best to design and implement a change management programme and research in the transformative way yearned for by Kezar *et al.* (2018). In recognition of this fundamental basis, the paper has borrowed and analysed Erikson's (1963) psychosocial theory not only to underscore its relevance in curriculum transformation, but also its cross pollination with Evans *et al.*'s (1998) cognitive structural and Hogg's (2016) social identity theory. Such a framework has implications on how we conceptualise education and change management reforms by highlighting the value in treating the social-related aspects (i.e. of all people) with dignity. Appropriate human resource policies should be adopted to produce the right type of communication, glossaries and actions for effective curriculum redesign and implementation. Herein lies the type of practical as well as theoretical revival that Higgs (2016), Msila and Gumbo (2016) and colleagues earlier yearned for in order to address Ramrathan *et al.*'s (2016) wider socio-political concerns within curriculum transformation.

8.2 Practice

Practically, the findings suggest that managers and others in supervision or monitoring roles should be aware of the process(es) of adopting reformed curriculum delivery and the different identities they begin to manage. The use of e-learning technology should be done in an inclusive and innovative way to address local and global challenges simultaneously. The participants have shown what types of practical actions are required to achieve the renewal they have been tasked to accomplish. As such education stakeholders should be cognisant of the benefits of the framework proposed here and the need to respect emerging identities (individual and collective) even if these do not comply with managers, supervisors and mentors' aspirations and demands. Human resource management professionals should develop a suite of developmental programmes, in the short and longer term, to use the framework to identify potential problem areas in curriculum delivery and in the development of people for social and curriculum good. Emerging management activities, actions, policies and procedures should include local cultural issues in (re)shaping management practice and wisdom as this paper's notion of Africanisation has shown.

8.3 Research

The proposition of an education framework that combines a range of psychosocial, cognitive and multiple social identity aspects is a significant research development in curriculum reform as previous studies have narrowed their focus on either barriers, race issues (Esakov, 2009), decolonisation (Le Grange, 2016) or African renaissance of teaching and learning (Higgs, 2016) – (see literature section). We have not only examined these issues but shown how they can be used in a thematic categorisation process leading to a practical framework for

implementation. The latter can help academics and practitioners alike to be aware and understand the fundamental combination of factors/challenges that can bring about curriculum transformation failure and how best to use available human and technological capacity to avoid the capacity development problems that Alderuccio (2010) or the social identity crisis that Burford (2012) highlighted in previous studies. Current and emerging research should examine the drivers, challenges and potential outcomes in order to better comprehend the practicalities of rejuvenating pedagogic programmes and their psychosocial ramifications.

9. Conclusion

This paper has used college reports to analyse the implementation of curriculum transformation not only in one but in the University of South Africa's seven colleges. It was noted that the implementation, which was driver-outcomes-based, needed to engage all faculty members in order to be successful. This helped in creating a new way of thinking and a new multi-layered psychosocial identity similar to Erikson's (1963). A new framework that highlights curriculum responsiveness, decolonising curriculum content and practical pedagogy has drawn focus on the scholarly activities undertaken by colleges within MyUnisa. Our framework has highlighted the structural and socio-cultural transformations needed (e.g. fine-tuning programme content, decolonising teaching methodologies in line with the emerging political and economic realities and supporting students' development in order to alleviate wider unemployment in society). This paper's research question has been answered and its objective of developing an education framework has been achieved within a challenging and challenged South African HE institution context. The authors have done this by identifying an HEI pedagogy that needed to reform its curriculum to meet the socio-political and economic challenges of an emerging country's economy such as South Africa's. The treatment of the topic by previous studies such as those of Ramrathan *et al.* (2016), West (2017) and Msila and Gumbo (2016) missed highlighting a contextualised framework that could help address the wider socio-political, Africanisation and inclusivity issues linked to curriculum reform. The report data was used to highlight three key themes that Erikson's (1963) psychosocial, Burford's (2012) social identity and Evans *et al.*'s (1998) cognitive structural theory missed before. The concept of Africanisation introduced by Msila and Gumbo (2016) and West (2017) has helped not only to highlight the transition into more African-based epistemologies but to identify the new identities (individual and collective), whilst creating room for the adoption of a new language and new technology needed to do so. These did not feature in the previous studies examined here. A socio-education framework has highlighted what is fundamentally needed to implement curriculum transformation and to do so successfully and contextually, aspects missed previously by Le Grange (2016), Banks (2001) and Shay (2015). The three-stage process involving 1) curriculum responsiveness, 2) decolonising curriculum content and

3) practical pedagogy features a multi-layered set of pedagogic, political and socio-cultural identities that Erikson (1963) and Hogg (2016) missed in holistically targeting aspects for individual and collective development.

Future research should examine the skills' mix needed in the new framework. These will include how to make effective and efficient use of new technologies and platforms in the new curriculum dispensation and dissemination programmes. On a more strategic level, our HEI should also be thinking of how their initial localised/contextualised reforms are positioned within wider, global platforms of reform to gauge the extent to which the initial gains can be sustained in a transformational way in the longer term amidst growing local and global competition (Watson *et al.*, 2011). New research should also examine how curriculum reform is perceived as an opportunity for bridging the socio-economic inequalities worldwide and how localised changes within a university may help in reshaping global futures and mindsets.

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