

CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM REFORM, DESIGN, AND MANAGEMENT IN THE 21st CENTURY: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

T.J. MKHONTO AND A. MULLER

ABSTRACT

Higher education curriculum reform is a worldwide phenomenon induced by both the internal and external environments of higher education functioning. While a variety of factors are attributed to these changing environments, this paper focuses mainly on the epistemological domain characterising these changes. As the fundamental "business" of higher education, "knowledge" is perceived in this discussion as the essential terrain in which the competing global-local (glocal) interests and concerns unfold. Based on a **case study** model of two higher educational institutions with traditionally disparate academic cultures, the paper concludes with a trilogy of models posited as facilitating space for epistemological diversity.

Keywords: curriculum reform/transformation; epistemological diversity; higher education; Africanisation.

1. INTRODUCTION

That higher education (HE) is confronted with the challenge of reform is no longer in dispute. The scope, pace and direction of change in the functioning of higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide have profoundly impacted on the organisational and curriculum character of higher learning (Altbach *et al.*, 2005:1-3; Muller, 2007:8-9). In defining the curriculum's capacity to respond appropriately to the external and internal challenges, the **contradictory** nature of the multiple stakeholder interests has to be addressed as well (Mkhonto, 2007:xxvii; 120; Power, 2001:22). The content and form of the curriculum have inevitably become major determinants of the nature and trajectory of institutional responses to any proposed change (Muller, 2007:6).

1.1 Rationale and context of the study

The South African HE system is confronted firstly with the problem of de-contextualising and disengaging the curriculum from its erstwhile **political** ramifications (CHE, 2000:9). Secondly, the post-1994 democratic dispensation faces the challenge of assimilating affordable and quality HE into the broader socio-economic imperatives now facing the country (Kraak, 2000:17).

The study began in 2002, when the former TWR (Technikon Witwatersrand) had not yet been officially designated as the merging partner with the former RAU (Rand Afrikaans University) to form the new organisational structure now known as UJ (University of Johannesburg). The study was motivated by the desire to determine the extent to which both the academic and vocational spheres of knowledge construction addressed the new and emerging socio-dynamics of the country, against the backdrop of tensions in the glocal (global-local) sphere.

1.2 Problem statement

Higher education curriculum development and transformation are impacted on by major external forces such as globalisation and ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) which have also resulted in the advent of heterogeneous student populations. The content and organisation of the curriculum is confronted with the challenge of providing “relevant” knowledge, experiences, and competencies that will enable them to function effectively in society, the economy, and in personal development. Given that the constituency of higher learning is increasing, and often with contradictory expectations and interests, will the curriculum’s content and organisation be able to equitably meet the concerns of both society and the world of work, while effectively maintaining global competitiveness?

1.3 Purpose and research objectives

The general purpose of the literature review and case studies was to determine the extent to which local HEIs’ curriculum and epistemological orientations ‘conformed’ or ‘deviated’ from international curriculum practices and trends, as well as how the glocal tensions mediated themselves in the actual curriculum design and management practices and processes. In that regard, policy **rhetoric** was able to be differentiated from actual policy implementation. The extent of institutional curriculum ‘deviation’ or ‘conformity’ was therefore determined on the basis of the collective integration of literature-based and empirical data and information. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1.3.1 to provide an overview and analysis of local and international HE reform, design and management challenges;
- 1.3.2 to survey a sample of local HE institutions’ management of curriculum and material development processes, structures and outputs; and
- 1.3.3 to develop an appropriate curriculum conceptual model for South African HEIs that will encompass the process, content and management dimensions of curriculum development, and implementation, taking the African context into account.

1.4 Research design, methodology and fieldwork

The qualitative approach constituted the most critical tenet of research design. The research methods were framed in the context of extensive literature-based and policy reviews. A **case study** survey was employed at two Gauteng-based HEIs with historically distinctive academic cultures; one a traditional university. Considering the huge number of recognised public higher and further education institutions in the country, judgement sampling became the primary sampling method most suited to this scenario, and was applied to construct inclusive representativity on the basis of the researcher's critical judgement (Sarantakos, 2000:151) of what constituted similarities or variability (university and technikon 'eccentrics') between the selected HEIs, despite their disparate institutional and intellectual cultures. Institutional degrees of variability and/or similarity in respect of **actual** curriculum reform, design, and management practices at the two designated research sites included: the curriculum's academic and/or vocational inclination, extent of innovative usage of assessment techniques, and the incorporation or exclusion of Africanisation. To the extent that the unit standards (items) to be 'measured' are representative of institutional curriculum challenges, they constituted the variables whose commonality (prevalence) is pervasive in all HEIs (Mkhonto, 2007:300).

The collection of data from the two sampled HEIs was facilitated mainly through the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews serving as the "... instrument[s] of observation" (Henning, 2005:81). Both data triangulation and method triangulation were utilised to complement each other and maximise the probability and 'truth value' of the findings. Method triangulation on the other hand, was utilised through the exploratory (questionnaires-related) and participatory (interviews-related) approaches, both in turn informed by the extensive literature review incorporated in the different research-related units of analysis (Sarantakos, 2000:141). The **combined** approach of using the questionnaire and interview methods in this case became an inter-method (as opposed to intra-method) form of triangulation (p. 168). The implication is that, while the questionnaire is more elaborate on curriculum issues, the interviews tended to be more focused and contained. At Institution A (the university), 30 questionnaires were distributed among senior academics from various disciplines within the Faculty of Education, and only 16 were returned. No interview materialised as none of the respondents was available for that purpose. At Institution B (the former technikon), 16 questionnaires were also completed by academics from various disciplines, and only 10 were returned. Two (semi-structured) interviews were held and tape-recorded on separate occasions, one with a senior academic in the Faculty of Education, and the other with a senior management academic. The two interviewees were not asked to complete the questionnaires.

2. OVERVIEW OF TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

In most parts of the world, the trend towards HE organisational and instructional development has tended to follow the hegemonic European university model(s) (Altbach *et al.*, 2005:1-3; Giddens, 1990:174-175). From this paper's perspective, the **epistemological** domain of HE functioning is primarily located in the spheres of Barnett's (1997:29ff) classical "one dimensionality" (Mode 1) and the later "multi-dimensionality" (Mode 2) paradigm of the post-modern era. One-dimensionality accentuates HE as presiding over knowledge monopoly and establishing "... the internal self-determination" of HEIs (Pretorius, 2003:16-17), or the "... the dislocation of intellectual culture [which] is undoubtedly a component of the late twentieth-century condition" (Scott, 1997:19-20). The hitherto classical organisation of subjects into disciplines and departments 'privatised' knowledge and learning into the hands of the professors (and other "knowledge elites" (Muller, 2000:14)) acting as gatekeepers to the acquisition of 'their' (professors') knowledge (Duderstadt, 1999:43).

On the other hand, the classical mode of one-dimensional knowledge creation has gradually been outmoded by the 'unbundling' of disciplines into many new subject fields (Mode 2), developing largely due to ICT and the concomitant knowledge explosion (Scott, 1997:19-20). On the extreme end of the knowledge explosion is the notion of a revolution of ideas in the Kuhnian sense; that paradigm shifts have been necessitated by a **disjuncture** in the cohesiveness of scientific disciplines. Lyotard (1994:4) attests further that the technology-research nexus, as well as the dislocation of "normal science", have contributed to the preponderance of knowledge fields. The preponderance itself has actuated itself from the late nineteenth century through a five-stage matrix of acceleration, complexity, interaction, circularity and reflexivity (Scott, 1997:167-17). The disjuncture itself has been so rapid and uncontrollable that the multiplication of subject fields each with its own professional codes, publications, and standards of acceptance into its respective 'academic tribe' defies commonplace logic.

2.1 Higher Education's responses to epistemological transformation

A fundamental HE response to curriculum reform has been in the form of either maintaining disciplinarity as the primary academic and organisational terrain of knowledge, or opting for more open intellectual cultures (Bridges, 2000:37; Muller, 2007:6-7, 13). Barnett's (1997:29) model of "one dimensionality" could be viewed as an example of Mode 1 orientation to the 'initiation' of particularly undergraduate students into the canons of respective disciplines, as determined by the professoriate (Muller, 2007:16).

The re-affirmation of the discipline-based curriculum albeit increasing trends towards inter-/trans-/ and multi-disciplinarity, will remain an extant feature of knowledge production, especially where research funding is premised on the promotion of basic and pure research (Bridges, 2000:50, 53 in Muller, 2007:24).

2.1.1 Dislocation of disciplinarity

Various epistemological responses to the changing HE environment have been noted. Only a few are mentioned in this case to indicate the trend towards both "... the deconstruction of the subject" (Bridges, 2000:42) as a major cohesive unit of the content and organisation of knowledge, as well as "... the deconstruction of the university" (p 42), according to which the traditional university has been de-emphasised as the pristine site of knowledge production.

- **The key skills approach:** The focus on skills development links knowledge with employment and employability. The relevance of the curriculum in this context is weighted on account of skills that enhance economic performativity and job compliances (Muller, 2007). The vocationalisation of the curriculum thus emphasises 'knowing how' (training) to 'knowing what' (education). Fundamental to performativity is the assumption that key skills will transfer from one task and content to another, which is so far an insufficiently proven proposition.
- **Learning from experience:** The notion of 'experiential learning' has been found to have a dualistic application. On the one hand, and for work preparation, it is applied to refer to **formal** on-the-job experiences that students acquire as part of the integration of theory and practice. In that context, it would constitute a practicum for that particular field of study. On the other hand, there is the tension based on the notion of HE-obtained knowledge, which is thus 'assessable' by its (HE's) standards of quality assurance. Not only is the epistemological authority of traditional higher learning challenged by experience-based learning, the role of academics - and implicitly, that of curriculum managers - is also threatened (Bridges, 2000:47; Scott, 1997:42).
- **The Web-based curriculum:** The copious expansion and availability of knowledge through the Internet presents inordinate opportunities and challenges for the HE sector. Not only is the place of learning reconceptualised from the traditional idea of the campus, so is the 'scholarly community', as manifested by the prevalence of a plethora of 'invisible colleges' and their 'invisible academics'. The identity of 'the student community' has also been reconceptualised due to the **heterogeneity** of students increasingly demanding access to higher learning (Duderstadt, 2000:281).

- **Modularisation:** Sometimes referred to as **unitisation**, modularity allows for student-centered learning and flexibility in respect of students' particular needs and circumstances (Bridges, 2000:43). Whereas the linearity of course structures "... allow[s] no [student] options whatsoever, because of disciplinary logic" (Squires, 1990: 104), modularity allows for the aggregation (cashing in) of credits at the completion of a (free-standing or packaged) unit or units of study, after which a recognised formal qualification is granted. A student can assemble a cross-disciplinary package of unit standards and structure a qualification, thus enhancing inter-, trans-, or multi-disciplinarity (Bridges, 2000:43).
- **Credit Accumulation and Transfer Schemes/CATS:** Modular and credit-based learning schemes are **interrelated** (CHE, 2002:110,119) in that packaged or free-standing modules (acquired through formal learning) have to be weighted and accorded a value (credit) within the same institution or inter-institutionally. CAT encompasses the accreditation of learning acquired formally, informally, or non-formally (DoE, 2007:8). CHE (2002:110) goes as far as linking 'credit-rating' and 'experiential learning' on the one hand, and on the other, 'community-based' or 'service learning' as well as '[industry-based] co-operative education'. This linkage is viewed as pivotal to transformation strategies for the South African HE system.
- **Recognition and Accreditation of Prior (formal) Learning/RAPL:** CHE (2002: 105) articulates that the notions of formally accredited prior learning (RAPL) and informally acquired experiential learning (RAPEL) are premised on two general assumptions. Firstly, the experiences and abilities that people obtain throughout their lives in a variety of contexts *"... are equivalent, or at least comparable, to those achieved by learners in formal education systems"*. Secondly, despite the place and methods of its acquisition, *"... non-accredited learning has the potential to be recognized and accredited in relation to formal qualifications in an outcomes-based education system"* [italics mine].
- **Lifelong learning:** Lifelong learning specifically addresses the needs of adult learners (Breier, 2001:5). In compliance with the demand for **responsiveness** and **access**, HE addresses these needs by providing part-time modular courses, distance learning and resource-based learning. In the SA context, RPL has been 'promoted' (p. 5) to facilitate access and seamless learning to those whose formal education has been disrupted or denied by apartheid. It is almost aphoristic that a seamless and lifelong form of learning is the recognition that all learners are not isomorphic; *ergo*, their different learning needs, expectations, and experiences warrant **inclusion** in any learning programme that would enhance their mobility throughout life.

The provision of knowledge as strategic resource in the contemporary era requires the enhancement of a dualistic (economic/human capital (resources) *vis-à-vis* the humanistic/human rights culture) approach UNESCO (1998:7).

2.1.2 Empirically-determined epistemological trends

Consistent with the current topic and other salient units of analysis, the institutional data presented herein focuses mainly on the epistemological trends and Africanisation.

TABLE 1: Epistemological base of institutional curriculum models

In fulfilling its mission, your institution embraces curriculum models that are epistemologically:	Institution A		Institution B	
	N	%	N	%
entirely discipline based	4	25%	1	10%
inter-/multi-disciplinary	3	19%	-	-
trans-disciplinary	2	12%	-	-
career-oriented/vocational	1	6%	7	70%
profession-oriented	3	19%	2	20%
other	3	19%	-	-
TOTAL	16	100%	10	100%

Despite dominant claims to the contrary, a majority of 25% indicates that disciplinarity **predominantly** constitutes the organisational and instructional framework of knowledge production at Institution A. At Institution B, the 70% majority response for the vocational base of the curriculum is in tandem with the orientation towards the application of knowledge within the (former) technikon sector.

TABLE 2: Characterisation of institutions' intellectual culture in curriculum organisation

The organisation of curriculum in your institution is characterised by an intellectual culture that exhibits:	Institution A		Institution B	
	N	%	N	%
openness (more accountability to external stakeholder interests)	8	50%	9	90%
closeness (more accountability to internal stakeholder interests)	8	50%	1	10%
TOTAL	16	100%	10	100%

At Institution A, polemic 'positions' were adopted. It is unclear as to which intellectual culture is dominant.

However, an inference from Table 1 based on the extent of the (non)application of innovative approaches (e.g. inter-/multi-/trans-disciplinarity) suggests that the dislocation of the discipline, if existent, is marginal. At institution B, the overwhelming 90% response is congruent with the character of technikon education: the technological application of knowledge warrants close links with **industry** as an external stakeholder, which profusely enhances “experiential learning”. As opposed to university-type education (where internal curriculum management constitutes one of the fundamental tenets underlying closely-guarded intellectual cultures), technikon openness to external (private sector) stakeholders lends more flexibility and diversity to curriculum organisation.

TABLE 3: Epistemological rationale of course content in the faculty/department

Which of the following principles underpin your department's epistemological rationale of course content?	Institution A		Institution B	
	N	%	N	%
Accessibility: providing multiple entry and exit points	7	44%	3	30%
Flexibility: inclusive of multiple stakeholder interests	8	50%	4	40%
Responsiveness: relevant educational programmes for both local and international needs	13	81%	3	30%
Horizontal articulation/Diversity: integration of both academic and vocational programmes	10	62%	5	50%
Vertical articulation	6	38%	1	10%
TOTAL	16	100%	10	100%

The prevalence of 'more' than the actual number of respondents (16 and 10 respectively) and 100% responses indicates that the respondents could answer more than one option. It is illuminating that a majority of 81% viewed curriculum content as **responsiveness** to both societal needs and international competitiveness, albeit within a predominantly disciplinary environment. That horizontal articulation obtained a majority response of 50% at the former technikon, implying that technikon knowledge is not necessarily 'un-academic'. The very practical component **derives** from an academic/theoretical foundation.

TABLE 4: Enhancement of the curriculum's cultural compatibility through incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

IKS enhances cultural compatibility of the curriculum	Institution A		Institution B	
	N	%	N	%
True	14	88%	7	70%
False	2	12%	3	30%
TOTAL	16	100%	10	100%

The 88% affirmation at Institution A reinforces the view that culture is an indelible aspect of curriculum. This is also corroborated by the second highest percentage (62%) in Table 5 below. Cultural **compatibility** of the curriculum corresponds with the local (national) dimension as well (corroborated in Table 3 for Institution A). In a multicultural society like South Africa, it is imperative that 'cultural representativity' in the curriculum be recognised, which will also contribute towards democratic citizenship, nation building and tolerance. The major problem, however, materialises when cultural 'superiority' becomes the (unstated/hidden) text of the curriculum. As at Institution A, cultural compatibility is also affirmed (70%) at Institution B as being crucial to IKS, a component of Africanisation of the HE curriculum. However, this contradicts Institution B's response in Table 3, where the majority of 50% affirmed the horizontal articulation of curriculum.

TABLE 5: Institutions' perceptions of the Africanisation of the curriculum

Africanisation of the HE curriculum engenders perceptions of:	Institution A		Institution B	
	N	%	N	%
inferiority of standards	2	12%	2	20%
relevance to local needs	11	69%	6	60%
less scientific modes of knowledge production	4	25%	2	20%
the curriculum as culturally responsive (compatible)	10	62%	5	50%
the curriculum as political prescription	3	19%	3	30%
None of the above	1	6%	-	-
TOTAL	16		10	

The purpose of the question was to determine whether understanding of Africanisation in the HE curriculum is only limited to a cultural context, or whether a broader perspective could be found. The majority (69%) response at Institution A obviously conforms to responsiveness, as corroborated in Table 3. It is apparent that the responsive mode of Institution B (indicated by the majority 60%), when compared to Table 3, is aligned to 'vocationalisation' of the curriculum. The **collective** responses of Africanisation as relevant to local needs confirm a trend by which epistemological space for Africanisation in the curriculum is being affirmed.

TABLE 6: Epistemological foundation of the undergraduate curriculum

The undergraduate curriculum in your department/faculty is fundamentally focused on:	Institution A		Institution B	
	N	%	N	%
general education	9	56%	2	20%
liberal education	3	19%	-	-
market-oriented education	9	56%	7	70%
information and communication technologies (ICT)	2	12%	1	10%
TOTAL	16	100%	10	100%

The respondents could once more indicate more than one option. That both general and market-oriented education are the highest at 56% at Institution A, suggests the undergraduate curriculum is predominantly oriented towards their preparation for the professions **and** for participation in socio-economic development. The 'cultivationist' orientation of liberal education, on account of its lower (19%) position, underlines the 'outmoding' of moral, aesthetic, and spiritual upliftment as priority objectives (Altbach *et al.*, 1998:8; Duderstadt, 2003:75-78). Participation in the economy and personal mobility seem to be primary concerns. Ironically, ICT's very low percentage (12%) gainsays the perception that ICT, in view of its salience in socio-economic development, would have **at least** been rated alongside market-oriented education. ICT was expected to attract large student numbers in courses that provide such knowledge, since it has made tremendous inroads into HE knowledge acquisition; and its growing demand for employment purposes would presumably rate it the highest. At Institution B, the high percentage (70%) for market-oriented education is **in alignment** with the declared mission of an institution of this type (former technikon). The implication then is that the undergraduate curriculum is steered towards advancing the needs of the economy/industry (knowledge-as-product), rather than at the academic, knowledge-as-process inclination.

2.2 The case for Africanisation in the HE curriculum

It has been observed from the empirical data that, in the broader scheme of curriculum relevance and responsiveness to societal needs and demands, the collective response to Africanisation connotes a view where 'local' is (mis)construed as being synonymous only with 'culture' in the anthropological sense. Such a perception and state of affairs negates and undermines the philosophical and epistemological complexities of this phenomenon, of which IKS (Indigenous Knowledge Systems) forms a part (Goduka, 1999:28-30; Seepe, 2000:58-60). The **extant** nature of Africanisation as a concept spans both the pre- and post-merger life of HE development in South Africa. The following are the premises on which the case for Africanisation is advanced:

2.2.1 The promotion of epistemological diversity

The concept of Africanisation is the realistic embodiment of the **affinity** existing between African knowledge, culture, and identity (Makgoba & Seepe, 2004:17). In other words, the argument of the **indivisibility** of knowledge is accorded real manifestation (Goduka, 1999:26; Dos Santos & Dobbstein, 2007:23-26). Knowledge is in this sphere not 'divided' into some form of (arbitrary?) scientific stature where 'scientific knowledge' refers only to those forms and 'ways of knowing' conforming to material standards; and 'non-scientific' (or 'non-knowledge') is confined to those forms and 'ways of knowing' defined according to some industrial-development standard. Western 'scientism' relegates spirituality/environmentalism/nature to the periphery of 'conventional' knowledge (Goduka, 1999).

2.2.2 The promotion of multiculturalism

South African society despite some vestiges of the past is a **multicultural** 'melting pot' - hence the 'rainbow nation' adage. For this reason alone, and in order to enhance the ideas of a common citizenship, unity in diversity, and reconciliation/tolerance, isomorphic and homogenous ways of 'knowing' (such as the perpetration of the supremacy of Eurocentric knowledge) from a white male's cultural perspective (invariably referred to by others as DWEMS, the dead white European males, in reference to the enduring Cartesian-Newtonian premises of rationality and other 'classical' epistemological norms, references, values, norms and symbols) still promote cultural 'superiority' as well (see Giddens, 1990). Knowledge of all the elements of the population's diverse cultural backgrounds and orientations (e.g. multilingualism) can only bring real freedom to all the country's citizens. South African HE is morally obliged to contribute towards the development of nation-building (Cloete & Bunting, 2000). By promoting the culture of "freedom" and "equality" as enshrined in the Constitution, the right to learn from one's own cultural context is definitely not an affront to the right to learn, lest that interest, power, and control (in)advertently constitute the framework for ideological, epistemological, and intellectual **stratification**.

2.2.3 Democratic equalisation

The democratisation of South African society after the 1994 elections opened 'the doors of learning' to all citizens, including the majority that had been marginalised by the erstwhile apartheid dispensation. Forms and ways of 'knowing' are no longer subjected to 'gerrymandering' of knowledge along such nuances as 'communist' and/or 'non-communist' knowledge or thought. Access to different forms of 'knowing' is no longer the preserve of a privileged section of society. Being on the African continent, the South African HE curriculum is most suited to reflecting and advancing democratic participation in the reconstruction and development of society as a whole. The right to learn, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and freedom of expression are some of the elements of the new culture of the purpose of existence in a democratic society. The Constitution of the RSA (Act 108 of 1996) and the Higher Education Act (1997) become emblematic instruments in this regard.

3. A TRILOGY OF MODELS

A trilogy of HE curriculum-oriented models has been conceptualised as both a visual and 'tangible' instrument for the meaningfulness of particularly Objective (d) of the study. The conceptualisation and presentation of the trilogy of models is viewed as a **means**, rather than the end itself. For that reason, and taking cognizance of 'the politics of knowledge', the model is viewed as advancing the course of epistemological **diversity**.

The perspective adopted here then, is one in which Africanisation plays a mediating/modulating role between forces of conservatism (*ergo*, elitism and adaptation) and progressivism (*ergo*, responsiveness and relevance to the pressing needs of society) regarding the **purposes** of HE curriculum as the reflection of its (HE's) shift towards the **transformation** of its knowledge base. The mediating/modulating proposition of the models makes the following assumptions:

- Africanisation is a means to an end through its input-mediating-output triad factor, and does not lay any claim to epistemological hegemony.
- As a mediating factor between 'curriculum correctness' and 'political correctness', it is a potential force for change in respect of relevance and responsiveness (as opposed to 'adaptation') in SA higher education curriculum development.
- It informs on multi-dimensional (diverse) perspectives of culture, knowledge, and identity, which is the reason for the 'reciprocal' direction of the arrows in the third model of the trilogy.
- Africanisation should ultimately have an influence on the *content* (broadly viewed here) of the HE curriculum (also incorporating where appropriate Indigenous Knowledge Systems), on the *methodology and instructional and learning design*, and it should also be a function of a certain openness or *disposition*, a willingness to consider and incorporate African perspectives in the HE curriculum.

TABLE 7: A trilogy of models of Africanisation in higher education**A: THE EXTERNAL/MACRO-ENVIRONMENT OF AFRICANISATION IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM**

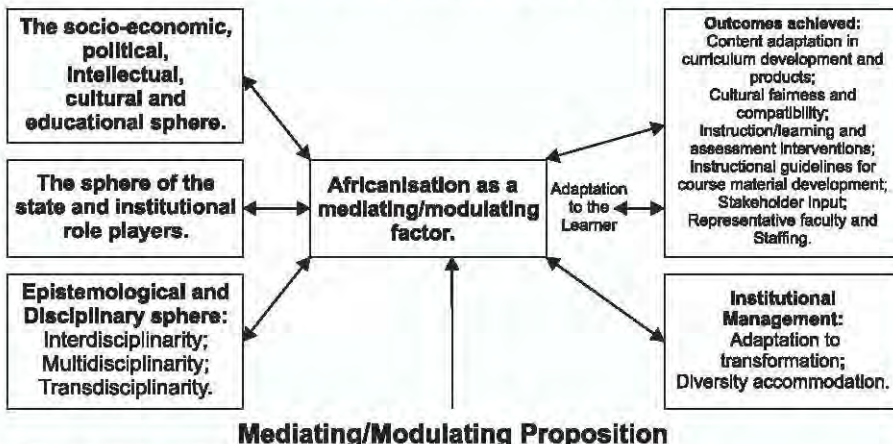
The Ideological Domain			
Sphere	Transformation Orientation	Reform Orientation	
Political	Prioritisation of Ubuntu/African Humanism; Democratic accountability; Power/control in respect of collective interests.	Democratic individualism and privatism; Power/control in respect of multiple minority interests; Equity and redress.	
Intellectual	Diversity as agent for critical thinking; Legitimation of Afrocentric and local ideas; Indigenisation & diversity in knowledge construction; Essentialisation of knowledge as a product; Engagement of societal role players.	Conformity to 'mainstream' ideas; Perpetration of Eurocentric scientific universalism; Canonisation of disciplines; Essentialisation of knowledge as a process; Privatisation of knowledge.	
Cultural	Gender, multiculturalism, multilingualism; Human dignity and non-materialistic concerns; Supremacy of communalism.	Idealisation of metropolitan Euro-American values as "natural"; Nature and the environment subject to material value.	
Economic	Entrepreneurialism as communal poverty alleviation; Virtues of collective development; Supremacy of people-centred growth.	Entrepreneurialism as individual development; 'Sovereignty' of market de-regulation.	
Social	Socially-directed relevance and responsiveness; Community development and ongoing social responsibility mission.	Curriculum conformism to labour market; Community service as occasional public relations enterprise.	
Educational	Progressivism, responsiveness, relevance; De-legitimation of 'hidden' curriculum as true knowledge; Incorporation of socio-economic realities into the curriculum; Education as cultural fulfillment; Valuing and transmission of non-materialistic human values and dignity.	Continued elitism, adaptation; Knowledge stratification; 'Hidden' curriculum covertly transmitted through materialism and consumerism.	
ROLE PLAYERS			
State/Departmental	HE Institutional	Societal	Private Sector
State: Legislative mechanisms, e.g. HE Act, the Constitution; Statutory bodies: e.g. CHE, NRF, SAQA/NQF; DoE: Policy formulation and Institutional coordination in relation to socio-economic transformation; Departments of Science, Arts and Culture.	Professional bodies: e.g. HESA, AAU, IAU; Transformation goals: e.g. Massification; Missions and programmatic differentiation; Continuous engagement with African universities; The student and student bodies.	Multicultural representative governance in HEIs, from professional and non-professional social categories; NGO sector; Cultural organisations.	Employment organisations promoting entrepreneurialism and workers' development; Industry; Commerce; Industry training boards.

B: AFRICANISATION: AN INTERNALLY-FOCUSED CURRICULUM MODEL

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL DOMAIN			
The disciplinary sphere	The instructional sphere	The learning materials sphere	The assessment sphere
Organisation/Deconstruction of the subject: Module and whole course structure; Core and electives in respect of national imperatives; ICT and Science as second 'tier' core subjects; Inter-/multi-/trans-disciplinary course construction in respect of, core African subjects and elective mode; Key skills adaptability; Web influences; Lifelong learning; Experiential/Cooperative learning; Forces for retention of disciplinary.	Content: Emphasis on African content subjects, e.g. History, Philosophy, Anthropology; Curricular frameworks. Delivery and method: Personal contact with learners; Accommodation of different learning styles; Community-based professionals and experts; Outcomes/Competencies: Literacy; Numeracy; Multi-lingual communication; Cross-curricular thinking. Skills: Conceptualisation. Attitudes/Values: Environmental awareness; Tolerance; Ethics.	African textbooks; International learning materials in certain subject fields; Copies of additional study guides; Web and multimedia sources; Additional study materials; Web and multimedia presentations.	Standards: Cultural compatibility and nationally relevant standards. Learning Outcomes: Cognition, creativity, cross-curricular skills; Crediting of prior experiential learning; Teamwork and project management.
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT ROLE PLAYERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS			
Faculty	Corporate	Departmental	
Faculty Boards; Programme Coordinators; Faculty Officers; Subject Committees.	Senate/Council; Curriculum Coordination Committees.	University-based Curriculum Committees; Subject/Disciplinary experts (faculty).	
QUALITY ASSURANCE ROLE PLAYERS			
Institutional efficiency	Faculty	Students	
Institution-based Council; Institution-based Senate; Office of Institutional Effectiveness; Academic/Learning Committee; Academic Planning Committee.	Representatives of Quality Assurance bodies; Faculty Management Committees; Quality Assurance Committee; RPL Committee; Co-operative Learning Committee; Research Committee; Higher Degrees Committee; Deans' Committee.	Student Representative Council and Class Representatives; Students and recent graduates.	
ALIGNMENT TO THE STUDENT			
Traditional: Communalism expressed through class-based group work; Recognition of parental involvement as foundational contribution and educational modeling; Extent of belief systems in 'ways of knowing'. Indigenous: Local relevance and responsiveness factors/Articulation of community-based imperatives; Indivisibility of 'taught' knowledge and experience-based learning (as opposed to work-based); Societal involvement and participation in articulation of learning needs. Cultural compatibility: Benchmarks and standards of assessment; Integration/Mainstreaming of multiculturalism; Recognition of 'non-standard' and experience-based learning. Congruity with Target Group: Adequacy of gender studies to relevant age groups; Heterogeneity/identity of student community i.r.o. varying backgrounds, needs, experiences and expectations; Involvement of peers/class in group-based forms of assessment, or "group creativity".			
ALIGNMENT TO NATIONAL POLICY AND ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS			
DoE/SAQA/NQF; Compliance, accountability, performativity			

Source: Researcher's own development, with modifications from Muller (2007)

C: THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL DOMAIN AND THE MEDIATING ROLE OF AFRICANISATION ON THE CURRICULUM (PLANNED AND REALISED)



3.1 Brief explication of the model

The macro-systemic/external environment encompasses the **contending** frameworks of the nature of change within which HEIs are expected to function.

The premises for the nature of the adopted change are fundamentally **ideological**, and determine the **pace** and **direction** of curriculum change in the 'reform' or 'transformation' mode; the latter two aspects themselves being collective products of the larger societal spheres and its attendant 'power brokers': i.e. role players. The micro-institutional environment reflects the internal **epistemological** means by which the curriculum mediates and translates its essence as the product of the university (Muller, 2007). The quality assurance domain is more complex, with each HE operational and instructional unit placed in a mode of accountability and performativity. Every unit is characterised by different assessment variables such as: what has to be done? by whom is it to be done? how is it to be done? and when is it expected to be done? The various role players are expected to represent various epistemological 'positions'. That the same structures are opted for (e.g. NRF, NQF) implies that it is not their existence that is problematic. In the same way as the DoE, it is the inherent ideological and intellectual **cultures** that have been viewed as problematic in the study. The alignment to the student environment relates to the mechanisms by which relevance becomes actuated at the level of the learner, rather than only the systemic or institutional levels. In that regard, the environment is student-focused and characterised by instruction-relevant variables.

The last facet of the model largely illustrates the 'mediating/modulating' effect highlighted earlier (prior to the brief explication of the model), and proposes the 'window of opportunity' presented by an orientation towards Africanisation as filling an epistemological gap in South African HE curriculum development.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The following propositions have been made on the basis of both the consulted literature and fieldwork of the study:

HE knowledge is a strategic and contested resource. The advent of the multiple stakeholder constituencies has ushered in often divergent **interests** from government, society, funders, commerce and industry, for example. Consequently, ideological contestations for 'the heart and soul' of the curriculum is cause for HEIs to mediate between 'political correctness' and 'curriculum correctness'.

- The disciplinary rootedness of knowledge is pervasive and extant. Despite trends towards the 'de-canonisation' of epistemological cultures and commodification of knowledge, 'academic tribes' (e.g. learned societies) still perpetuate the 'superiority' of the academic essence of knowledge construction.
- The extant paucity in the development of epistemological egalitarianism attenuates the local perspective in knowledge development and creation. In the South African context, the 'negotiated settlement' produced a 'rainbow nation' but a 'rainbow curriculum' reflecting the multicultural population is yet to materialise. It is precisely this state of affairs that still locates HE curriculum reform in particular, in the realm of state intervention. In reality, the absence of 'home grown' curriculum innovations has led to 'policy-borrowing' becoming the *modus operandi* for innovations. The argument for Africanisation is specifically located in the epistemological and philosophical terrains of HE curriculum development. Africanisation should therefore be mediated into the mainstream curriculum's epistemological base. Bringing about curriculum change should not be confined to only the productivity interests of the capital-economy-industry nexus. Neither should Africanisation be viewed only as a cultural factor in the labyrinthine processes of 'knowing'.
- Cultural compatibility should become a universal aspect of the HE curriculum, such that there are varying standards applicable to different modes of knowing. Given the multicultural state of society, 'culture' should translate into making meaning of any segment of knowledge in the curriculum.

Culture should not be associated with 'backwardness' only when it relates to anything African; but accorded a proselytising status when relating to Eurocentric modes of knowing. Multiculturalism should be incorporated into the mainstream curriculum as an instrument for fostering equality, democratic citizenship, and inter-racial understanding and tolerance.

5. REFERENCES

Altbach, P.G., Berdahl, R.O. & Gumport, P.J. (Eds) 2005. *American higher education in the twenty-first century: social, political, and economic challenges*. 2nd edition. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Barnett, R. 1997. *The limits of competence: knowledge, higher education and society*. Buckingham: Society for Research in Higher Education & Open University Press.

Bridges, D. 2000. Back to the future: the higher education curriculum in the 21st century. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 30(1): 37-55.

Breier, M. 2001. Higher education curriculum development: the international and local debates. In Breier, M. (Ed.) *Curriculum restructuring in higher education in post-apartheid South Africa* (pp.1-37). Cape Town: UWC Education Policy Unit.

CHE. 2000. *Towards a new higher education landscape*. Pretoria: CHE.

CHE. 2002. *A new academic policy for programmes and qualifications in higher education*. Pretoria: CHE.

Cloete, N. & Bunting, I. 2000. *Higher education transformation: assessing performance in South Africa*. Rondebosch: CHET.

Delport, C.S.L. 2002. Quantitative data collection methods. In De Vos, A.S. (Ed.) *Research at grass roots*. 2nd edition. (pp. 165-196). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Department of Education. 1997. Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997). *Government Gazette* (Vol. 375, No. 18515. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education. 2007. *The higher education qualifications framework*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Duderstadt, J.J. 1999. The twenty-first century university: a tale of two futures. In Hirsch, W.Z. & Weber, L.E. (Eds) *Challenges facing higher education at the millennium* (pp.37-55). Phoenix: ACE & The Oryx Press.

Duderstadt, J.J. 2000. *A university for the 21st century*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.

Fataar, A. 2003. Higher education policy discourse in South Africa: a struggle for alignment with macro development policy. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 17(2): 31-39.

Frackmann, E. 1997. Research on higher education in Western Europe: from policy advice to self-reflection. In Altbach, P.G. & Sadlak, J. (Eds). *Higher education research: issues and trends* (pp. 107-36). Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

Giddens, A. 1990. *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Henning, E. 2005. *Finding your way in academic writing*. 2nd edition. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Kraak, A. (Ed.) 2000. *Changing modes: new knowledge production and its implications for higher education in South Africa*. Pretoria: HSRC.

Liotard, J.F. 1994. *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*. Translation from the French by G. Bennington & B. Massumi. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Makgoba, M.W. & Seepe, S. 2004. Knowledge and identity: and African vision of higher education transformation. In Seepe, S. (Ed.) *Towards an African identity of higher education* (pp. 13-58). Pretoria: Vista University & Skotaville Media.

Mkhonto, T.J. 2007. *Challenges facing higher education curriculum reform, design, and management in the 21st century*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Aucklandpark: University of Johannesburg.

Muller, A. 2007. Trends in curriculum reform and the transformation of higher education. *Management Insights*, Volume 2: 6-33.

Muller, J. 2000. *Reclaiming knowledge: social theory, curriculum and educational policy*. London & New York: Routledge Falmer.

NRF. 2005. *Institutional review of the National Research Foundation*. Pretoria: NRF.

Power, C.N. 2001. UNESCO's response to the challenge of establishing unity in diversity. In Campbell, J. (Ed.) *Creating our common future: educating for unity in diversity* (pp. 15-28). Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

Pretorius, D. 2003. Social engagement and the creation of knowledge. In Naude, P. & Cloete, N. (Eds) *A tale of three countries: social sciences curriculum transformation in Southern Africa* (pp. 13-40). Rondebosch: CHET.

Republic of South Africa. 1996. *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. (Act 108 of 1996)*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Sarantakos, S. 1998. *Social research*. 2nd edition. South Yarra, Australia: Macmillan Education Australia Pty Ltd.

Scholte, J.A. 2000. *Globalization: a critical introduction*. New York: Palgrave.

Scott, P. 1997. Changes in knowledge production and dissemination in the context of globalisation. In Cloete, N. Muller, J., Makgoba, M.W. & Ekong, D. Eds. *Knowledge, identity, and curriculum transformation in Africa* (pp. 17-41). Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman

Squires, G. 1990. *First degree: the undergraduate curriculum*. Buckingham: SRHE & Open University Press.

TWR. 2004. *TWR research documents*. Doornfontein: TWR Research Unit.