



Achieving socio-cultural student engagement through curriculum responsiveness

Lee-Anne Lesley Harker

Department of Internal Auditing and Financial Information Systems, Faculty of Business and Management Sciences, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa

harkerl@cput.ac.za

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2235-7505>

(Received: 7 November 2023; accepted: 15 November 2023)

Abstract

With democracy came political pressure to promote both academic access and success in higher education in South Africa. However, increased formal access has not necessarily provided meaningful access to previously disadvantaged learners, and this has resulted in high attrition and dropout rates. In response to this, I propose that life-world knowledge can enable meaningful engagement through the pedagogical incorporation of real-world experiences. Therefore, my aim in this study was to determine how curriculum responsiveness could be addressed in pedagogic practices to achieve epistemological access. I used the concept of autonomy to show empirically whether content can be related to a student's socio-cultural context to bring about curriculum responsiveness resulting in better student engagement. Thus, the epistemological stance of this research is qualitative in my drawing on data collected from curriculum documentation for a selected business subject at a University of Technology as the case study, to serve as a guiding principle for considering the appropriate pathways for enabling epistemological access.

Keywords: autonomy, curriculum, curriculum responsiveness, epistemological access, pedagogy

Introduction

The recent drive to improve accessibility to higher education (HE) in South Africa has led to universities granting access to students who differ generally, given their ethnicity, from what used to be considered the norm (Arjomandi et al., 2018). However, the socio-economic and cultural disparities experienced by these students in South Africa has influenced the way in which they engage with their HE learning (Pather et al., 2017). Student engagement is important in creating relationships that influence student retention rates positively (Thomas, 2012), given that 47.9% of South African students drop out before completing their degrees (Sawahel, 2017) and only 15% percent of black students eventually complete their HE studies (Adonis & Silinda, 2021; Le Grange, 2016). Previously marginalised students are still experiencing a disconnect with content and learning in the classroom, and with the university

culture (Heleta, 2016; Le Grange, 2016; Luvalo, 2019). Since the end of apartheid in 1994, institutional cultures and epistemological traditions have not changed (Heleta, 2016; Moremoholo, 2023). This has led to the disengagement of black students from their curricula and learning material (Heleta, 2016; Luvalo, 2019). To become fully engaged, all students must have a strong sense of belonging (Gillen-O’Neel, 2021; Thomas, 2002). The failure to transform higher education will continue to result in alienation, oppression, and the development of irrelevant curricula (Adonis & Silinda, 2021; Higgs, 2012; Le Grange, 2016). It is therefore important to explore whether there is integration between the curriculum and students’ socio-cultural contexts and, if not, how this can be achieved pragmatically. I propose that HE academics should integrate students’ social and cultural backgrounds with the curriculum to make it easier for them to engage with the content and, therefore, to make their knowledge transferable.

Literature review

Introduction

With democracy came political pressure to promote both academic access and success (Muller, 2014; Themane & Mabasa, 2022). As a result, there have been initiatives implemented to increase access to African students at HE institutions such as foundation and extended programmes (Boughey, 2005; Sehoole & Adeyemo, 2016). These initiatives were about increasing formal access to afford previously marginalised groups greater access to higher education (Boughey, 2005; Maphosa et al., 2014). However, increased formal access has not necessarily provided meaningful access to these learners, and this has resulted in high attrition and dropout rates because the required competencies have not been achieved (Adonis & Silinda, 2021; Motala et al., 2009). Being mostly first-generation university students, these learners do not have prior exposure to a network of people who could prepare them for the university experience and culture. Consequently, they have been disadvantaged because of the disparity between their own familiar culture and the unfamiliar institutional culture, that is the epistemic context of the university (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2006). Higher education institutions have tended to blame the schooling system for the under preparedness of these students, but it is incumbent on the HE sector to accommodate these students and to understand and address their academic challenges by addressing these disparities without lowering academic standards (Maphosa et al., 2014). Being responsive to these challenges would mean providing epistemological access to education in addition to formal access (Liccardo et al., 2015).

Epistemological access

The term epistemological access was coined by Wally Morrow (2009) to distinguish between the two dimensions of access to HE—formal educational access and meaningful educational access to the knowledge that the institution distributes (du Plooy & Zilindile, 2014; Muller, 2014). The term originated from the political democratisation of HE in South Africa (du Plooy & Zilindile, 2014; Muller, 2014). It is about ensuring access to the “epistemological

activities underpinning a systematized form of inquiry” (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2006, p. 37) by addressing the articulation gap between underprepared learners and the academic demands of programmes at HE institutions (Liccardo et al., 2015; Slonimsky & Shalem, 2006). This gap arose from the disparities in background knowledge required for HE in terms of both educational and socio-economic backgrounds (Liccardo et al., 2015). Herbert et al. (2011) asserted that this gap in the ways of knowing is the single most significant factor affecting academic success. However, academic institutions are failing to bridge this gap because of narrow institutional culture (Fataar, 2012). Chetty and Vigar-Ellis (2012) contended that to address the disparities in educational backgrounds, academically disadvantaged and privileged students cannot be treated homogeneously. Gale et al. (2017) averred that academic success is more about the extent to which the learners’ a priori knowledge and skills are recognised by the institution. This assertion aligns to that of Teese and Polese (2003) who pointed out that meaningful engagement occurs when a connection is made between learners’ community contexts, or their own experiences, and the curriculum. Fataar (2012) argued for a greater connection between learners’ everyday knowledge, the curriculum, and pedagogical practices. While Morrow’s (2009) description of epistemological access did not provide a pragmatic solution for how it could be realised (du Plooy & Zilindile, 2014), there is overwhelming support in the literature for pedagogy as the key leveraging site for realising epistemological access (Alexander, 2008; Fataar, 2012; Fraser, 2008; Gale et al., 2017; Muller, 2014).

Curriculum, pedagogy, and epistemological access

The curriculum is key to educating people through a systematic way of disseminating knowledge and skills. Moreover, the curriculum has a powerful influence since it determines what is included or excluded in courses of learning (Higgs, 2016). This power is extended to shaping values, beliefs and principles in terms of learning and understanding, and society overall (Higgs, 2016). This is because the curriculum is influenced by the political, social, and cultural context in which it exists (Barnett & Coate, 2005). Ironically, while South Africa has been democratised, the higher education curricula do not currently reflect the social, political, or cultural context of our democracy because the curricula have not changed (Le Grange, 2016); arguably, the curriculum could be the catalyst for this sought-after transformation. However, Lingard et al. (2003) contended that the opportunity for an inclusive educational experience rests more in pedagogy than in curriculum since it constitutes education’s central message system because of its potential to organise social relations. Similarly, Fataar (2012) argued that teaching pedagogies contribute the most to better student learning, particularly for students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds. In fact, the impact of pedagogy is so significant in student learning, that Gale et al. (2017) suggested that it often perpetuates inequalities by inhibiting opportunities for learning, rather than creating them. Of course, this is because it is the means through which knowledge production occurs through interactive processes facilitated by academics to engage the learner. It seems plausible, then, as Muller (2014, pp. 260–261) put it, that

“‘[e]pistemology’ in ‘epistemological access’ thus seems to mean ‘the logic of the concepts of the game being played’”, and thus that “the issue is pedagogical rather than epistemic.” A further argument is that improved epistemological access of underprepared students can be achieved through curriculum responsiveness that entails “accommodating diversity of socio-cultural realities of students, by developing a wider variety of instructional strategies and learning pathways” (Moll, 2004, p. 4). Given that the curriculum brings together the student, what must be learned, and the context, curriculum responsiveness must collectively embrace economic, cultural, disciplinary, and learning responsiveness (Moll, 2004). Cultural responsiveness will entail incorporating the socio-cultural experiences, realities, and diversity of students into instructional strategies and learning pathways (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2006). Additionally, teaching activities should be planned for systematic learning (du Plooy & Zilindile, 2014). However, such teaching activities should aim to develop learners’ cognitive structures through their own unique reflection and interpretation of the world (Liccardo et al., 2015). Fataar (2012) contends that it is this life-world knowledge that can enable critical engagement through pedagogical incorporation of real-world experiences so that disadvantaged learners can begin to engage in an interactive learning process, thereby evoking interest and leading to social inclusivity. Therefore, the aim of my study was to determine how curriculum responsiveness can be addressed in pedagogic practices to achieve epistemological access.

Theoretical framework

Introduction

There has been a strong influence from government and industry on (re)shaping the curriculum (Higgs, 2016). Thus, transformation has primarily been guided by the skills and knowledge requirements of the labour market. While outside interests have more strongly influenced the curriculum because of constant changes to competencies and expertise necessary for our modern economy, educators must recognise their role in developing curricula that integrate different forms of knowing to respond to these changes more readily (Higgs, 2016). These forms of knowing should not be limited to skills of knowing that are more concerned with knowing performance, or one’s capacity to manipulate knowledge (Barnett & Coate, 2005), but should be integrated with dimensions of being and acting. As stated by Higgs (2016, p. 93), “A curriculum in which the domains of being and acting are not integrated with knowing offers a fragmented experience, perhaps lending itself to a more performative character rather than a deep engagement with knowledge.” Thus, research on education and curriculum has noted that students must be enabled to learn for conditions that extend beyond the classroom, must be prepared for transferring knowledge to other contexts, and must be able to build on previous knowledge and understanding, thereby enabling cumulative and adaptable knowledge-building (Maton, 2013). While teaching pedagogy often involves simplifying new knowledge by using context-specific meanings and explanations, adapting knowledge for different contexts can be achieved only by decontextualizing knowledge (Maton, 2013). The opportunity for decontextualising and recontextualising knowledge to create an autonomous curriculum to engage students from disadvantaged

backgrounds (Fataar, 2012) exists in the pedagogical relationship between horizontal (life world) and vertical (curriculum) knowledge. While Fataar (2012) acknowledged that there is scepticism about mixing the two knowledge discourses, he argued for its usefulness to bridge the knowledge gap between the life-world context of disadvantaged students and formal educational knowledge by employing a dynamic interactive approach to engage learners more meaningfully. However, he cautioned that such an approach should employ much care in the scaffolding of horizontal knowledge onto vertical knowledge, while still respecting the importance of vertical, educational knowledge. The question is about how this can be achieved pragmatically. Debates on curriculum transformation considering broader formal access to HE have tended to focus on identifying whose knowledge is foregrounded and which social powers have more influence on curricula (Maton & Moore, 2010). What should be explored to advance the transformation agenda is how knowledge forms enable or constrain knowledge building (Maton, 2013). Most educational theoretical frameworks, whether applied to explore processes of learning or to redress social injustices, have treated knowledge-building as a generic process, and knowledge as homogeneous (Maton, 2014). What is needed is a lens that focuses on the ways and contexts of knowing.

Legitimation code theory

Theoretical frameworks serve an integral role in providing the explanatory power that can inform transformation in educational practice. Maton (2014) contended that transformation can be brought about only when a theory is practical enough to provide the explanations that can serve to understand the phenomenon in a manner that is not contextually bound. Theories that are too context-dependent make it difficult for studies to build on each other, thereby leading to segmentalisation of knowledge, and thus the development of a narrow theoretical model (Maton, 2014). Legitimation code theory (LCT) is a multidimensional sociological framework useful for researching and changing educational practice (Maton, 2014). The framework, positioned within social realism, an approach to research that accounts for knowledge as being socially produced, and real (Lockett, 2010), constitutes a toolkit for interrogating a social problem in education and accounting for its reality. LCT explores the organising principles that underpin educational practice, dispositions, and contexts. These principles are analysed in respect of five dimensions, each conceptualising a different legitimation code (Maton, 2014). LCT has integrated and empirically developed theoretical frameworks from Bourdieu (1993) and Bernstein (1977). The applicability of the LCT framework is unbounded; this is evident in the growing number of studies applying LCT, in and outside of the educational domain, and its inclusion of various educational levels and disciplines because of its open-ended nature. It provides a suitable basis for analysing and informing practice that will forward the conversation about what possibilities exist for the transformation of education (Lockett, 2010).

Autonomy

Autonomy is a dimension of LCT that can be used to explore the phenomenon of integration of knowledge (Maton & Howard, 2018). It provides the means to explore whether such integration is possible, and how it can be achieved through concepts of positional autonomy

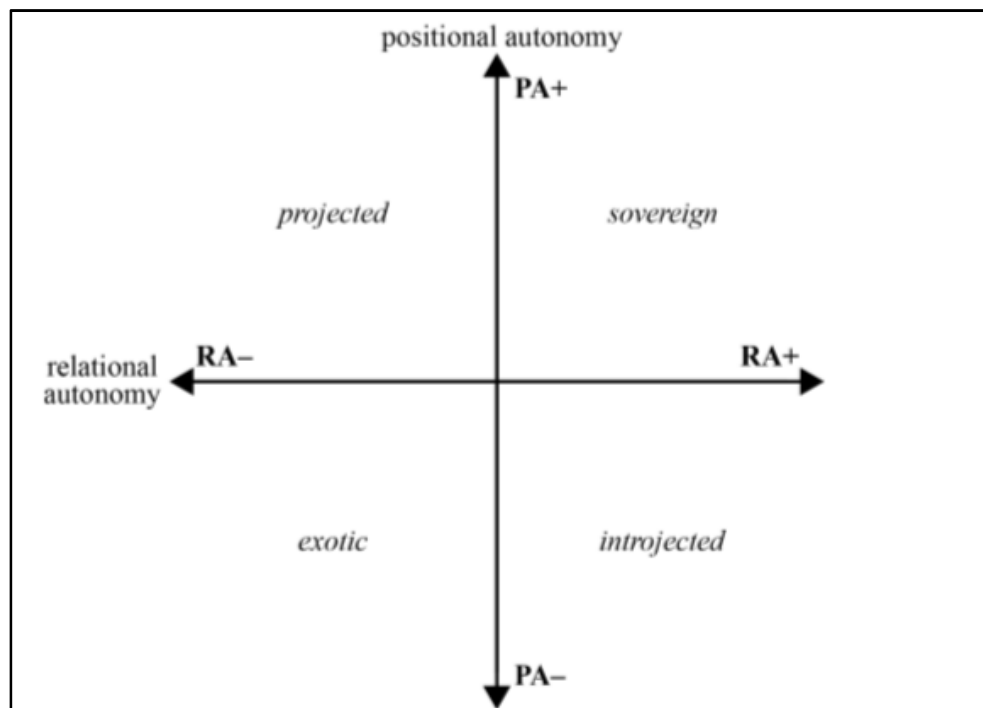
and relational autonomy (Maton & Howard, 2018). These concepts help to explore the boundaries that are created for a given practice and its constituents, and the relations between constituents. Autonomy codes are enacted through autonomy pathways that either enable or constrain knowledge integration. These pathways are defined in respect of varying strengths of positional and relational autonomy along respective continua that generate four principal autonomy codes (Maton & Howard, 2018). These autonomy codes set the stage for integration to occur. Levels of integration are enacted when recontextualisation of knowledge practices is positioned in, and moves between, autonomy codes, called pathways (Maton & Howard, 2018). Unless the correct autonomy pathways are enacted, knowledge will remain segmented. The open-endedness of the framework is demonstrated through the concept of a target that sets a context for a given analysis (Maton & Howard, 2018). The target is not labelled according to a limited empirical feature but is dependent on the analysis at hand. Thus, the exploration of integration and knowledge relations will not be influenced by preconstructed categories or ideas (Maton & Howard, 2018). Additionally, the theory enables the analysis of not only knowledge practice, but mental disposition and social contexts on which educators draw to enact recontextualisation, and integration (Maton & Howard, 2018). The contention is that integration is not merely achieved by bringing together knowledge and knowledge practices. There should be conscious and appropriate “selection, repurpos[e] and connect[ion] through appropriate autonomy pathways” (p. 33). It is thus proposed that herein lies the opportunity for exploring curriculum responsiveness. The concept of autonomy can provide an in-depth analysis to determine when social and cultural integration can be achieved for epistemological access.

Conceptual framework

The concept of autonomy centres on the premise that there is a relationship between and among constituents within a given practice or context (Maton & Howard, 2018). Constituents can be actors, ideas, or artefacts, for example. In the context of this study, constituents were concepts, knowledge, and practices that underpin an academic programme. The relationship between constituents can be based on “explicit procedures, tacit conventions, mechanisms, explicitly stated aims, unstated orthodoxies, formal rules, etc.” (Maton & Howard, 2018, p. 6). Autonomy codes are the concepts that underpin the autonomy dimension with the purpose of establishing the boundaries of the constituents and their relationships within a context or practice. Autonomy codes are expressed as positional autonomy (PA) and relational autonomy (RA) (to what purpose the knowledge and practices are being put). Positional autonomy is expressed as stronger or weaker distinctions between the constituents positioned in a context and those positioned in other contexts. Relational autonomy is expressed as stronger or weaker relational autonomy in terms of being autonomous or heteronomous on the basis of the principles governing how constituents relate together. A stronger relational autonomy means a specific set of practices whereas weaker relational autonomy means a shared set of practices, purposes, aims, or ways of working (Maton & Howard, 2018). Each code may be stronger or weaker along a continuum of strengths to create an autonomy plane, such as that in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

The autonomy plane (Maton & Howard, 2018, p. 6)



Varying the two strengths of positional and relational autonomy based on what is valued for a given context or category generates four autonomy codes, including:

- **Sovereign codes (PA+, RA+):** represent a strongly insulated position and autonomous principles; the context is centered on internal constituents for internal purposes.
- **Exotic codes (PA-, RA-):** represent a weakly insulated position and heteronomous principles; the context is centered on external constituents for external purposes.
- **Introjected codes (PA-, RA+):** represent a weakly insulated position and autonomous principles; the context is centered on external constituents for internal purposes.
- **Projected codes (PA+, RA-):** represent a strongly insulated position and heteronomous principles; the context is centered on internal constituents for external purposes.

In the context of this study, knowledge in the sovereign code is academic knowledge since it currently exists as formal educational knowledge or vertical knowledge. This knowledge is strongly oriented toward colonial education paradigms (PA) and follows their practices, educational philosophies, and curricula (RA). The introjected code (outside-in) would, arguably, constitute knowledge that exists outside the current curriculum, known as the students' life-world context (horizontal knowledge). The projected code (inside-out) would constitute whatever knowledge students are exposed to when they leave university; the application of that knowledge is the projected code.

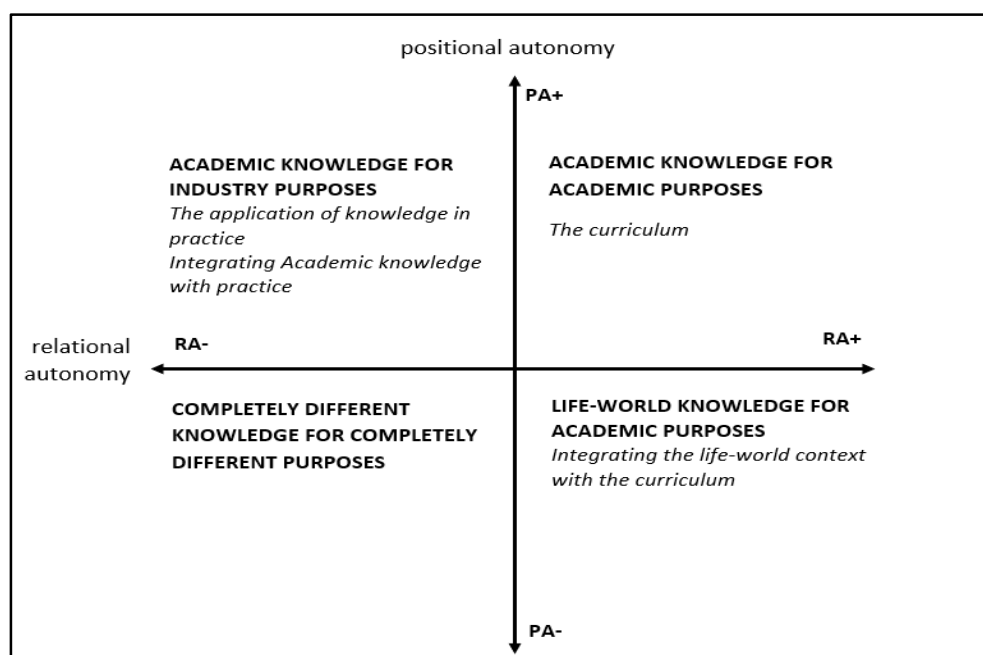
Autonomy pathways can be used to show whether integrative knowledge-building exists in a curriculum. Pathways represent movement between the four autonomy codes that represent change in practices. While there can be an unlimited number of potential path movements, for simplicity, Maton and Howard (2018, p. 8) offer some examples.

- **Stays:** A path that remains within the same code;
- **One-way trips:** A path that begins in one code and concludes in another;
- **Tours:** A path that begins in one code, moves to another, and returns to the initial code; and
- **Return trips:** A path that moves back and forth between two codes.

Maton and Howard (2018) argued that integrating different knowledge practices requires a pathway that leaves one code to engage with others, but, essentially, to bring that knowledge back to that code. Pathways that stay within one code segment knowledge and practices from one another. Thus, it is proposed that staying within the sovereign code shows that curriculum responsiveness is not being addressed in a curriculum, and that there is, therefore, no integration to a student's socio-cultural context. It is proposed that there must be pathways within a curriculum to move from the sovereign code to the introjected code, representing weaker positional autonomy by introducing content into the curriculum that is influenced by the political, social, and cultural context in which it exists (Barnett & Coate, 2005). The proposition is that pathways constituting tours between the aforementioned codes will integrate the curriculum with the student's socio-cultural context for the achievement of curriculum responsiveness for epistemological access. Figure 2 depicts the codes applicable to this study.

Figure 2

Framework drawing on Maton & Howard (2018, p. 6)



Specific translation device

I used the autonomy codes and pathways to determine how the pedagogic devices and practices in a selected subject can or cannot bring about integration of indigenous knowledge and cultural, social, and political contexts to make recommendations for creating the pathways for curriculum responsiveness. Determining the autonomy codes in the context of this study, to determine what is being insulated, was achieved using a generic translation device for autonomy codes. “The generic device provides a framework for individual studies to develop specific translation devices that translate between these categories and the concrete specificities of their data” (Maton & Howard, 2018, p. 10). The device enables one to define two categories, a target that would constitute stronger positional and relational autonomy, and a non-target that would indicate weaker positional and relational autonomy. From there, subdivisions of the categories can be applied, including core and ancillary targets, and associated and unassociated non-targets. An example of the device is depicted in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3

Generic translation device for positional autonomy and relational autonomy (Maton & Howard, 2018, p. 10)


PA/RA	1st level	2nd level	3rd level
+ ↑ ↓ -	target	core	inner
			outer
		ancillary	inner
			outer
	non-target	associated	near
			remote
		unassociated	near
			remote

A target presents the starting point for autonomy codes. The translation device can determine what would constitute the target and from there determine non-targets. Target constituents have stronger positional autonomy and target principles for relating these constituents have higher relational autonomy (Maton & Howard, 2018). The target category can be further subdivided into core constituents and principles, and ancillary constituents and principles. The non-target category can be subdivided into those constituents and principles that are associated (closer to) or unassociated (further from) the target. A third level of analysis can be introduced for finer levels of detail, which, in the context of this study, would address specific detail at the level of lesson planning and engagement in the classroom. For this research, however, I performed a high-level document analysis so the focus was on the first

two levels of the device. Figure 4 is the specific device developed for the context of this study that provided the recognition criteria and contextual boundaries for data analysis.

The curriculum for the selected subject is the target content, or core target (PA++) that has strong positional autonomy as a target constituent, determined by the core syllabus of the subject, and strong relational autonomy (purpose is teaching students that content – RA++), which is the target purpose of the subject and which is determined by the outcomes of the subject, often subdivided into units of learning. Other units of learning or other academic knowledge would be ancillary targets (PA+), such as integrating curricula with industry practice or using academic knowledge for different purposes (RA+). Non-target constituents that have weaker positional autonomy include associated knowledge (PA-) that is life-world knowledge for academic purposes, and unassociated knowledge (PA--) that would constitute knowledge from beyond education (Maton & Howard, 2018). Based on the specific translation device developed for this study, the projected code would constitute a focus on the exit-level outcomes and graduate attributes that fall outside the scope of this study, given that the objective is to determine how curriculum responsiveness is addressed in the curricula documents in the selected subject.

Figure 4
Specific translation device for this study

PA/RA	1 ST level	In this study	2 nd level	In this study
	<i>target</i>	Selected business subject syllabus	<i>core</i>	Specific unit of learning in target (Academic knowledge for academic purposes)
			<i>ancillary</i>	Academic knowledge for industry purposes
	<i>non-target</i>	Other content or purposes	<i>associated</i>	Life-world knowledge for academic purposes
			<i>unassociated</i>	Knowledge from beyond education

Methodology

This study draws on the work of Karl Maton and Sarah Howard (2018) to show empirically how content can be related to a student's socio-cultural context for integration to occur through recontextualisation to bring about curriculum responsiveness for better student engagement. Thus, the epistemological stance of this research is qualitative in drawing on data collected from curriculum documentation (see Myers, 2009) for a selected business subject at a University of Technology as the case study (see McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). This subject was purposively sampled (see Kruger & Welman, 2001) because it is strongly discipline-driven and therefore served as an interesting case study to explore the potential for curriculum responsiveness in a formalised knowledge system to provide a data rich case for the study. The autonomy codes and pathways were used to determine how the pedagogic devices and practices in the subject may or may not bring about integration of life-world knowledge and cultural, social, and political contexts to make recommendations for creating the pathways for curriculum responsiveness. This data was collected through teaching materials (documentation) to populate the generic translation device for autonomy codes (positional autonomy and relational autonomy). The documentation analysed included content knowledge in the form of notes, texts, and other relevant content, teaching and learning methods used, specific subject outcomes, and assessment instruments. The analysis of this documentation determined how curriculum responsiveness is being addressed by focusing on the sovereign and introjected codes. Document analysis is particularly useful for producing rich descriptions for a single case study (Bowen, 2009). While ordinarily document analysis is used with other qualitative research methods for triangulation, document analysis in some cases might be the only necessary source of data for studies that are particularly designed within an interpretive paradigm and that fit the conceptual framework of the study (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis involved an iterative process of reading and interpretation from the perspective of the autonomy concepts, combining content and thematic analysis aligning to these concepts (see Bowen, 2009). The intention of this research was to put forward principles of curriculum responsiveness from the case study to be explored within other contexts, thus the findings will serve as a guiding principle, rather than a generalisation of curriculum responsiveness (see Anderson, 2001).

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from Fundani Ethics Research Committee (FREC). Consent to conduct the study was obtained from the programme Head of Department and subject lecturer. Participation in this research was voluntary and the participants were informed that they could withdraw their participation at any point. Confidentiality and anonymity of the subject and participants were maintained. The purpose of the research and how the data would be used was fully disclosed beforehand. Other ethical considerations pertain to the veracity of the results presented in the study; interpretation was guided by the autonomy dimension concepts, using the specific translation device developed for the context of this study.

Case study

The subject that was selected for the study is a second-year major subject in the selected programme. The purpose of the subject is to provide students with a comprehensive overview of constitutional and administrative law in South Africa by exploring the historical development of the Constitution of the Republic of SA (1996), and examining the constitutional values and their impact, government authority, administrative justice, and the Bill of Rights. The specific subject objectives are directed at enabling the student to:

- apply knowledge and understanding of the institutional framework and values of the Constitution of South Africa and the scope and content of the rights entrenched in the Bill of Rights when examining a related legal problem;
- inform, advise, assist, refer and/or represent a client or principal as a paralegal in relevant forums using the knowledge and skills acquired;
- demonstrate advocacy, active citizenship and social intelligence when engaging with various role players in this context; and
- demonstrate ethical and professional conduct and effective case management skills.

Document sampling

The teaching context for a subject is elucidated through the documented subject structure, curriculum, methods of teaching, and assessment. For the selected subject, these details are outlined in the subject guide. The documents I requested for an initial observation were the subject guide, examples of formative and summative assessments, and content documents such as notes. Upon inspection of the documents, I ascertained that the only way to trace autonomy pathways was to follow the delivery of a unit of learning from start to finish. This would include starting with the outcomes of that unit of learning and tracing the achievement of those outcomes through content delivery, teaching, and learning methods used, and assessment of learning. Whether the student can draw on cultural, social, and political contexts that do not emanate from the curriculum would be determined by the teaching and learning activities and assessments. Additionally, to trace the pathways for determining knowledge integration, the sequence of module delivery had to be used to determine whether knowledge practices leave one code to engage with other codes, and particularly whether that knowledge is brought back to the sovereign code. Thus, to perform a more in-depth analysis, I selected one unit of learning to trace the delivery of the unit of learning from content delivery to teaching and learning activities, and finally to the assessment thereof.

Table 1 lists the details pertaining to the unit of learning that I selected for the study with the corresponding content references, teaching and learning activities, and assessments. The unit of learning was selected based on its potential to show the strong relationship to the knowledge base of the discipline while also creating strong linkages and collaboration with the community through the observation of the knowledge base. Unit of learning 1 focuses largely on the historical development of the Constitution, basic constitutional concepts, constitutional sources and values, the impact of values on the application, interpretation and

limitation of the Bill of Rights, and the understanding the concept of citizenship. The select focus of this unit of learning was on the understanding of the concept of citizenship.

Table 1

Learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment tasks

Learning outcome	Content to be covered	Teaching & learning activities	Assessment criteria	Assessment task
Unit 1: Introduction to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). The learner should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the concept citizenship, and apply this knowledge to solve problems in a real or simulated environment.	Constitution Prescribed text Case law	Independent research Storytelling Lecture Class discussions Debate	Define citizenship in the South African context, inform, advise, assist and/refer individuals who wish to acquire citizenship. Solve problems related to citizenship in a real or simulated environment.	CBA 1 Tutorial 1 Peer evaluation Oral presentation POE Activity 1 Test 1

For the selected unit of learning the additional documents I requested were those related to the teaching and learning activities. This included the lesson presentations used, additional resources referenced during the lesson, formative assessment guidelines or questions posed, as well as contextual information provided such as a case study or whether students had to use an external context for the purpose of an investigation.

Given that the approach to teaching and learning employed in this subject is driven by research that was performed on a student cohort studying in the programme, and that was completing the selected subject, a research paper served as an invaluable document to trace the pedagogy employed in the subject, especially because it presented a novel way of employing the principles of constructive alignment (Biggs, 2008), specifically as it applies to the African context, or current student demographic, given that an adapted model was developed for their context. The research paper furthermore provided more descriptive value pertaining to the pedagogy employed that would serve to provide insight into the teaching and learning processes.

Document analysis process

Miller and Alvarado (2005) proposed analytic strategies for document analysis that include content analytic and context analytic strategies. Context analytic document analysis approaches that use documents as commentary or as actors observe documents as elements

that form part of a larger social context. When used as commentary, they are used to interpret social realities such as identifying the political, social, or economic context for a given phenomenon. Instead of using documents for their information, context analytic document analysis uses documents as actors in a social context, to be evaluated for their interaction with human and nonhuman actors, thereby focusing on the production or use of documents in a social context for a given phenomenon. Content analysis of documents focuses on the content of the document as an independently adequate source of meaning and practice. In line with this view, I deemed content analysis suitable to identify the emergent themes of the translation device for the given teaching context, particularly because the selected documents serve to corroborate the teaching, learning, and assessment practices employed in a subject, thereby suitably making the documents a primary source of data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

The selected documents were systematically reviewed and evaluated according to the translation device to determine whether they had suitable details to provide the depth of analysis that was required to answer the research question (see Bowen, 2009). The salient themes were curriculum content and curriculum processes. Given the interpretive orientation of the research, content analysis was found to be suitable since it organises the information in the documents according to categories identified to answer the research questions (see Bowen, 2009), which, for this study, were guided by the theoretical framework. Content analysis was employed by organising the information in the documents according to the overarching themes of curriculum content and curriculum processes. Furthermore, content analysis was employed in the application of the translation device, or theoretical framework, to identify the positional and relational autonomy of the curriculum and the pathways employed to demonstrate whether curriculum responsiveness is being addressed in the selected subject. The analysis thus used concept-driven, or closed, coding (Gibbs, 2008). The purpose of this study was not to generate codes through data in the documents, but to trace the autonomy pathways of a subject by drawing on the description of the teaching and learning content and processes. Thus, the codes served to view the information in the documents through the lens of the translation device and concepts driven by the theoretical framework. The framework served as a means to view the information in such a manner that it could answer the research questions but was not intended to derive new codes from the data. Thus, the information in the documents was systemically reviewed through the theoretical lens to provide rich descriptions of the autonomy pathways that are enacted in the subject, and to explain these findings in relation to curriculum responsiveness. In evaluating the evidence, the focus was not on specific words from the documents, but on the meaning and overall contribution of the information as it fits within the conceptual framework (see Bowen, 2009). Bowen (2009) furthermore noted that the focus should not be on how many documents are selected for analysis, but on the quality of the documents in terms of providing relevant evidence. Thus, the documentation for one unit of learning was sufficient to trace the delivery of the unit of learning, particularly because the approach was quite similar for each unit of learning. The findings section below systematically shows how the translation device was applied to the documents to show how the codes were derived and how autonomy pathways were traced to determine if curriculum responsiveness was addressed in the selected subject.

Findings

An overview of the teaching and learning process

The unit of learning commences with directing students to read the prescribed texts as pre-reading before a lesson. Thereafter students watch YouTube videos that adapt the legal concepts that will be used in the delivery of the unit of learning for the layperson's understanding. The students are therefore exposed to legal jargon that will be used in case law, for example, before the lesson. Thereafter, students are required to complete a computer based assessment (CBA). The intention of the CBA is twofold: it ensures that the students have read the prescribed texts and watched the videos before their lesson and is a pre-emptive formative assessment. What this means is that the results of the CBAs are evaluated by the lecturer to plan the lesson by deciding on the appropriate teaching and learning activities. Thereafter the lesson is presented; it incorporates a variety of teaching and learning activities, some of which are conducted during the lesson, and some occur as a homework activity in preparation for the next lesson, as a continuation of the previous lesson. For these activities, students must draw on contextual information, or must conduct independent research to answer the questions posed to them. Their responses are discussed during the lesson. Students then embark on a portfolio of evidence (POE) activity that is an assignment that requires them to employ the principles of the unit of learning practically, utilising real-world situations to respond to the requirements of the activity. Each assignment from each unit of learning ultimately contributes to a portfolio of work performed for the academic year.

Tracing autonomy pathways enacted through the teaching and learning process

Pre-lesson activity: Pre-reading the prescribed texts

The prescribed texts used for unit of learning 1 are selected chapters from the Constitution, the prescribed textbook, and case law. The prescribed texts constitute target constituents for the selected subject, as determined by the specific translation device. It constitutes academic knowledge, given the stated purpose of the subject, to provide students with a comprehensive overview of constitutional and administrative law in South Africa. While case law draws on specific contextual situations, it constitutes law that is based on judicial decisions, thereby also making it a target constituent. Students must read the prescribed texts in preparation for their lesson. This means that they are using the academic knowledge for academic purposes, that is, to learn the concepts of the unit of learning. Thus, it constitutes a target principle for relating constituents. Target constituents embody stronger positional autonomy and target principles for relating constituents embody stronger relational autonomy. Thus, the unit of learning starts in the sovereign code (PA++, RA++), internal constituents for internal purposes, represented by point 1 in Figure 5.

Pre-lesson activity: Watching the YouTube videos

The YouTube videos are specifically designed for any person who is encountering legal concepts for the first time, so the concepts must be explained in ways that are not related to a

legal context, but that draw on day-to-day concepts and examples. The knowledge that is drawn on for the purpose of explaining these concepts is unassociated knowledge, therefore a non-target constituent. In the context of this subject, the examples that would be used to explain the legal concepts would be generic, and therefore are not considered as associated knowledge, because it does not necessarily draw on the life-world knowledge of the student but is still presented at an introductory level. Given that the specific translation device is adapted for the context of this study, the life-world context is associated knowledge that will enable the student to draw on their life-world knowledge for their learning. The purpose of the videos is to teach the legal concepts, so it is a target principle for relating constituents, thus representing strong relational autonomy. The unit of learning now starts to move to the Introjected code (PA--, RA++); the context is centred on external constituents for internal purposes, represented by point 2 in Figure 5.

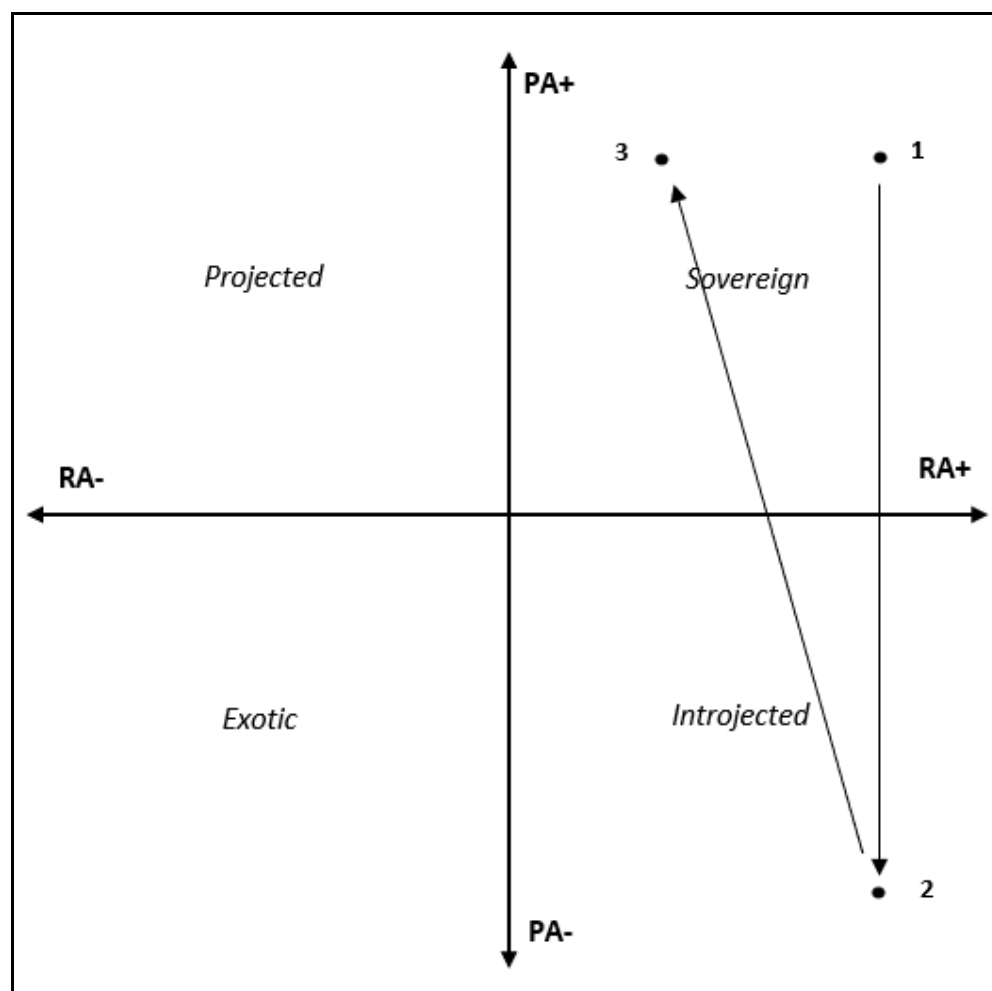
Pre-lesson activity: Computer based assessment

The CBAs are used to determine the student's initial understanding of the academic knowledge of the unit of learning after prereading the prescribed texts and watching the YouTube videos. The CBA serves as a pre-emptive assessment of learning that must align to the outcomes of the unit of learning, thus making it a target constituent (PA++). The feedback from these formative assessments serves a diagnostic role in helping lecturers to decide on the appropriate teaching and learning activities for the delivery of the unit of learning. The purpose of this assessment is not a reactive means to determine the student's degree of mastery of the learning outcomes, thus it is not used in the traditional sense. The CBA still serves a target purpose, given its focus on the core syllabus but its purpose is not primarily for assessment for and of learning (see Bloom et al., 1971), therefore it is an ancillary target purpose that represents strong relational autonomy (RA+), but not a core purpose (RA++). The unit of learning now takes a turn back to the sovereign code (PA++, RA+). However, given that it is an ancillary target purpose, it is not a deep shift into the sovereign code (PA++, RA++). Refer to point 3 in Figure 5.

First lesson on unit of learning 1

The lesson is on constitutional law and citizenship. The lesson starts with an activity where students individually reflect on what their understanding is of a citizen. They subsequently share their views during the class reflection. The lesson did not start with providing the student with any theoretical standpoint on the concept, so there is no link to the core academic knowledge yet. Therefore, the students must use their own experience and pre-existing knowledge to express their opinion of what a citizen is. The knowledge they will draw on is the knowledge that they have developed through personal experience, and this constitutes life-world knowledge, i.e., their personal opinions are shaped by the socio-cultural factors to which they are exposed. This makes the student's knowledge a non-target associated constituent (PA-). The purpose of the activity is for students to reflect on their pre-existing ideas of the concept and for the lecturer to obtain a view of what the students know about the concept. This means that relational autonomy has weakened, because it is not focused on teaching the theoretical concept of citizenship.

Figure 5
Autonomy pathways for pre-lesson activities



The target purpose is associated since it is still related to academic purposes, but not to teach anything that is about academic knowledge in terms of the core syllabus or any other associated academic knowledge (RA-). If the lecturer brought the discussion back to the concept of a citizen from the standpoint of the core syllabus, then relational autonomy would have strengthened, but this part of the lesson is followed by another activity before the lecturer brings in the view of a citizen according to the Constitution of South Africa. The lesson starts by taking the unit of learning into just within the exotic code (PA-, RA-) given the knowledge constituent and purpose being associated according to the specific translation device. Therefore, the context is centred on external constituents for external purposes. Refer to point 4 in Figure 6.

The lecturer proceeds to discuss psychological development to further explore the concept of a citizen from the perspectives of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Barrett's (2006) levels of consciousness. The frameworks are not part of the core syllabus of the subject, but constitute academic knowledge, nonetheless. They are used by the lecturer to provide a theoretical underpinning of psychological development, but do not relate to the constitutional standpoint, and therefore represent an ancillary core target constituent (PA+). However, given that the lesson flows into another activity to reinforce the concept of a citizen, the lecturer has

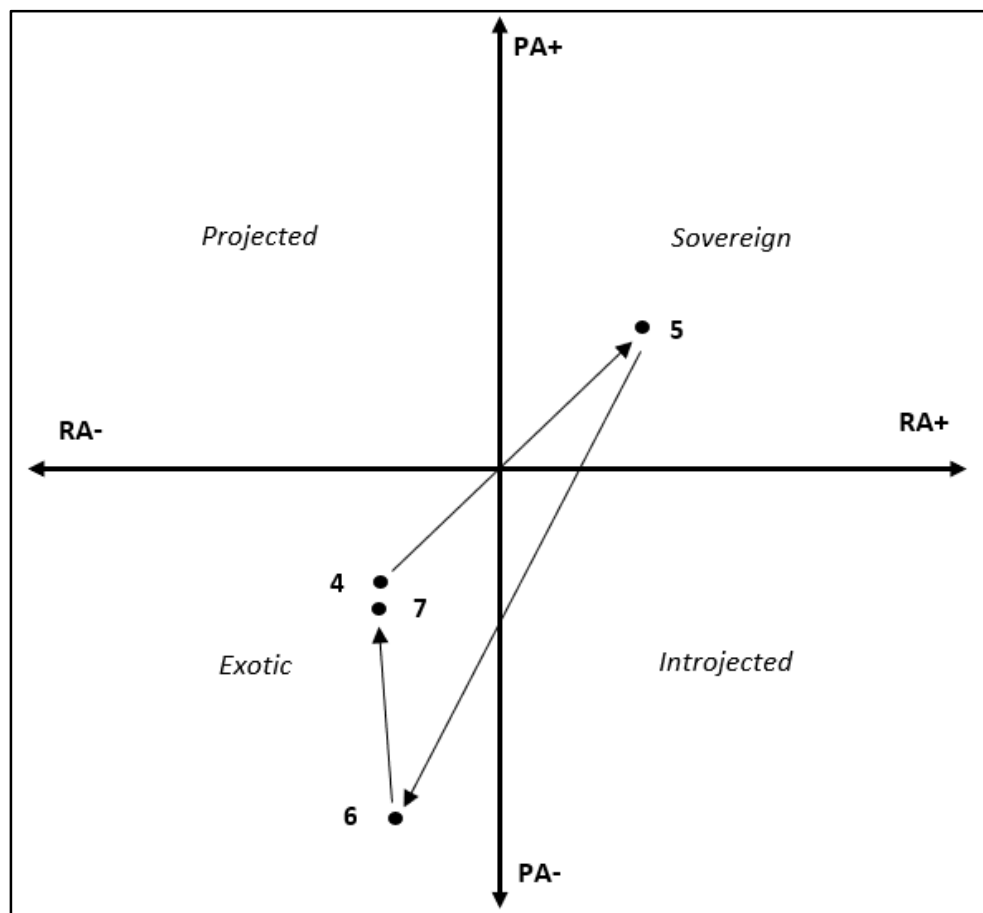
not likely yet related the explanation of the two frameworks to the concept of citizenship, and thus the purpose of the discussion of the frameworks is still mainly to discuss psychological development. This means that the target purpose is ancillary, focusing on teaching the psychological development of a person (RA+). The unit of learning now moves into just within the sovereign code (PA+, RA+). Refer to point 5 in Figure 6.

An exercise of reflection follows that requires the students to consult the 100 greatest South African songs (*The Sunday Times*, 2014)⁶ that influenced the nation; this resource is supplied to them. Students must select one song to which they most relate and determine why that song resonates with them. Here the lecturer progresses to a third activity before bringing the core syllabus into the lesson. The *Sunday Times* top 100 songs do not reflect academic knowledge, nor knowledge from a strictly life-world (or African) context. The knowledge constitutes a move to an unassociated non-target constituent (PA--), with the target focus being another exercise of reflection for academic purposes, but not specifically teaching the concept of a citizen, making it an associated non-target purpose (RA-). Here the unit of learning moves back to the exotic code (PA--, RA-), deeper than the last trip into the exotic code, given the very weakly insulated position, depicted as point 6 in Figure 6.

Furthermore, students reflect on what they value as an individual. They determine their personal views on control, sensation, and security by reflecting on their values in respect of material things, intellect, social aspects, religion, and their spirituality. Here the focus is moving back to the student's life-world knowledge based on their personal views, opinions, and experiences that are shaped by their socio-cultural contexts. The non-target constituent is ancillary (P-). Once again, the lecturer has not yet brought the lesson back to the core syllabus and its interpretation of a citizen but continues to take students via an explorative journey of reflection, thus making it a non-target associated purpose (RA-). The reflection exercise is for academic purposes, but not specifically for teaching the concept of citizenship nor ancillary academic knowledge. The unit of learning stays within the exotic code, but moves just within this code, given the more strongly insulated position toward academic knowledge. This is represented by point 7 in Figure 6. The lesson concludes when students are provided with a homework exercise that requires them to embark individually on a personal reflection exercise to rank themselves on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Barrett's (2006) levels of consciousness and bring their responses to class.

6 The Sunday Times is a South African newspaper.

Figure 6
Autonomy pathways for the first lesson



Second lesson

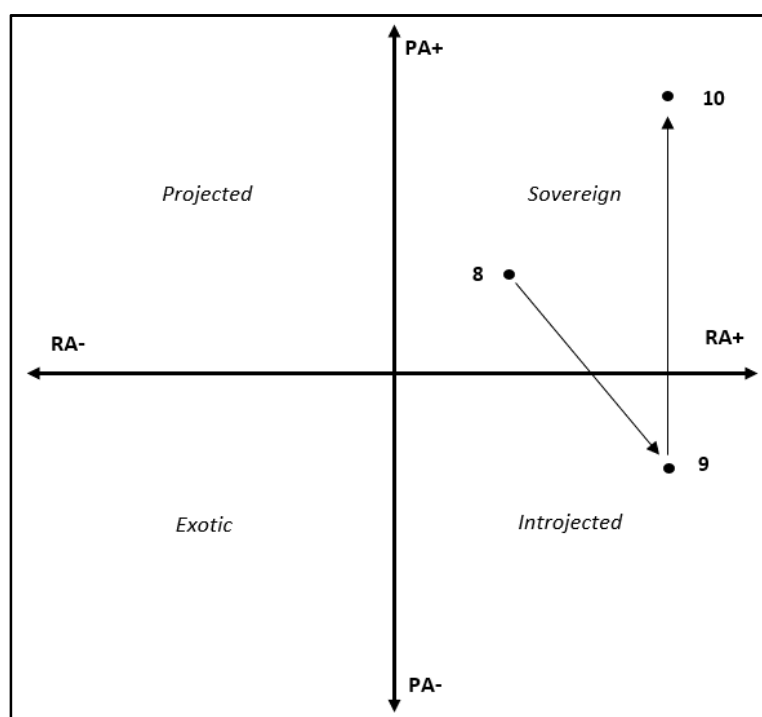
The next lesson commences by revisiting the concept of a citizen. Students must review their initial opinion of what makes a person a citizen and determine whether their opinion has changed or remained the same after completing the personal reflection exercises and share their views. The knowledge constituent focuses on target ancillary academic knowledge as discussed (PA+), and a target ancillary purpose that is to explore the student's understanding of the frameworks and to relate it to their personal reflection on the concept of a citizen, which is an academic purpose (RA+). The unit of learning is brought back to just within the sovereign code (PA+, RA+). Refer to point 8 in Figure 7.

This exercise is followed by the lecturer shaping the broader context of South African society in terms of poverty, literacy, and legal aid provided. Students then share with a partner their layman's diagnostic of a citizen based on the community in which they live or on their community of origin, and South African society as a whole. The exercise requires that they place each on Barrett's (2006) levels of consciousness continuum. They then reflect on whether they were able to place their community and South African society on the same level. The contextual information provided to the student from a South African perspective, and the requirement for the student to use their own contextual perspective constitutes a non-target associated knowledge constituent (PA-), or life-world knowledge. The purpose of this

exercise is to facilitate the student's application of the framework for the South African context and their personal context, and this means that the purpose is academically oriented, but it strengthens relational autonomy progressively to ancillary autonomy (RA+) by applying the contextual information to Barrett's framework. Now the unit of learning moves from the sovereign code to just within the introjected code (PA-, RA+). Refer to point 9 in Figure 7.

Finally, the lecturer introduces the concept of what the law regards a citizen to be by drawing on the Constitution. The lecturer focuses on the core syllabus, and this means that it is a target core knowledge constituent (PA++), while moving the purpose of the discussion to specifically teaching the concept of a citizen (RA++). Here the unit of learning finally moves deep within the sovereign code, bringing the students to the core purpose of the unit of learning. However, at this point the lecturer returns to the students' personal reflections to determine whether there is synergy between their personal understanding of what a citizen is and what the law regards a citizen to be. Furthermore, the students must respond to what this reveals about their own level of consciousness and hierarchy of needs. While each student must reflect on the prior activities for which the position was weakly insulated, it must be related to the core knowledge, thus keeping the focus on the target core knowledge constituent (PA++), and because the purpose of this exercise is to teach the concept of a citizen, it is a target principle for relating constituents, thus representing strong relational autonomy (RA++). The exercise thus keeps the unit of learning deep within the sovereign code. The lecturer introduces the summative assessment, discussed in the next section that has a detailed brief, and must be completed in their own time. Refer to point 10 in Figure 7.

Figure 7
Autonomy pathways for the second lesson



Assessment: POE Activity (summative assessment)

Students are assessed on their achievement of the outcomes of the unit of learning via a POE activity. The POE activity takes on an open-book assignment format. The assignment provides a detailed brief that outlines the case of an individual who is seeking refugee status in South Africa. The assignment requires that the students complete the asylum seeker's application form on behalf of the individual. Part of learning about the Constitution means that the students must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the concept of citizenship. Students are required to apply this knowledge to solve problems in a real or simulated environment. The lessons prepared students to understand this concept from both a layman's and a legal perspective. The assessment first requires that the student must consult the relevant notes related to the unit of learning, including prescribed texts such as the Constitution, the South African Citizenship Act 88/1995 as amended by Act 7/2010, the Immigration Act 13 of 2002 and other sources of reading as annexures to the assignment that include the Refugees Act 130 of 1998 and the *Migrants' guide to the asylum and immigration systems* (Legal Resources Centre, n.d.). These resources are aligned to the achievement of the outcome of the unit of learning that is to learn about citizenship, and to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the concept of citizenship by applying this knowledge to solve a simulated problem. The assigned readings are target, core constituents since contextually they are strongly insulated for the achievement of the assignment outcomes (PA++). The purpose of prereading is to reinforce the student's understanding of the theoretical concepts as taught during the lessons, and thus it represents autonomous principles for relating constituents, i.e., to apply the knowledge as a means to show that they have learned the principles (RA++). Thus, the assignment starts deep within the sovereign code. This is represented by point 11 in Figure 8.

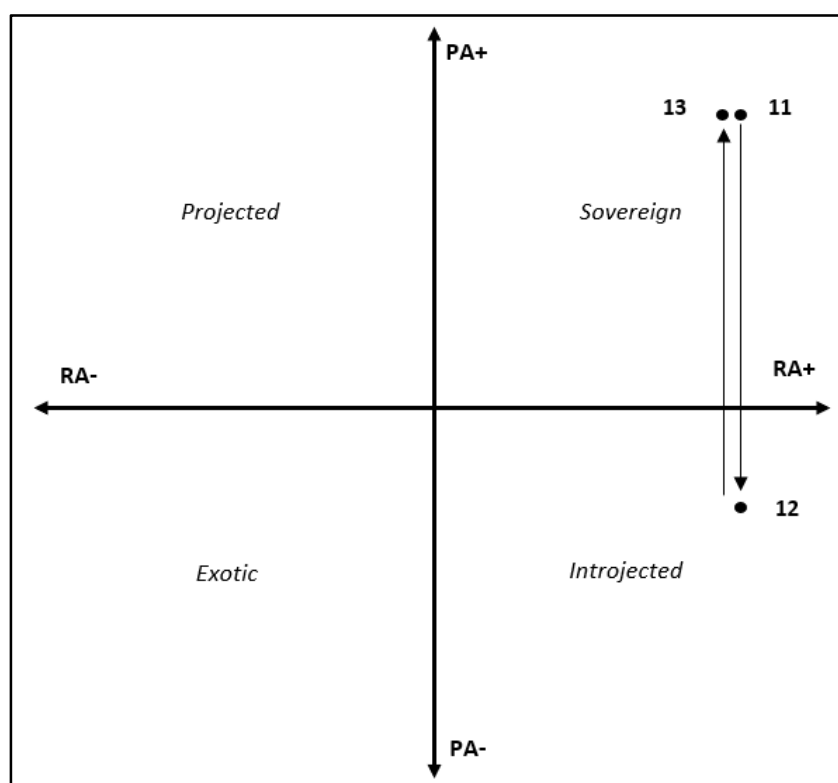
The students must subsequently reference the case study for the purpose of applying the outcomes. The case study is furnished with examples of societal issues such as xenophobia or discrimination against homosexuals. The lesson and assignment enable the students to navigate personal objections or opinions in the interest of their professional duty. The brief provides information that is very closely related to the kind of case with which the students will work in the South African context. For example, the case study from the brief reads,

Makunde, a Zimbabwean citizen, has requested PASSOP refugee centre to assist him with an application for asylum. His community threatened to burn him alive due to his gay male sexual orientation. You are a volunteer at the centre and during his initial interview you are informed that Makunde's parents, Mutumwa and Millcent, are still living in Zimbabwe. The two of them were frequent visitors to South Africa but it is the first time that Makunde set foot on South African soil. Makunde served in the Zimbabwean army for 4 years before he went to study at the University of Harare, completing a 3-year degree in Gender Studies. He also stayed briefly in Buluwayo, Chitungwiza, Gweru, and Kadoma. Makunde produced an authentic Zimbabwean identity document that contains the information in the text box.

The project case study presents non-academic knowledge. The case study thus represents a non-target constituent. However, the content of the case study is related to life-world

knowledge for academic purposes, as aligned to the specific translation device. The contextual information provides students with information from a socio-cultural standpoint that is used in performing the requirements of the project. The contextual information constitutes associated knowledge (PA-) that must be applied to achieve the outcomes of the unit of learning and to assess the student's understanding of the theoretical concepts and achievement of the outcomes, thus it has a target core purpose (RA++). The unit of learning now moves to just within the introjected code (PA-, RA++). (Refer to point 12 in Figure 8.) However, once the student applies the facts of the case study to the project requirements, i.e., to complete the asylum seeker's application form, the form constitutes the target core constituent of the exercise given its strongly insulated position within the context of completing the outcomes of the assignment (PA++), while the purpose of the exercise embodies autonomous principles (RA++), thus the completion of the asylum seeker's application form is centred on internal constituents for internal purposes (PA++, RA++) of employing the theoretical principles of the unit of learning in order to achieve the outcomes, as per Table 1. Now the assignment brings the unit of learning back from the introjected code to deep within the sovereign code, as shown by point 13 in Figure 8.

Figure 8
Autonomy pathways for POE activity



Discussion of findings

In this study, I set out to determine how curriculum responsiveness can be addressed in pedagogic practices to achieve epistemological access by accommodating the diverse socio-

cultural realities of students. I proposed that cultural responsiveness should include incorporating the socio-cultural experiences, realities, and diversity of students into instructional strategies and learning pathways, and that curriculum responsiveness is about collectively embracing economic, cultural, disciplinary, and learning responsiveness. While teaching pedagogy often involves simplifying new knowledge by using context-specific meanings and explanations, adapting knowledge for different contexts can be achieved only by decontextualizing knowledge (Maton, 2013). Autonomy codes are enacted through autonomy pathways that either enable or constrain knowledge integration. Levels of integration are enacted when recontextualisation of knowledge practices is positioned in, and moves between, autonomy codes or pathways. Unless the correct autonomy pathways are enacted, knowledge will remain segmented. Thus, my discussion of the findings will address whether the autonomy pathways enacted in the case study indeed facilitate the integration of this life-world knowledge with the curriculum.

The pre-lesson activities start deep within the sovereign code with the prereading activity that is the formal curriculum, as defined by the specific translation device. The unit of learning leaves the sovereign code by including other content from the YouTube videos but retains the target purpose that moves deep into the introjected code. The CBA shifts to target content, while maintaining the target purpose through strong relational autonomy. By maintaining strong relational autonomy throughout each phase of the pre-lesson activities, integration is achieved (see Maton & Howard, 2018). However, by using unassociated content in the YouTube videos, life-world knowledge has not been used per se, but the YouTube videos are used to simplify new knowledge. While non-target knowledge can certainly serve to support student engagement and understanding (Maton & Howard, 2018), the pre-lesson activities have not brought life-world knowledge into the curriculum.

The first lesson begins just within the exotic code by using non-target associated knowledge where students reflect on personal perceptions. Relational autonomy is weak in focusing on students' pre-existing ideas of the concept of a citizen. The discussion proceeds to address target, ancillary content that are the frameworks used for the discussion of psychological development. The target purpose is ancillary, focusing on teaching the psychological development of a person, thus shifting the unit of learning to just within the sovereign code. The lecturer progresses to a third activity in the lesson. The *Sunday Times* top 100 songs list is non-target, unassociated content, with the target focus being another exercise of reflection for academic purposes, but not specifically teaching the concept of a citizen, making it a non-target associated purpose. Now the unit of learning shifts to the exotic code, but more deeply than the last trip into this code because of the weakly insulated content. Furthermore, students reflect on what they value as individuals, to determine their personal views that are shaped by their socio-cultural contexts. Here the focus is on the students' life-world knowledge. The reflection exercise is for academic purposes, but not specifically teaching the concept of citizenship nor ancillary academic knowledge. The unit of learning stays within the exotic code, but moves to just within this code, given the more strongly insulated position toward academic knowledge. The lesson starts in the exotic code, moves to the sovereign code, moves back to the exotic code, and then stays there until the end of the lesson. While the

content has more strongly focused on life-world knowledge for the first and last activities as non-target associated knowledge constituents, the relational autonomy was weak, because the target purpose was not achieved through integration with the target content. The only reason the pathway to the sovereign code was created was because of the target ancillary content and purpose that still did not bring about integration that would have been achieved with a deeper move into the sovereign code. Integration would have required that the pathway leave one code to engage with others, but then it must bring that knowledge back to the sovereign code (Maton & Howard, 2018). Furthermore, the lesson ends in the exotic code, never returning to the sovereign code to integrate the external knowledge with the internal syllabus. The knowledge is likely left segmented from the core syllabus.

The second lesson starts in the sovereign code where the focus is on using target ancillary academic knowledge, specifically Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) and Barrett's (2006) levels of consciousness, to explore the student's understanding of the frameworks and to relate it to their personal reflection on the concept of a citizen, which is an ancillary academic purpose. The lecturer further uses contextual information about South African society in terms of poverty, literacy, and legal aid to facilitate the students' application of the framework for the South African context and their personal context, which means the purpose is academically oriented. This contextual focus is life-world knowledge that is non-target associated knowledge, and the relational autonomy remains strong. The lesson further progresses to the lecturer introducing target core content i.e., the constitutional definition of a citizen, and strengthens relational autonomy to the target core purpose that takes the lesson deep into the sovereign code. Here is an example of bringing in external life-world knowledge to facilitate knowledge integration by starting in the sovereign code, moving to the introjected code by drawing on the non-target associated knowledge, but for academic purposes, which maintained the strong relational autonomy to engage with other external knowledge forms and to bring that knowledge back to the sovereign code to ensure that recontextualization takes place, and integration occurs. Moreover, the lecturer returns to the students' personal reflection to determine whether there is synergy between their personal understanding of what a citizen is and what the law regards a citizen to be, thus life-world knowledge must be related to the core knowledge, and this, in turn, keeps the focus on the target core knowledge constituent to teach the concept of a citizen as the target principle. The exercise thus keeps the unit of learning deep within the sovereign code. This last exercise further reinforces the recontextualization of knowledge and integration with the core target.

The POE activity starts deep in the sovereign code because students must consult the prescribed texts related to the unit of learning that are target, core constituents since contextually they are strongly insulated for the achievement of the assignment outcomes, and the purpose of prereading is to reinforce the student's understanding of the theoretical concepts as taught by the lessons, and thus embody strong relational autonomy. By referencing the case study for the purpose of applying the outcomes of the assignment, there is a move to the introjected code, the contextual information constitutes non-target associated knowledge, or life-world knowledge that must be applied to achieve the outcomes of the unit of learning and to assess the students' understanding of the theoretical concepts and

achievement of the outcomes, thus it has a target core purpose. The application of the facts of the case study to the asylum seeker's application form that is a target core constituent of the exercise, means the purpose of the exercise embodies autonomous principles and the assignment moves from the introjected code to deep within the sovereign code. Here strong relational autonomy is maintained throughout the POE activity, while decontextualising the knowledge, and then recontextualising it via the return trip to the sovereign code. More specifically, the trip to the introjected code is facilitated through life-world knowledge via the non-target associated knowledge. The important requirement for supporting integration is to maintain strong relational autonomy.

Research implications and recommendations

Practical implications

Each phase of the unit of learning is technically segmented because it occurs during different timeframes. Thus, if we consider Figure 6 that shows that point 7 ends in the exotic code, and Figure 7 that shows that point 8 starts in the sovereign code, because these two lessons occurred at different times, even though there is continuation from one lesson to the other, each phase of the unit of learning must return to the sovereign code to ensure that knowledge is not left segmented before the next phase of the unit of learning, therefore bringing it back to the sovereign code will support integration (Maton & Howard, 2018). Moreover, integration is achieved only when the pathway moves deep into the sovereign code since a move to just within the Sovereign code does not bring the content and purpose back to the core syllabus because it focuses on target ancillary content and purposes. While the exotic code can support student engagement and understanding, as per the specific translation device, it does not bring about curriculum responsiveness. It could, however, be used to scaffold the level of engagement by moving from the sovereign code to the exotic code, and then back to the sovereign code, followed by a pathway from the sovereign code to the introjected code, and back to the sovereign code. The aim is to recontextualise before decontextualising again, thereby enabling students to build on previous knowledge and understanding and enabling cumulative and adaptable knowledge-building (Maton, 2013).

To achieve curriculum responsiveness, the selection of content must align to weaker positional autonomy via associated knowledge influenced by the political, social, and cultural context in which it exists (Barnett & Coate, 2005). Furthermore, the purpose must maintain strong relational autonomy when creating pathways to ensure that integration occurs through recontextualization. For the selected subject, it appears that the opportunities to achieve integration with indigenous knowledge was mostly achieved by using activities that require reflection and students drawing on their personal experiences or cultural, social, and political contexts to reflect on the curriculum (see Luckett, 2010). Furthermore, assessment can also be integrated with indigenous knowledge even if it requires more structure, which, for this subject, was achieved by customising case studies so that they draw on the contextual dynamics of society, and the students can recontextualise the content by applying it to the outcomes of the unit of learning through the assessment requirements. These findings

therefore uphold the contention that integration is not merely achieved by bringing together knowledge and knowledge practices, but that the appropriate autonomy pathways to bring about curriculum responsiveness can be achieved only through the conscious and appropriate selection and repurpose of knowledge to create the appropriate pathways (Maton & Howard, 2018).

Theoretical implications

In this study, I attempted to explore a new approach to forwarding the curriculum transformation agenda by leveraging pedagogy as the means for realising epistemological access. To this end, in order to propose a pragmatic approach for realising such transformation at the curriculum level, I used the autonomy dimension of LCT to explore how different knowledge forms could be integrated to achieve epistemological access, and to create an autonomous curriculum to engage students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is the first time, as far as I am aware, that the autonomy dimension has been used to explore curriculum transformation and curriculum responsiveness as phenomena, particularly in the South African context, thereby allowing the theory to be applied beyond the bounds of previous research contexts, while also yielding a new viewpoint on curriculum transformation and curriculum responsiveness.

Research limitations and future research

Given that this study was limited to document analysis, the findings are limited to the information contained in these documents. More detailed accounts of the teaching and learning activities can be achieved through lesson observations and interviews with lecturers to account for potential gaps in the documentation. The findings are limited given the focus on one unit of learning. However, the intention of this research was to put forward principles of curriculum responsiveness from the case study, so the findings serve as a guiding principle, rather than a generalisation of curriculum responsiveness in the selected subject. This study focused only on one subject as a case study. Future studies could apply the translation device to other subjects to compare the findings. This study does not attempt to generalise on the matter of epistemological access through curriculum responsiveness but, given the detailed systematic analysis using the pedagogic device, it can serve as a guiding principle for considering the appropriate pathways for enabling epistemological access.

Acknowledgements

This research was made possible by funding and support from the Fundani Centre at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

References

- Adonis, C. K., & Silinda, F. (2021). Institutional culture and transformation in higher education in post-1994 South Africa: A critical race theory analysis. *Critical African Studies*, 13(1), 73–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2021.1911448>
- Alexander, R. (2008). *Education for all, the quality imperative and the problem of pedagogy*. Institute of Education, University of London.
- Anderson, M. (2001). The complex relations between the academy and industry: Views from the literature. *Journal of Higher Education*, 72(2), 226–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2001.11778879>
- Arjomandi, A., Seufert, J., O'Brien, M., & Anwar, S. (2018). Active teaching strategies and student engagement: A comparison of traditional and non-traditional business students. *e-Journal of Business Education & Scholarship of Teaching*, 12(2), 120–140. link.gale.com/apps/doc/A561344961/AONE?u=anon~38fc6145&sid=googleScholar&xid=231d57ab.
- Barnett, R., & Coate, K. (2005). *Engaging the curriculum in higher education*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Barrett, R. (2006). *Building a values-driven organization*. Routledge.
- Bernstein, B. (1977) *Class, codes and control, Volume III: Towards a theory of educational transmissions* (2nd ed.). Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: Theory, research, critique*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Biggs, J. B. (2008). Aligning teaching for constructing learning. *Focus*, 16 (1), 1–3.
- Bloom, B. S., Hastings, J. T., & Madaus, G. F. (1971). *Handbook on formative and summative evaluation of student learning*. McGraw-Hill.
- Boughey, C. (2005). 'Epistemological' access to the university: An alternative perspective. *South African journal of higher education*, 19(3), 230–242. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC37141>
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production*. Polity Press.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>

- Chetty, Y., & Vigar-Ellis, D. (2012). Understanding the needs of science access students for university support services. *South African Journal of Higher Education, 26*(5), 908–925. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC132760>
- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996).
- du Plooy, L., & Zilindile, M. (2014). Problematizing the concept epistemological access with regard to foundation phase education towards quality schooling. *South African Journal of Childhood Education, 4*(1), 187–201.
- Fataar, A. (2012). Pedagogical justice and student engagement in South African schooling: Working with the cultural capital of disadvantaged students. *Perspectives in Education, 30*(4), 52–62. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC128204>
- Fraser, N. (2008). Social justice in the age of identity politics: Redistribution, recognition, and participation. In *Geographic Thought* (pp. 72–89). Routledge.
- Gale, T., Mills, C., & Cross, R. (2017). Socially inclusive teaching: Belief, design, action as pedagogic work. *Journal of Teacher Education, 68*(3), 345–356. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487116685754>
- Gibbs, G. (2008). *Analysing qualitative data*. Sage.
- Gillen-O’Neel, C. (2021). Sense of belonging and student engagement: A daily study of first- and continuing-generation college students. *Research in Higher Education, 62*(1), 45–71. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-019-09570-y>
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Longman.
- Heleta, S. (2016). Decolonisation of higher education: Dismantling epistemic violence and Eurocentrism in South Africa. *Transformation in Higher Education, 1*(1), 1–8. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-57acdfafc>
- Herbert, M., Conana, C., Volkwyn, T., & Marshall, D. (2011). Multiple modes of epistemological access in Physics. In Bozalek, V., Garraway, J., & McKenna, S. (eds.). *Case studies of epistemological access in foundation/extended curriculum programme studies in South Africa*. University of the Western Cape.
- Higgs, P. (2012). African philosophy and the decolonisation of education in Africa: Some critical reflections. *Education Philosophy and Theory, 44*(2), 22–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2011.00794.x>
- Higgs, P. (2016). The African renaissance and the transformation of the higher education curriculum in South Africa. *Africa Education Review, 13*(1), 87–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2016.1186370>
- Immigration Act 13 of 2002*.

- Kruger, S. J., & Welman, J. C. (2001). *Research methodology* (2nd ed.). Oxford university press.
- Le Grange, L. (2016). Decolonising the university curriculum. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 30(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.20853/30-2-709>
- Legal Resources Centre. (n.d.) *Migrants' guide to the asylum and immigration systems*.
- Liccardo, S., Botsis, H., & Dominguez-Whitehead, Y. (2015). Background knowledge and epistemological access: Challenges facing black women in a SET scholarship programme. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 29(1), 373–389. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC172781>
- Lingard, B., Hayes, D., Mills, M., & Christie, P. (2003). *Leading learning: Making hope practical in schools*. Open University Press.
- Luckett, K. (2010). Knowledge claims and codes of legitimation: Implications for curriculum recontextualisation in South African higher education. *Africanus*, 40(1), 4–18. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC22689>
- Luvalo, L. M. (2019). Relationship between transformation and institutional culture. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 33(1), 184–199. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-15a669c94c>
- Maphosa, C., Sikhwari, T. D., Ndebele, C., & Masehela, M. (2014). Interrogating factors affecting students' epistemological access in a South African university. *Anthropologist*, 17(2), 409–420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2014.11891450>
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370–396.
- Maton, K., & Howard, S. K. (2018). Taking autonomy tours: A key to integrative knowledge-building. *LCT Centre Occasional Paper*, 1 (June), 1–35.
- Maton, K. (2013). Making semantic waves: A key to cumulative knowledge-building. *Linguistics and Education*, 24, 8–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2012.11.005>
- Maton, K. (2014). *Knowledge and knowers: Towards a realist sociology of education*. Routledge.
- Maton, K. (2014). TALL order? Legitimation Code Theory for academic language and learning. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning*, 8(3), A34–A48. <https://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/348>
- Maton, K., & Moore, R. (2010). Coalitions of the mind. In K. Maton & R. Moore (Eds.), *Social realism, knowledge and the sociology of education. Coalitions of the Mind* (pp. 1–13). Continuum.

- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction*. (5th ed). Pearson.
- Miller, F. A., & Alvarado, K. (2005). Incorporating documents into qualitative nursing research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 37(4), 348–353.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1547-5069.2005.00060.x>
- Moll, I. (2004). Curriculum responsiveness: The anatomy of a concept. In Griesel, H. (eds.). *Curriculum responsiveness: Case studies in higher education*. South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association.
- Moremoholo, T. P. (2023). The role of culture in shaping the curriculum of higher education in South Africa. *Journal of Curriculum Studies Research*, 5(2), 37–55.
<https://doi.org/10.46303/jcsr.2023.17>
- Morrow, W. 2009. *Bounds of democracy: Epistemological access in higher education*. HSRC Press.
- Motala, S., Dieltiens, V., & Sayed, Y. (2009). Physical access to schooling in South Africa: Mapping dropout and age-grade progression in two districts. *Comparative Education*, 45(2), 251–263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060902920948>
- Muller, J. (2014). Every picture tells a story: Epistemological access and knowledge. *Education As Change*, 18(2), 255–269.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/16823206.2014.932256>
- Myers, M. D. (2009). *Qualitative research in business & management*. Sage Publications Ltd.
- Pather, S., Norodien-Fataar, N., Cupido, X., & Mkonto, N. (2017). First year students' experience of access and engagement at a University of Technology. *Journal of Education*, 69, 161–184.
http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2520-98682017000200008&lng=en&tlng=en
- Refugees Act 130 of 1998*.
- Sawahel, W. (2017). *Taking a closer look at student attrition and migration*. Retrieved March 5, 2019, from
<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20170816194548180>
- Sehoole, C., & Adeyemo, K. S. (2016). Access to, and success in, higher education in post-apartheid South Africa: Social justice analysis. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 14(1), 1–18. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90016098>
- Slonimsky, L., & Shalem, Y. (2006). Pedagogic responsiveness for academic depth. *Journal of Education*, 40(1), 37–58. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/AJA0259479X_72

South African Citizenship Act 88 of 1995 as amended by Act 7 of 2010.

Teese, R., & Polesel, J. (2003). *Undemocratic schooling: Equity and quality in mass secondary education in Australia*. Melbourne University Press.

Themane, M. J., & Mabasa, L. T. 2022. Epistemic access and success of historically disadvantaged students during the COVID-19 pandemic: A South African experience. *Perspectives in Education*, 40(1), 18–38. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-persed_v40_n1_a2

The Sunday Times. (2014, July 15). *The 100 greatest South African songs*. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/lifestyle/2014-07-15-the-100-greatest-south-african-songs/>

Thomas, L. (2002). Student retention in higher education: The role of institutional habitus. *Journal of Educational Policy*, 17(4), 423–442. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930210140257>

Thomas, L. (2012). Building student engagement and belonging in higher education at a time of change. *Paul Hamlyn Foundation*, 100,1–99.