

# TEACHING

in Extended Programmes in South Africa



classroom contexts, lecturer identities & teaching practices

edited by  
**LYNN COLEMAN**



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Fundani, Centre for Higher Education Development  
Cape Peninsula University of Technology  
Cape Town, South Africa

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#### TEACHING IN EXTENDED PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA:

classroom contexts, lecturer identities and teaching practices

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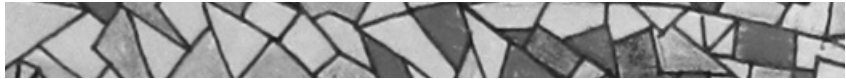
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## FOREWORD

A major concern of the Higher Education System over the past decade has been the throughput rates of students which have been persistently poor across the entire sector over an extended period of time. This is borne out, in the main, by successive cohort studies which indicate that on average fewer than 50% of students successfully complete a three-year qualification within five years of study! Such inefficiencies pose a huge cost not only to universities but to the broader economy which is heavily reliant on graduates to contribute to growth and development.

By far the highest attrition rate among students is experienced in the first year of study.

One of the factors contributing to the poor performance of first year students is the articulation gap between senior secondary school and university, which relates to the gap between the level of preparedness of students leaving high school and what is expected of them on entering university. In the earlier years, a number of universities introduced academic support programmes to bridge this gap. However, these met with limited success, as they were often premised on a student 'deficit model', believing that the problem could be solved by addressing the 'deficit' in student learning.

In reality, the majority of our students emerge from educational backgrounds that poorly prepare them for the transition from high school to university. Most experience challenges with the first-year curriculum. In this respect, student underpreparedness remains a relative concept and is best understood as underpreparedness in relation to a particular curriculum which makes certain assumptions about the prior knowledge of the student. It is thus evident that structural changes are required to effectively address the problem of poor student performance. Universities need to accept student underpreparedness as a reality and adjust curricula accordingly so as to be more responsive to their needs.

Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs) have been an important intervention in this regard. These programmes are designed to provide additional curriculum time for foundational learning to enable students to develop sound academic and social foundations for succeeding in higher education. It is a curriculum intervention which aims specifically to address the articulation gap, focusing not only on subject knowledge but also on academic skills, numeracy and literacy, approaches to studies as well as coping skills at university. A focus on academic

literacy is particularly important to induct students into a particular discipline as reading and writing constitute the central processes through which students learn and develop knowledge within that discipline.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has been actively encouraging universities to increase enrolment on ECPs and funding for these programmes has been substantially more than for any other intervention to improve throughput and success rates at universities. This clearly signals that in the view of the DHET, the ECP remains a significant intervention for addressing the challenges related to throughput and success and improving graduate output and outcomes across the sector. The DHET has also made funding available for staff development workshops, good practice seminars and various other initiatives designed to improve the effectiveness of ECPs.

This book represents an initiative with a similar outcome in mind. It comprises a collection of case studies by ECP lecturers reflecting on their experiences in the classroom, the challenges they encounter and their attempts to address these challenges. More importantly it focusses attention on undergraduate teaching and the significant role this can play in improving student performance. There is no doubt that this book will help generate scholarly debate and critical engagement on a range of issues related to teaching practice in the context of extended programmes. In so doing, the book thus makes a valuable contribution to improving the effectiveness of and ultimately helping to strengthen the delivery of extended programmes across the higher education sector.



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Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning

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December 2018



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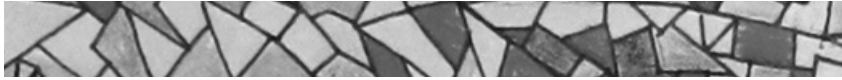


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The beginnings of this book can be traced to the Writing to Learn action research project which started in 2016. This project aimed to encourage and support CPUT academics working in various extended programmes to research their teaching practice. Structured around a ‘critical-friends’ methodology, a small group of interested academics got together regularly to ‘talk’ action research. As rich and interesting data and insights started emerging from these incubator studies, we realised that it would be valuable to create a broader scholarly platform where this type of research could be shared amongst the wider ECP community. However, it was important that such a platform include a range of voices, even if this meant ‘colouring outside the lines’ of the traditional writing forms and styles expected in mainstream academic scholarship.

This book was supported and encouraged by various people who rallied behind its importance, believed in the need to honour the holistic and developmental writing processes, and helped ensure academic rigour. A special thanks to the following academic advisors, colleagues and friends of the book: Sally Baker, Megan Bam, Kibbie Naidoo, Ian Scott, Lucia Thesen and Shirley Walters. The two independent higher education experts who reviewed the book, offered invaluable, thoughtful and critical feedback which helped to sharpen the overall positioning of the book. The editorial, marketing and production design team for their energy, enthusiasm and deep commitment to producing a worthy scholarly publication: Dylan Cromhout, Dawn Daniels, Elizabeth Mackenzie and Amanda Morris. Then finally as editor, I want to express my gratitude to the authors, who from our first engagements displayed such implicit trust in the value of the book’s intentions. Thank you for allowing me to take you down often unchartered pathways as you wrote your chapters.



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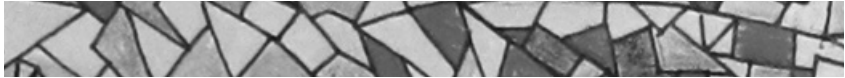




## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Academic Development
ADC	Academic Development Centre
ASP	Academic Support Programme
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHED	Centre for Higher Education Development
CoP	Community of Practice
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
DSA	Department of Students Affairs
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ECP	Extended Curriculum Programmes
EDU	Education Development Unit
#FMF	#FeesMustFall
HE	Higher Education
HELTASA	Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa
IP	Intervention Programme
FHS	Faculty of Health Sciences
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QL	Quantitative Literacy
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SAULT	South African Universities Learning and Teaching (forum)
SoTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
TAU	Teaching Advancement at University
UCT	University of Cape Town
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UWC	University of the Western Cape
ML	Mathematical Literacy





## INTRODUCTION

### **Shifting attention onto the lecturer and their teaching in extended programmes**

[Lynn Coleman \(Cape Peninsula University of Technology\)](#)

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Most practitioners and scholars working in the university will readily accept that teaching and learning are inextricably linked. Thus, any attempt to study or reflect on teaching must go hand-in-hand with a consideration of learning. In this way giving expression to Ramsden's assertion that the 'aim of teaching is to make learning possible' (2003: 7). Yet, even the most seasoned lecturers have to be carefully coaxed into redirecting their empirical attention onto their own practice; their teaching.

My observations, described in the reflection below, tell of the struggle my colleagues experienced when I, as academic developer, asked them to place firmer attention on their own teaching practice and to define the object of their reflection and action research investigation in relation to what they were doing as lecturers. However, identifying this area of difficulty my colleagues experienced is not intended to signal inadequacies on their part. Rather it highlights an unspoken assumption most lecturers in the university share, that any attention on teachers and teaching displaces the central place of the student and their learning. This almost covert assumption about the 'decentred' place of the teacher in relation to the more central position of the student, is held in place by discourses that dominate higher education today. Student-centredness and student-centred rhetoric are commonly accepted as a necessary philosophical norm overseeing much of the work, practices and behaviours of those working in the contemporary university, including institutional policy makers and managers, student support professionals as well as academics and lecturers, who are often in the most immediate and direct contact with students. Thus as Malcolm and Zukas (2001: 38) argue, 'focusing on the individual learner has become a tacit or explicit requirement for "good practice" in teaching'. As student centredness has become the primary guiding principle in the university, it has had the complementary effect of ensuring that students' experiences are foregrounded 'at the expense of robust empirical attention on the experiences and practices of teachers' (Tuck 2018: 27). Tuck argues further that the prominence of phenomenographic research and its emphasis on the

student experience as an object of study or in day-to-day practices, have had the consequence of decentring the academic teacher. Thus ‘focusing on teachers themselves has been viewed as a barrier to better understanding of teaching and learning’ (Ashwin 2009 in Tuck 2018: 27). My teaching colleagues’ initial reticence to place themselves and their practices more firmly in the centre of an empirical inquiry can therefore be viewed as simply voicing their alignment with these prevalent discourses and the rhetoric around student-centredness. Yet in the process, they had inadvertently delinked their role and the activity of teaching from the complimentary activity of learning.

In a parallel process, universities are increasingly seeking to accentuate their status through the promotion of research excellence. This has unfortunately seen teaching and academics who teach relegated to more outlying spaces in the university. The combined effect of the attention given to student-centred discourses and the unchecked promotion of research activity should, I would argue, be raising some searching questions for all university stakeholders about how the activity of teaching and those devoting much of their academic labour to it are perceived within the university. Posing such questions is particularly critical when directed at academics teaching at the coalface of undergraduate, first year or extended programmes in the South African higher education system, who are frequently required to bear the burden of responsibility to address the increasingly diverse and varied academic and psycho-social needs of the students they teach.



### **LYNN'S REFLECTION: Encouraging a focus on teaching and the lecturer**

I have been working as an academic developer in the extended curriculum domain at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) since 2015. Part of this role involves working with lecturers as they undertake small-scale action research projects. An aim of this activity is to encourage colleagues to become more aware of their teaching practice through the systematic reflective inquiry the action research methodology promoted. Our small group meets for a ‘long lunch’ every second week or so to talk about action research. The group of about five lecturers from various departments at the institution share a common connection point – they all teach on the extended curriculum programme in their department – and they all want to improve their teaching practice. In these informal and convivial lunchtime sessions, these lecturers come together to talk about and share their evolving understandings of the action research methodology and their attempts to structure and conduct their own action research projects. In my academic staff development role, removed from the face-to-face realities of the classroom, I

act as facilitator and ‘knowledgeable other’, someone with prior experience in using the action research methodology. Most of the group’s participants were quickly able to identify a classroom ‘problem’ worthy of investigation using the action research cycle. However, when each ‘problem’ was first described, the students and the difficulties they might encounter with content or classroom activities were given priority. The participant’s role as a lecturer and any direct reference to their own practice was often only visible on the periphery. As these ‘problems’ were shared and discussed, it became increasingly clear that everyone in the group struggled to reframe action research ‘problems’ in relation to their own practices, activities and roles in the classroom. It required a conscious shift in mindset on all our parts to keep the focus on teaching and the lecturer.

### **Premise of this book**

This collection is an attempt to shine the spotlight on undergraduate lecturers and their teaching. It does this by focusing exclusively on the lived, enacted teaching experiences and critical reflective insights of ordinary academics working in the extended curriculum domain of five different South African universities. Extended curriculum programmes or ECPs are positioned as the primary systemic, state-funded curriculum initiative aimed specifically at improving both students’ access to higher education and their overall success at university. In this way, extended programmes have become a key driver of transformation within the higher education sector (DHET 2012) for at least a decade, and are an increasingly visible presence at most institutions. The primary purpose of ECPs is, therefore, to improve the academic performance of university students who are deemed at risk of academic failure due to their educational backgrounds (Staak 2017). The enactment of innovative and thoughtful curricula and pedagogic interventions are commonly seen as the defining characteristics of such programmes. ECPs therefore represent a distinct academic space in the university because of the status they attach to teaching excellence and the primacy given to the activity of teaching. However, the challenges of responding appropriately to the increasingly diverse academic needs of undergraduate university students are also amplified in this domain. ECP lecturers, like their counterparts across the higher education sector, are grappling to understand and adapt to this increasingly complex teaching and learning context.

Through an exclusive focus on the pedagogic enactments of ECPs at different universities, the collection places attention on how broader policy and discursive understandings of ECP intersect with more local institutional contexts and come to frame the work, status, position, visibility and value ascribed to ECP lecturers.

Each chapter is presented as a case study where ECP lecturers use various methodologies to start the process of critically reflecting on, especially, their teaching practice. These instances of reflection and self-critique, while at times still in the incubation stage, illustrate an interesting range of reflective inquiries and insights into the distinct teaching and learning spaces which these extended curriculum lecturers inhabit. These short case studies offer an insightful glimpse into the varied teaching landscape of the extended domain at South African universities. While they provide the early expressions of scholarly activity, they nonetheless make a vital contribution towards opening up the conversation and also stimulating debate about what it means to be an undergraduate university lecturer in South Africa, teaching in the ECP classroom. The case studies also point to pivotal issues that academics, lecturers and academic developers working in both the extended domain and broader university sector need to better understand in respect to the ECP classroom and the kinds of teaching practices needed. They also point in the direction of further research and explorations required.

The different chapters in this collection deliberately emphasise the experiences, perspectives and narratives of ECP academics and lecturers. As they shift the object of inquiry away from their students, the authors courageously provide a window into their experiences as lecturers working in the complex and often contradictory context of the ECP classroom. The authors therefore invite the reader into their, at times, very personal journeys of becoming more contextually aware as they develop and refine their descriptive resources to understand and explain their teaching contexts. The authors thus enlist reflective inquiry in its multiple and fluid forms as an enabling tool for subjecting their practices, assumptions, theoretical understandings, roles, identities and locations in the university to critical review and reflection. Collectively the case studies illustrate how they in certain ways, mirror the complexity and contradictions of the terrain they are intended to examine and explore; as such they are not intended to produce even or complete views. In the various chapters, the authors show how reflection and reflective inquiry, as a methodological lens, can be a powerful driver enabling lecturers to engage more responsively with the challenges and complexities frequently encountered in a dynamic and varied university learning space such as the ECP. As both a pedagogic and methodological tool, approaches to reflection have an established history within the sub-fields of both school teacher training and academic development in the university sector. Various models of reflection as outlined by Gregson and Hillier (2015), recognise the value academic teachers can derive from subjecting their everyday classroom activities and experiences to systematic review, evaluation and questioning. The notion of reflective inquiry can be traced to the work

of educationalist John Dewey, who according to Lyons, saw reflective inquiry 'as a kind of thinking' about how we think and act (2010: 9). Schön's work on reflective practice suggested that teachers and other professionals working in highly complex environments could use processes like reflection-on-action to draw closer attention to the understandings and premises informing their activities and practices (see Craig 2010; Lyons 2010). For Brookfield and other critical scholars like Paulo Freire and Jack Mezirow, reflection by definition is not inherently critical. Together these scholars argue that reflection only becomes a critical activity when the socio-cultural, political and power dynamics operating both in and outside the classroom and between the teaching-learning role-players are also subject to interrogation (Brookfield 2010; Craig 2010; Lyons 2010). A crucial element of critical reflection is what Brookfield (2010: 216) calls 'assumption hunting'; directing the attention of reflection and reflective practice towards uncovering, checking and ultimately challenging the very assumptions we hold about the people, processes, activities and structures that define and hold together teaching-learning interactions and their contexts. Additionally, critical reflection can be seen as a fundamental pillar of not only improved pedagogic practice but also acting as a significant catalyst for blurring the artificial boundaries between pedagogic theorisation and pedagogic practice.

The case studies in this collection give expression to the different ways in which reflection and reflective inquiry can be understood and used. They also demonstrate the usefulness of reflection in helping lecturers to become more aware of their teaching practices and then attempt to make their practices work effectively and achieve the consequences they intend. Many of the authors do however, engage in the more critical forms of reflection and call into question previously held assumption about their students, their roles, identities, practices and relations of power both in and outside their classrooms. Often this critical interrogation makes visible some of the tensions they encounter in their ECP teaching environments. For example, how pedagogies which value the knowledge, skills and talents students bring with them to university, sit at odds with institutional curriculum cultures that frame the ECP as catering for 'weaker' students. Or how a lecturer's disciplinary home can become the source of rupture with traditional syllabi that enforce the status of canonical or Eurocentric knowledge. The first-hand accounts of the everyday teaching realities captured in the different case studies show how these tensions and contradictions are sometimes reconciled. In other cases, despite much attention and effort by lecturers, these tensions remain a feature of the teaching space and the lecturer's pedagogic practice.

The focus in this collection, to shift empirical focus onto the lecturer and their practice, and is not intended to demote or assign peripheral status to the

student and their experiences of the classroom. Rather, it suggests that there is equal value in exploring and giving attention to the situated experiences and perspectives of academic teachers. In so doing, it is the aim of this collection of case studies to also reinforce and affirm the role of the ECP lecturer as teacher-researcher: an academic who brings a scholarly disposition to their pedagogic practice. In this role, these ECP lecturers can express their capacity to offer critical commentary on what possibilities exist in the domain of the classroom to realise some of the social justice intentions that cohere around ECP provision at South African universities. Only by exploring the classroom context in a holistic manner, inclusive of all the elements and participants that constitute this living and embodied space, can there be movement towards understanding the multiple complexities that shape the domain of university teaching and learning and a consideration of how best to meet its challenges.

### **Extended curriculum programmes in South Africa**

ECPs have been a consistent feature of the South African higher education landscape for more than three decades. While the ECP footprint is evident at all institutions across the South African university sector today, the structural representation of these provisions has, however, undergone various refinements and reconfigurations (Dhunpath & Vithal 2014; CHE 2016). Emerging from the academic development movement in the mid-1980s, the first iterations of these provisions took the form of ‘bolt-on’ and co-curricular modules and specialist tutorials, which evolved into more structured bridging and access courses (Boughey 2007). These earlier versions were characterised by their limited scope and focus on generic writing and study skills, small student numbers and their complete separation from the ‘mainstream’ teaching and learning pathways enjoyed by students who gained access to the university through normal and direct routes (Scott 2013; McKenna 2014). Typically, these earlier courses gave students access to the university through alternative entry requirements or were aimed at students identified as needing additional academic support to cope with and adapt to the academic demands and socio-cultural practices of the university (McKenna 2014). Given the racialised socio-political order of apartheid South Africa, most students who participated in these early programmes were black\* (Boughey 2007; McKenna 2014). Along with the continued reconceptualisation and restructuring efforts, these early ECP provisions experienced major expansion in the post-1994 period, when the newly elected government was keen to give expression to its various transformation, redress and equity agendas. In a move signalling its commitment to both the educational merits and underpinning transformation intentions, ECP provision started to receive direct state funding in 2004, primarily through three-year block grants and ring-fenced funding (CHE 2016). The publication of the ECP policy guidelines by the Department



of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2012 further signalled the state's commitment to permanently fund ECP through earmarked grants. Currently, ECPs attract over R200 million in government funding each year. This amount exceeds all other allocations intended to support and strengthen the quality of the curricula and teaching and learning activities across the sector (Leibowitz & Bozalek 2015; Staak 2017).

At the heart of all ECP provisions, both the current and historical configurations, is the

*recognition that for the majority of potential students in South Africa, success at higher education is severely constrained by systemic faults...and ECP has constituted an attempt to address these faults at curriculum level (CHE 2016: 164).*

South African higher education scholars and practitioners have long lamented the stubborn challenges which continue to reduce the system to both a highly inefficient and ineffective one; with low participation and high levels of attrition being particularly salient characteristics (Boughey & McKenna 2016; Lockett & Shay 2017). The sector, like the wider socio-political and economic environment, has struggled to unshackle itself from the deep, racialised economic and structural legacies of inequality entrenched under successive colonial and apartheid governments. As a result, black students in particular continue to bear the brunt of limited access opportunities to university and experience more precarious learning journeys once at university, where they are four times less likely to complete their degrees and diplomas than their white peers (Scott 2013; CHE 2016; Case et al. 2018).

Attempts to acknowledge and correct these inefficiencies and outcome discrepancies, in a manner which places institutional curriculum structures and practices at the centre of corrective action, has meant that the primary focus of the curriculum strategy of ECP has been to address the 'articulation gap'. As Scott notes, an articulation gap highlights areas of 'mismatch between two consecutive educational levels or phases' (2013: 21). In South Africa, the most prominent location of the articulation gap is manifested between students' schooling backgrounds and the assumptions made by traditional undergraduate curricula and programmes about this prior learning and educational experience (Scott, 2013; CHE 2016). The significance of using this articulation gap as the driver for curriculum intervention has been to acknowledge the inherent systemic nature of poor success rates especially for black university students. Thus, Scott emphatically asserts that, 'Irrespective of how talented they are, students whose home and educational backgrounds are disadvantaging, face daunting challenges in trying to cope with a teaching-and-learning process unresponsive to their needs' (2013: 21). The utilisation of the articulation gap is premised

on recognising the structural and institutional inequalities prevalent in the schooling system and the consequences this holds especially for black university entrants. However, it has not been able to shift the otherwise predominant deficit conceptualisations of black students that ascribe poor academic performance directly to the student and their cognitive, intellectual or affective dispositions and abilities. This stubborn discourse of student deficit, while prevalent throughout the university sector, has come to inflict the ECP domain and its participants, including lecturers, with the unfortunate but indelible stain of stigma.

### **Flexible models for curriculum design**

The 2012 ECP policy guideline offers higher education institutions, ECP programme designers and lecturers four different curriculum models. These models are premised on the extension of the undergraduate degree or diploma by an additional year of study which provides additional classroom learning time. ECP offerings are typically four years long, rather than the traditional three years of a mainstream degree or diploma. The ECP curriculum models provide varying degrees of curriculum and pedagogic flexibility, allowing individual programmes to tailor their teaching and learning approaches and their subject content to meet the academic and transitional needs of their students. For example, the 'Foundation model' caters for the inclusion of a preparatory year of study before students are introduced to subject knowledge explored in the mainstream first year. The 'Extended and Augmented models' work with the existing first year subject content but might alter the sequencing and pacing of the curriculum and provide students with additional time-on-task and varied opportunities to explore subject content. Finally, the 'Augmenting model' is reserved for programmes in the Humanities and Social Sciences, where courses typically do not have a cumulative nature. While completing their mainstream courses, students also take special augmenting courses. These typically focus on enhancing students' meta-understanding of the discourse patterns and conventions of their mainstream courses and subject areas or the academic communicative practices deemed relevant in the university. There is however, a great deal of variation in how these DHET guidelines have been interpreted at individual institutions. In the absence of standardised implementation across the sector, a particular model might be structured in different ways at various institutions.

The additional curriculum time allocated in all the ECP models means that ECP classrooms can be more receptive to a range of innovative pedagogic approaches. They are thus able to: engage students as active learners; create supportive and developmental learning environments that attend to students' cognitive and psycho-social needs; construct opportunities for students to gain

vital access to disciplinary and professional discourses or knowledge practices associated with their field of study; encourage critical thinking; and heighten students' ethical awareness of their place in society. Such traditions of pedagogic innovation, creativity and experimentation associated with the ECP environment is well documented within the South African higher education sector (see for example Garraway 2009; Hutchings & Garraway 2010; Bozalek et al. 2011; Pym & Paxton 2013; Dhunpath & Vithal 2014).

### **Uneven success: policy and structural barriers**

The significant role of ECPs in correcting some of the inequities inherited from the apartheid university system is frequently acknowledged by higher education scholars in South Africa (Dhunpath & Vital 2014; CHE 2016). ECPs are credited with having significantly contributed towards granting access to university, creating meaningful learning pathways and ensuring the academic success of thousands of students who might have otherwise been excluded from university study. However, there is also recognition that at best, the influence of the ECP as an overarching curriculum intervention in addressing the equity and redress imperatives of the wider university sector and the academic needs of the majority of students has been limited and peripheral (Leibowitz & Bozalek 2015; CHE 2016; Shay et al. 2016). Additionally, the capacity of the ECP intervention to improve degree completion rates for students who followed an ECP pathway at the beginning of their studies, has also come under review. While students might appear to enjoy academic success during their ECP period, such success is not always continuous when they join the mainstream. As a result, Luckett and Shay conclude that 'with some notable exceptions, ECP completion rates remain unsatisfactory. The initial gains made are lost by the end of years two (2), three (3) and four (4) when students drop out or are academically excluded' (2017: 5).

Given the significant role assigned to the ECP intervention, both in terms of financial and moral investment in its capacity to offset the inefficiencies and inequalities that beset the university sector, as a curriculum strategy, the ECP bears an enormous burden of responsibility. The already complex activities of university teaching and learning are further layered within the ECP domain with a range of policy and structural configurations and discursively constructed expectations. Various scholarly observations have drawn attention to the consequences of such configurations on the extent to which ECPs have realistically been able to enact their policy and educational mandates.

Firstly, ECPs have been designed as a 'minority intervention' with funding provision extending to roughly 15% of the total university student intake, although performance patterns show that (see for example, Scott et al. 2007; CHE 2016), the majority of students at university could benefit from the levels

of curricular and academic support provided to ECP students. Secondly, the ECP focus on the entry-level articulation gap fails to address the multiple curricula and pedagogic transition points commonly experienced during the course of an undergraduate qualification (Leibowitz & Bozalek 2015). Thus, its capacity to influence curriculum and pedagogic change, beyond its narrow band of influence in students' first year at university, has been marginal. In most cases, mainstream curricula have remained untouched (CHE 2016). Additionally, the actual uptake and full integration of the educational, curricula and pedagogic philosophies underpinning ECPs have been uneven across the sector. In many institutions and for many ECP lecturers 'the additional year has been understood to be an opportunity to do "more of the same" rather than to critically analyse the specific skills and practices students need to succeed' (CHE 2016: 165). Pockets of excellence do exist within the wider ECP community; here good educational practice is exemplified at the level of faculty (Pym & Paxton 2013), the institution (Dhunpath & Vithal 2014), individual programmes (Shay et al. 2016) and in individual subject or classroom activities (Garraway 2009; Bozalek et al. 2011). However, these good practices have often remained at an insular level and confined to the site of implementation.

Some critique of the pedagogical underpinnings of ECP have drawn attention to the adoption of atheoretical conceptualisations of teaching and learning, where curricula and pedagogy are seen as neutral and asocial processes, and students are viewed in mostly decontextualised ways (CHE 2016). Like elsewhere in the broader higher education arena, focus is placed solely on the perceived gaps and omissions in the conceptual, socio-cultural and affective resources students bring along to university, thus perpetuating rather than offsetting deficit discourses (Coleman 2016). At the same time, the 'grafted on' nature of ECPs have had particular implications for staff (CHE 2016: 165). Frequently influenced by a strong remediation thrust, ECP staff are often employed in part-time or non-permanent contracts, in teaching-only roles and might have limited disciplinary expertise. A final, but significantly concerning consequence of the policy and design framework of ECP has been its ability to attract stigmatisation and marginalisation (Leibowitz & Bozalek 2015). The intention to fund 'educationally disadvantaged' students, when coupled with the socio-political and economic realities of the country, has effectively relegated the predominantly black ECP cohorts to the 'other', in their home institutions and across the sector. Leibowitz and Bozalek posit that 'students in ECP are regarded as more expensive to look after and/or are seen as of lesser importance and status' (2015: 12). This stigma crosses over to lecturers who teach on ECP programmes. Possibly due to both structural arrangements for staffing and entrenched prejudices and misunderstandings about the aims and intentions of

ECP, lecturers in these courses are subjected to stigmatisation and their already marginalised professional location often weakens their ability to challenge such conceptualisations. This precarious location within the sector is further exacerbated by the lack of oversight and evaluation by the DHET (Leibowitz & Bozalek 2015). Also absent are self-evaluation and collegial peer review opportunities internal to the ECP community itself. Institutions and their ECP stakeholders rarely engage in processes aimed at critically reviewing the extent to which policy objectives and educational principles have been conceptualised and given expression within their local contexts. Misalignment between policy and implementation realities are thus rarely surfaced or reported on, and little space is created to raise the challenges, contradictions and dilemmas experienced at the coalface of the classroom. Additionally, during the #FEESMUSTFALL and other student protests which affected much of the South African university sector between 2015–2017, institutions and lecturers were confronted by direct critique from students. In particular, ECP students challenged their ‘other’ status within the broader university environment and expressed how ECPs reinforced racial stigma and marginalisation. Academics who teach on extended curriculum programmes are therefore confronted with a range of tensions at the level of structure and ideology while also having to traverse the situated and contextual realities of their classroom settings.

### **Contents of this book: contexts, identities and practices**

The goal of this book is to create an opportunity for ECP lecturers to participate in wider scholarly conversations about the realities of their teaching and learning spaces. Given the way the ECP project is positioned within the broader sector, it is essential to show examples of ECP lecturers critically reflecting on and drawing insights from their practices in a manner that seeks to lift out the contextual textures of their classrooms, their students and the role(s) they inhabit. Through their engagement with different reflective inquiry approaches and theoretical lenses, they offer their insights and frequently their critique of their own teaching approaches, assumptions made about students, the limitations of certain curriculum structuring and how their specific teaching environments are either responsive or resistant to rethinking how ECP students are viewed and taught. Structured as nine short case studies, the chapters provide rich and descriptive narratives of these different ECP teaching contexts and the experiences of the 16 academics who inhabit these spaces. The chapters thus provide snapshots of ECPs located at traditional and research-intensive universities (Bernard, Taylor, Samson et al. and Abrahams et al.), a comprehensive university (Winter), a historically black and research-led university (Raitt and George) and a university of technology (Hugo & Morris and Alexander). The final chapter draws on the insights and critical

reflective meta-commentary of two experienced higher education scholars and educational developers who have reviewed the nine case studies. Naidoo and Thesen, through a series of thematic points, suggest a set of lessons the wider university community might gain from the reflective labour presented in the case studies. The case studies all differ in their institutional, disciplinary and course settings as well as the curriculum models of which they form a part. They thus introduce the reader to a variety of disciplines, fields and subject contexts. These include the Arts and Humanities, Physics, Health, Natural and Life Sciences, Management Studies, Quantitative Literacy, Visual Design and Academic Literacy. The contributors have provided clear accounts of their reflective engagement, often homing in on a specific instance of their teaching practice and then attempting to reflectively comment on how their pedagogic decision-making and actions are also intimately shaped by a range of contextual factors.

Three of the authors explore in vivid detail the varied influences of disciplinary knowledge practices on their curricula and pedagogic decision making as well as how these practices shape the way they teach their ECP courses. They also outline some of the dilemmas and challenges these knowledge practices evoke, especially for their own identities and those of their students. In Bernard's chapter she highlights how her identity as a critical applied linguist has allowed her to challenge decontextualised approaches of academic literacies and reframe the curriculum of the course she teaches to focus more explicitly on critiquing academic discourses. Additionally, by using autoethnographic tools she is able to harness reflexivity as a means to critically revisit her own university learning trajectory to bring a more sensitive understanding to her students' learning experiences. Taylor's chapter suggests that Physics as a discipline creates certain power differentials that play themselves out in lecturer-student and student-discipline relations. The case study provides an account of how Taylor attempts to subvert these imposed power boundaries and, using the notion of positioning, reflects on the extent to which she is able to achieve this outcome. The Winter case study focuses on a specialist pedagogic intervention aimed at supporting Management students to improve their performance in a quantitative literacy subject. The starting point of this intervention is the recognition of how anxiety associated with mathematical and quantitative literacies creates specific learning barriers. The individualised support offered to students is, however, firmly rooted in an understanding of how mathematical knowledge structures are used to understand and solve quantitative reasoning problems.

The centrality of support for language, communication and academic literacies in the ECP domain is emphasised through the five chapters devoted to exploring how this overarching subject area is pedagogically realised at four different institutional and faculty contexts. The Samson *et al.* chapter describes the rich

curricula and pedagogic history of their academic literacies course. However, responding to their contemporary institutional context where transformation and inclusivity are foregrounded, they explore the value of using the notion of a pedagogy of care to interrogate their lecturer identity; asking how their espoused pedagogies position them as care-givers and whether this is the sole identity they inhabit in the classroom. George is also concerned with how his position as the ‘all knowing’ expert impacts on student participation and belonging in his classroom. He subjects a formative feedback strategy employed in an ECP classroom to deeper critical review and considers how a lecturer’s vulnerability can be a source of insight that drives pedagogic change. Creating more opportunities for student participation in the academic literacy classroom at a university of technology is the central theme of Alexander’s case study. Subjecting a previous action research study to further critical review, she examines the discourses of writing that inform her pedagogies and shows how institutional discourses act as a barrier against the more transformative approaches she wishes to introduce in her classrooms. In the Raitt chapter, the reader is introduced to an integrated and cross-disciplinary literacies and study skills course completed by students in the various extended Science degree programmes at her institution. This case study offers a descriptive narrative of the curriculum and oversight role played by the lecturer-as-course coordinator, showing how this administrative oversight is essential for ensuring the academic integrity of the course.

A concern around student belonging connects the final two case studies, despite their institutional, disciplinary and professional divergence. Hugo and Morris introduce the ECP environment of a Design diploma at a university of technology. They raise their concerns about the intransigence of deeply entrenched Eurocentric conceptualisations of their field and the consequences this holds, for their own identity constructions and those of their students. Their reflective activity lays bare the tensions evoked by attempting to infuse their teaching practice with decolonisation theories. Located at a Health Sciences Faculty, the Abrahams *et al.* chapter problematises how the curriculum structure of the extended curriculum pathway in their faculty creates particular discomforts for students who are required to take this learning pathway. The authors review the internal pedagogic model that underpins their course, showing how it is built around the notion of a supportive community of practice, while further highlighting how this pedagogic model has been effective in mediating and supporting students’ transitions to the ECP pathway.

The primacy afforded to reflective inquiry becomes the lens through which all the chapters can shed light on the multiple ways in which teaching in ECP is understood and given expression. It also turns the spotlight on how individual

lecturers attempt to navigate extremely challenging teaching domains and yet remain engaged, critical and reflective; constantly seeking deeper insight to inform and improve their classroom practices. The representation of these reflective insights, like the terrain of the extended programmes, are therefore necessarily uneven and sometimes incomplete. However, by placing the ECP lecturer and their teaching practice at the centre of reflective observation and analysis, this collection deliberately attempts to validate the contribution of such empirical work for understanding and improving the quality of teaching and learning in the contemporary university. The chapters further validate the deeply situated nature of university teaching and thus strongly argue against any 'one-size-fits-all' approaches that blindly promote specific theoretical or pedagogic approaches as inherently valuable or universally applicable. Rather, the authors in this collection provide insight into how their ongoing exploration of and experimentation with various theoretical and methodological lenses have proved valuable within the contexts of their classrooms. This collection shows the ways in which the ECP space can be a robust and theoretically-informed teaching and learning environment, where lecturers engage with scholarly debates and are open to innovation and experimentation. The final impression created by these ECP lecturers and chapter authors, is that they do not shy away from complexity; rather complexity is regarded as an essential catalyst for becoming critical, extending and pushing forward their curricula and pedagogic practices in responsive ways.

### Notes

\* *Black* is used here in an inclusive manner to include the apartheid-defined racial categories of African, Coloured and Indian.

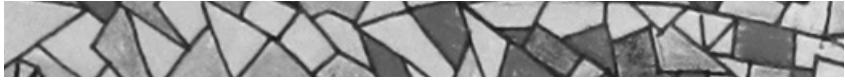
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## CHAPTER 1

# Autoethnography and critical reflection as pedagogical practice in the ECP classroom

[Taryn Bernard \(Stellenbosch University\)](#)

### (Re)considering my context

I have been working in an extended curriculum programme (ECP) at Stellenbosch University, a historically white, Afrikaans university, for exactly ten years. My course is situated within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. As a lecturer and coordinator of this course, I am not only responsible for the development of academic literacy skills but also for undertaking research that can enhance understandings of foundational provision in South Africa. Most faculties at Stellenbosch University have incorporated ECPs into one or more of their degree programmes and while the structure of ECPs differ amongst faculties, in the faculty where I work, we offer the augmented curriculum model. This means that students are enrolled at the university for their degree programme, but their degree is extended across an additional year as students complete the additional subjects in Table 1.1 below. This chapter reflects on the work and research being done in *Texts in the Humanities 123*, a compulsory academic literacy subject for second year ECP students.

**Table 1.1** *Additional subjects for ECP students in Humanities*

Year	Subject	Credits
1	Texts in the Humanities 113	12
1	Texts in the Humanities 143	12
1	Introduction to the Humanities 178	24
1	Information Skills 174	12
2	Texts in the Humanities 123	12
2	Texts in the Humanities 153	12

I view ECPs as an extremely important aspect of the contemporary higher education system in South Africa as they are not only the product of an exclusive and racialised system which prevented access to higher education for the majority of the South African population, but they also highlight the inherent tensions of

transformation. For example, my 2018 *Texts in the Humanities 123* class comprises 59 students, 58 of whom are black, and most of whom are second- or third-language speakers of English. While this could be viewed as a snapshot of a demographically representative classroom, it can also work as an example of how these programmes segregate students according to race and a norm-deviation paradigm which is, in the end, not transformative (see Leibowitz & Bozalek 2015; Luckett & Shay 2017).

As a white facilitator in the ECP classroom, I often feel at the epicentre of transformation tensions, and I have spent many hours and days trying to figure out how to not only equip students with a required skillset, but to make a contribution to piecemeal approaches to academic development and extended programmes (see Leibowitz & Bozalek 2015: 9–10). However, I do not think of my students as ‘ECP students’, nor do I think of ECPs as adjunct programmes that should run alongside ‘the mainstream’, a binary distinction that is often problematically applied to the ECP context. Within my classroom lies a wealth of information about the experiences of groups of students entering a prestigious institution which previously barred many of their parents and grandparents. This dynamic needs to be explored as ECPs remain a contested (and/or unwanted) part of the contemporary South African higher education system, yet they are a part which is closely aligned with discourses around race, culture and access (see Bernard 2015).

### **Adopting self-reflective methodologies**

For this study, I drew on autoethnographic methods such as autobiographical narratives and journal writing. The incorporation of such methods is premised on the idea that, if ECPs are to be studied in a coherent way, the experiences and views of facilitators and coordinators must be explored and understood. Furthermore, such methods allowed me to critique the presuppositions on which my curriculum and classroom practices are built and to investigate my own personal experiences of an important sociocultural practice. I have used autoethnographic methods as a means to answer questions about how I perceive ECPs, why I perceive them as such and whether this influences what I teach and how I teach it.

I was particularly inspired by the work of Mike Hayler (2011), whose autoethnographic research offers an important account of the experiences of educators of teachers in the British higher education system. Hayler shares his own story and compares this to the stories of six other teacher educators as an alternative means of understanding professional identity. Significant parallels can be drawn between teacher educators at these UK training colleges and facilitators on ECPs in South Africa as both ‘feel themselves to be only doubtfully recognised as part of the system of higher education’

(Hayler 2011: 9; see also Garraway 2015). Hayler's (2011) work highlights the contribution that autoethnography can make to understanding education settings. Autoethnography shows up the extent to which the identities of the participants influence their classroom practices and how they adapt their pedagogies in order to maintain their own beliefs about teaching and learning – regardless of institutional pressures and constraints.

With issues of personal identity in mind, I began my research at the start of the *Texts in the Humanities 123* course in 2018. The group of 59 students was divided into two groups, each required to attend three lectures per week. After each of these six lectures I made notes in a journal about my experiences of the lectures. Halfway through the course I sat down to write a narrative of my own journey to university. During the course the students wrote six assignments and completed a feedback form at the end. The course assignments and feedback forms from the 38 students who consented to be part of this study were included in my process of reflective autoethnography, which required me to read, re-read, progress, recede and understand (see Hughes & Pennington 2017) my own narratives as well as the student's assignments and feedback.

## **My narrative**

To include my entire narrative would go beyond the scope of this chapter, so I focus and elaborate on four dominant themes that emerged in my written narrative: (1) my Jewish identity, (2) valuing hard work and dedication (3) my (often stigmatised) status as an ECP lecturer, and (4) my adoption of the professional role and identity of a critical applied linguist. At times, I include short excerpts from my narrative to illustrate a point, and I return to these excerpts in the concluding section of this chapter.

## **On being Jewish and valuing hard work and dedication**

Rose Cohen, my Russian Jewish grandmother, arrived in Johannesburg by boat in the 1930s. She was sent to Arcadia, a Jewish orphanage in Johannesburg after her mother fell terminally ill. I recall my grandmother telling me that she did not want to learn Afrikaans because English, after Russian, was already enough. I always attributed my own aversion to learning Afrikaans, and learning in Afrikaans, to an aspect of my Jewish identity. Although being culturally Jewish is a facet of my identity, it is often something that I would avoid mentioning as we moved from Johannesburg into more secular communities in the Western Cape. Like Robins (2016), I was aware of Jewish stereotypes and felt embarrassed by them at particular moments in my life.

My grandmother, as a single mother, raised my mother and my own parents were divorced by the time I finished primary school. By the age of fifteen, I had

connected with my grandmother's work ethic and had become quite self-sufficient, and by eighteen I was on a plane to the UK for two years to save enough money to study at university. I applied to both UCT and Stellenbosch but picked Stellenbosch because it was easier for me to get around without a car. In February 2004, I sat on a low wall outside Administration A and decided to register, even though I did not know if I could afford to come back in 2005. Throughout my studies I received a scholarship from the Herman Trust via the Jewish Board of Deputies in Cape Town. In December 2006, I graduated cum laude and then continued with a two-year master's programme in Applied Linguistics in 2007. I began teaching on, and coordinating, our Faculty's ECP in 2008.

### **On being characterised as an 'ECP lecturer'**

Narrating my own story revealed to me how much I resist the label of 'victim' in an effort to focus on self-empowerment and upward mobility, and how I had actively resisted the stigma of being an ECP lecturer because of this. I came to realise the extent to which I resist such a characterisation and the associated stigma, to the point where I felt willing to write about it in my private journals but more reluctant to declare it in this chapter. However, I was struck by Richards' (2012: 71) reflection on autoethnography as a method that 'attempts to address othering in various ways', the most obvious of which is to allow the researcher to be transparent about their relationship with what they are studying, which in my research relates to the 'othering' of the ECP domain and those associated with it. The excerpt from my narrative in which I relay my experiences of feeling characterised and stigmatised as an 'ECP lecturer', is an attempt to honour the level of transparency noted in Richard's work:

*I have been asked, 'What are you doing on the ECP?' A compliment to say, 'you are intelligent, you can do much better.' I have even been told I am 'too good for the ECP'. But I have also been told that no one cares. I have sat in evaluation meetings and listened to the ECP being called the ugly stepsister. I have been told no one wants to touch it.*

### **Adopting the role of a critical applied linguist**

Narrating my own story drew attention to the fact that I had adopted the professional label and role of the critical applied linguist. I became immersed in critical applied linguistics while doing my master's research. Critical applied linguistics has its roots in critical theory and the term 'critical' in both instances relates to the use of the term by scholars attached to the Frankfurt School who were interested in how Marxist theory could shed light on contemporary developments in capitalism and the perpetuation of oppressive structures by ideological means. Horkheimer, a member of the Frankfurt School, described a theory as critical if it were one that seeks 'to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them' (1982: 244).

While I have taken interest in multiple sociolinguistic approaches to interpreting language and texts, I have spent many years focusing on critical discourse analysis (CDA) and the influence of social constructivism and systemic functional linguistics (SFL) on forms of discourse analysis. More specifically, I have been interested in the idea that language is not rooted in unchangeable codes or rules but is a system of resources for making meaning (see Halliday 1978). Critical applied linguists propose that certain sets of knowledges (discourses) and linguistic representations become dominant in society, and that these dominant ways of knowing, talking and representing have the power to give preference to, segregate and marginalise particular sets of social actors. The critical applied linguist *critiques* the production and consumption processes of texts, often in ways that side with the marginalised (see Wodak 2001). Thus, the adoption of these applied models of linguistics all at once creates a subject-position and identity for those who use and subscribe to their theoretical positions: I critique dominant social structures in an effort to create transparency and I side with the marginalised, especially within my own ECP classroom.

### **Reflecting on my curriculum**

When considering my own narrative, it became clearer why I had designed and delivered the course in the way I had. An underlying, guiding principle of *Texts in the Humanities 123* is that academic discourses are also the discourses of the elite and they have been used as tools to give preference to some social practices and social groups over others. In the ECP classroom, the power struggle embedded in academic discourse is magnified. This is because any agenda aligned to ‘widening participation’ in higher education contexts is directed towards granting access to groups of individuals who have historically been excluded from higher education contexts because they were not white, not middle-class, not born from parents who went to university, and not English. Teaching the characteristics and style of English academic discourses to this group of students as if these discourses are the social zenith, without any reference to the social and cultural contexts in which status is created and perpetuated – is both problematic and, I would argue, unethical. To not problematise the context would be to fall into the dominant deficit discourse of ‘non-traditional students’, who are ‘at risk’ because of a global statistical trend which indicates that there is a higher attrition rate amongst these categories of students. Such a discourse does little to attribute agency to the students – it does not recognise the knowledges and linguistic repertoires that the students bring to the classroom, and so it may also silence them, or cause them to feel stigmatised or alienated.

Thus, when designing the curriculum of *Texts in the Humanities 123*, I attempted to balance the imparting of skills to create access, with the skills needed to critique the context and the dominant institution in which the students now

find themselves. I do this by teaching fundamental concepts within SFL and the idea that language is not an abstract grammatical system, but a social system that performs significant social functions in different socio-cultural contexts. These fundamental concepts are socio-theoretical and linguistic in nature. Socio-theoretical concepts include ‘ideology’, ‘identity’, ‘social constructivism’, ‘critique’ as well as concepts within ‘critical media literacy’ such as understanding the production and consumption processes of media texts. The teaching of socio-theoretical concepts is paired with the teaching of linguistic concepts such as ‘genre’, ‘discourse’ and Halliday’s three metafunctions of language, and students are given a variety of texts to comment on and to practice their skills development. Table 1.2 below offers a schematic overview of the curriculum topics.

**Table 1.2** *Overview of curriculum topics for Text in Humanities 123*

<b>Week/s</b>	<b>Theme/Topic</b>
Week 1	Understanding the terms ‘critical’ and ‘critique’ Understanding the links between language, identity and ideology Defining ‘discourse’
Week 2	Social constructivism
Week 4	Tools for analysis and critique Systemic Functional Grammar: Halliday’s three metafunctions The textual metafunction (genre) The ideational metafunction The interpersonal metafunction
Week 5	Tools for analysis and critique A simple model of critical discourse analysis
Weeks 6–8	Language and representation: Transitivity
Week 9	Language and representation: Metaphor (Metaphor in academic and non-academic writing)
Week 10	Review of Term 1
Weeks 11–13	Critical media literacy
Weeks 14–16	Critical academic literacy

The content of the two final sections of this course require some elaboration here as they are pivotal in understanding the skills that the students are taught and encouraged to develop. Along with Fairclough (2003), I have adopted the stance that a text cannot be understood outside of complex consumption and production processes. Thus, students are not only taught the consumption and production processes of media texts, which have often been referred to as problematic in a democratic context (see Herman & Chomsky 1988), but in the final section of the course, students are also taught about the production and consumption processes of academic texts in an effort to make them



more transparent. I believe that such an approach facilitates an understanding of knowledge production in academia, but also a greater understanding of basic academic literacy skills such as referencing. As part of the work done in Weeks 11–13, students are asked to apply what they have learnt in the course to an analysis of media texts in which foundational provision is a central theme (see Bernard 2015). In the final weeks of the course, students are asked to critically analyse the language of academia, or academic discourses, with a particular focus on the fields of History, Psychology and Sociology (where most of the students are enrolled). This is achieved by drawing on the set of tools taught throughout the duration of the course. This exercise aims to empower students by equipping them with the knowledge, concepts and vocabulary to critique academic discourses, rather than to simply accept such discourses as prestigious and desirable.

### **Journaling my way through my own curriculum and pedagogical practices**

As stated in section two, after each lecture I made notes in a journal about my experiences of the lectures. This journaling process highlighted how the design of my curriculum and pedagogical practices were closely linked to my own personal narrative, particularly those aspects highlighted in section three above. Two dominant themes emerged from these journals which I outline here: ‘Resisting the label of (white) privilege’ and ‘It’s just too hard!’ These themes are elaborated on further in the sections below.

#### ***Resisting the label of (white) privilege***

By rereading my journal entries, I became aware of the extent to which I tried to present myself as ‘not privileged’ by sharing aspects of my own narrative with students, including my Russian, Jewish, immigrant ancestry, and the fact that I am a ‘non-traditional’ and ‘first-generation’ student. I became aware of how I used aspects of my own history as a mechanism to differentiate myself from those who are ‘privileged’, and to create some sort of shared understanding with the students. I also became aware of how much I valued ‘hard work’ as a mechanism to reach success and financial independence, and I found myself sending out such messages repeatedly to the class. However, during a classroom discussion around contemporary race discourses of white privilege, a student responded emotionally by saying, ‘This is a discourse, yes. Because as black people we are always told that if we just work hard enough...’. This response, which I noted in my journal after class, made me cognisant of the fact that my story cannot be equated with many of my students in the classroom and I am privileged as a result of *access* (including access to a scholarship from the Herman Trust) as well as my own status as a mother-tongue speaker of English. I wrote:

*I get nervous and my tongue trips on the clicks of my students' names. And then I wonder how I can even begin to teach my students my language, let alone critique it, without knowing theirs.*

### **'It's too hard'**

I frequently wrote 'it's too difficult' or 'it's too abstract and theoretical' in my journals. I also became worried that, by focusing on social constructivism, I was forcing students into a position where they had to critique their own belief systems, belief systems which might be at the root of their own persistence in an institution that could feel quite alienating to them (see Bangani & Pym 2017). This sentiment is addressed again in the concluding section below.



### **REFLECTIVE INSIGHTS: The impact of critical reflection on practice**

Adopting methods of self-reflection allowed me to understand how I perceive ECPs, why I perceive them as such and whether this influences what I teach and how I teach it. This understanding reached a pinnacle once the course was completed and I was able to contrast my perspectives and narratives with the students' assignments and their feedback. In spite of my concerns that it was too difficult or too theoretical, the course was rated extremely highly in formal feedback. The course was given an average rating of 80%, while I was rated 'well-prepared' and 'funny'. Students commented that I had developed their interest in linguistics and language, and that they had become more aware of how language plays a central role in the construction of identity and the perpetuation of dominant ideologies. However, I no longer interpret positive feedback such as this in a vacuum. I now interpret it in conjunction with my own reflections. Had I not recorded these reflections, or re-read and analysed them, I am certain that significant classroom events, interactions, topics and assignments would have remained static and locked in space and time, re-enacted year after year after year, which in the end does not make a valuable contribution to transforming the South African Higher Education sector.

There is also something to be said about the stigma that emerged in my narratives, as well as my personal representation of powerful social ideologies related to language, race, access and privilege.

### **Conclusion**

Like any other dominant social institution, the university is a space where narratives and discourses co-exist and push back against each other, where discourses which were dominant become less dominant, allowing counter

narratives and discourses to emerge and take shape. ECPs appear to be largely enveloped by a dominant discourse which works to segregate and marginalise, and perhaps rigorous processes of critique could transform ECPs from occupying this marginal space to a space at the centre of counter discourses, of alternative representations, and, ultimately, of transformation.

### **Dedication**

*This work is dedicated to Brenda Leibowitz, who turned to me at a writing retreat in 2012 and asked me if my mother was proud of me.*

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## CHAPTER 2

### Reflecting on lecturer identities in design: disrupting the narrative

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[Cheri Hugo](#) and [Amanda Morris](#) (Cape Peninsula University of Technology)

In the contemporary higher education setting of South Africa, decolonisation as a construct has become a significant consideration for all academics. The #FeesMustFall movement and other student protests between 2015–2017 turned the public spotlight on how particular types of knowledge, typically emanating from Western traditions, have become dominant in curricula, often at the expense of those derived from Africa. The disciplinary field of design and its curriculum construction has not been exempted from these critiques. While much debate and discussion about the nature of decolonisation as it might apply to the university, curriculum and pedagogy has been entertained at most institutions, actual change in the curricula has been slow. In this chapter, we present a critical self-reflection on some of the significant elements constructing our identities and teaching practices as lecturers in the design field. This is supported by the ‘decolonisation turn’ (Vorster and Quinn, 2017) which has afforded us the space to review and reconsider both our identities and membership of the Design fraternity as well as their influence on our classroom practices. Central to decolonisation theorisation is the importance attached to resisting Eurocentric ideas and philosophies, accepting the contributions of colonised communities and promoting social justice, especially in post-colonial contexts (Zembylas 2017). Additionally, the notion of decoloniality (see Quijano 1997, 2000; Zembylas 2017) attempts to account for how colonial and especially European influences are still prized above other ways of knowing and doing.

These ideas have offered a valuable reflective counterpoint from which to review and reframe our teaching practice. While not overtly referenced in this chapter, these ideas continue to offer a conceptual sounding board for our ongoing reflective enquiries. The critical review described here has allowed us to revisit our own learning pathways into the disciplinary field of design and ask pertinent questions about how this journey continues to influence our teaching practices. We are particularly interested in how our renewed and critical reconstruction of our design identities, coupled with our location in the extended curriculum

programme (ECP) space, can be harnessed to disrupt the expected pathways into design for our students. We have structured our reflective inquiry using a narrative research approach and, through a dialogical conversation, we attempt to account for our learning and academic journeys to our current roles and location as ECP lecturers at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). This dialogical conversation provides the basis for our critical reflection and interrogation, which attempts to understand the various influences that now inform our activities and practices as ECP lecturers in design.

### **Elements that define our teaching context**

#### ***Our institution***

CPUT as a merged institution is richly constituted by histories drawn from both of its pre-merger institutions, Peninsula Technikon and Cape Technikon. Both institutions reflected their place in the apartheid-constructed, higher education landscape, by serving different racial groups. Originally, the Peninsula Technical College was established as the college for 'coloured' apprentices in the Western Cape and later became the Peninsula Technikon (Pentech), catering exclusively for black students during apartheid. The old Cape Technical College served white students and later became the Cape Technikon.

In 2005, the Cape and Peninsula Technikons were merged to form CPUT. Mergers were presented as a way of creating new institutions with new identities and cultures that transcended their past racial and ethnic institutional histories and of contributing to deracialisation (DoE 2001a: 89). However, in practice, more than a decade after the merger, the institution and its various role-players are still grappling with the multiple challenges this process has produced. The merging of two historically separate institutions with varying demographics, institutional cultures and values as well as curriculum and pedagogic approaches, has presented CPUT with more challenges than initially anticipated.

#### ***Our students***

The students in the Design ECP are usually 18 or 19 years old. They are 100% black and come to our diploma directly from high school. Most students completed their schooling at a poorly resourced township school in either the Western or Eastern Cape with many not having completed Art or Design as part of their high school subjects. The gender distribution of our students generally does not conform to the dominant pattern at CPUT of slightly higher female numbers; in our programme males account for 60% of the cohort. Our students are mostly isiXhosa and Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers. Approximately 89% of our students depend on the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), while 30% are first generation university students. Although over 60% of our students live in a university residence, it is not always near where

the Design Faculty is located, and thus almost 70% of our students spend more than an hour travelling to university. The current Design Foundation student demographic is very different to what it may have been in pre-democratic South Africa, when design programmes targeted students who were skilled and naturally talented, by western standards, and had already been exposed to and attached value to Eurocentric art and aesthetics.

***Our curriculum: design education and its historical context***

Teaching and learning in most design programmes take place in what is called the design studio. The design studio is a classroom space where students and lecturers work on practical design projects. Students are arranged and work in a communal fashion around large tables and share their ideas, experiments, techniques and design outcomes with one another. In the initial phase of any design student's university career they spend most of their time in the studio interacting with fellow students as well as their lecturers. Completed work is typically displayed on walls where it is subject to critique, compared and valued by the 'knowledgeable' lecturer relying on an aesthetic with deep European roots (Carey 2017).

**Figure 2.1** *Typical layout of an ECP design studio at CPUT*



The type of curriculum and the pedagogic arrangements that exist within our design studios in both ECP and the mainstream courses also reflect the dominance of the Bauhaus traditions in design education locally and internationally. The Bauhaus tradition, when co-opted into educational settings, places a strong focus on the production of an artefact to prove the ability to apply one's acquired knowledge and practical skill. The production of this artefact is also strictly aligned to a prescribed timeframe or deadline. The teaching and learning practices of Bauhaus-informed design studios therefore

**Figure 2.2** *Interaction between a student and lecturer*



**Figure 2.3** *Students sharing ideas in a design studio*



place the lecturer in the position of expert and the student in the apprentice role. The current arrangement of our ECP classroom and our own pedagogic practices are largely prescribed by the Bauhaus, and therefore Eurocentric traditions. In critiquing the reliance on this approach in design education, Phelan (1981) suggests that it places pedagogic attention and emphasis on the aesthetic and the artefact rather than on the student and their learning. Due to the fact that the demographic of the design student has changed, we decided to reflect on our teaching practices. The reflections include the issues that influence the academic experience of our students. These areas include their socio-economic positioning, the indigenous knowledge they bring with them into our classrooms and the increasingly larger groups of students as the exclusivity of this field of study has dissipated.

### ***Our learning pathways***

We each completed our undergraduate diplomas and then BTech degrees at the two respective pre-merger Technikons. We then both joined the ECP Graphic Design programme at Peninsula Technikon and after the final act of the merger process, now teach on the amalgamated Foundation Design programme at CPUT. Our undergraduate academic experiences have had a profound impact on our initial exposure and subsequent socialisation into the world and field of design. These experiences have come to influence, in both obvious and less obvious ways, how we understand Graphic Design as a discipline more broadly and the Graphic Design educational practices in use at CPUT, in both the ECP space and mainstream offerings.

### **Amanda**

I grew up in a suburb called Ravensmead (originally called Tiervlei), one of the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town. This area accommodated ‘coloured’ people who were forcibly removed from areas such as Die Ackers, Skilpadvlei and Parow in the period stretching between 1950–1970. I completed my diploma in Graphic Design at the then Pentech after completing my Grade 12 (matric) at Groote Schuur High School in



Newlands in 1998. In 1991, Groote Schuur was the first public Afrikaans High School in South Africa with a broad admissions policy. While at high school I attended Frank Joubert Art Centre (now Peter Clarke Art Centre). When I applied to study design at both Cape Tech and Pentech, I was accepted to do first year Graphic Design at Pentech but was referred to the Access Course at Cape Tech. Due primarily to the financial implications of completing a four, rather than three-year diploma, my family chose Pentech as the institution where I completed my studies.

**Figure 2.4** *A scene from Tiervlei during the 1976 uprising*



*Source: UCT Visual Archives, Special Collections (originally published by Independent Newspapers)*

## **Cheri**

I am from Bishop Lavis, a historically ‘coloured’ community in Cape Town. I completed my matric at Elsie’s River High and in 1999 I started my Graphic Design diploma at the then Cape Tech. Because I didn’t have any formal art training, I was placed in the Access Course and was deemed to ‘lack’ drawing skills and having a limited exposure to art and art history. During my diploma studies I was one of only three other students of colour in my class of about 30 students. Despite lacking the pre-requisite drawing skills, I specialised in illustration. My studies were made possible through the assistance of bursaries and study loans organised by a community worker in Bishop Lavis and Elsie’s River.

## **Narrative dialogue as a pathway to critical reflection**

Narrative research is the study of how human beings experience the world through the collection of stories people tell and the creation of written narratives about their experiences. As a deeply qualitative methodology, when used in

educational research it can be a way for students, teachers and researchers to become storytellers and characters in their own stories and those of others (Connelly & Clandinin 1990: 4). Our decision to use a narrative approach to structure our reflective enquiry is based on the capacity of the methodology to place our stories of becoming and working as design educators at the centre of the enquiry. It allowed us to share our stories dialogically, and then subject them to critical review. As noted early in the chapter, we have been strongly affected by the ongoing calls for decolonisation of the curricula and institutions of higher education. However, we have been unable to fully interrogate what this might mean for our practices as ECP design lecturers. This is despite the fact that much of the suggested curriculum change, recommended by decolonial advocates, resonated with us. Central questions which framed our dialogic conversation were whether the pedagogic approaches we have employed are serving our students and whether we are sufficiently aware of ourselves and of our practices and their impact on our students.

### **Shared narratives: reflecting on our identities as design lecturers**

In this section, we offer descriptive insights into our narrative constructions of our socialisation into the Design discipline, primarily through our studies and then our roles as design lecturers in the ECP domain at CPUT. This has been a central theme in our dialogue and has come to influence our thinking about our teaching and our identities as teachers of Design. Our narratives are also filled with tensions and conflicts, which again become the source for our critical reconsideration of our current teaching practices and how to deal with the contradictions in our identity constructions.

In the extract below, Cheri comments on her socialisation into the Design discipline and draws attention to the huge investment made to become a recognised participant in this field of study.

**Cheri:** *I spent most of my adult life trying to learn this field and to adapt and adjust into being able to teach design drawing, in particular. My experiences as a student come into the classroom with me. Teaching the way I was taught, I thought that was the only way and the best way and that's what I knew.*

Cheri's comments of having to 'adapt and adjust' suggests tensions and compromises that had to be made in order for her to be 'able to teach design drawing'. This socialisation process is, however, also credited with informing both of our current teaching practices. Amanda's comment below echoes Cheri's acknowledgement of her previously unquestioning adoption and perpetuation of the practices she was socialised into.

**Amanda:** *It's almost by default that you go back to teaching in the way in which you were taught. So, one of the things I've consciously had to do was to almost unlearn those things and to say, I cannot just deliver in the way that it was delivered to me.*

What both extracts clearly start to show are the traces of a critical reconsideration of not only our socialisation into the field, but how this socialisation has unconsciously influenced and directed how we teach. There is evidence in our conversation of the gradual recognition of the limitations of simply reproducing the practices taught to us.

As we note early in this chapter, design education at CPUT, and arguably in other such programmes in higher education, is heavily influenced by the Bauhaus tradition. Below, Amanda acknowledges the influence of Bauhaus on the ECP design curriculum and how it sets up some of the recognition rules that lecturers, in particular, use to assess and evaluate students' legitimacy in the field.

**Amanda:** *What we do as design lecturers in the way that we deliver the design curriculum is very much focused on that Eurocentric gaze, the Bauhaus tradition. It's almost as if we are 'colonialised'... This design tradition is exclusive and if you don't have a particular way of 'seeing', then you just cannot be part of it.*

To be recognised requires the 'Eurocentric gaze' and 'the Bauhaus tradition'. While earlier we both acknowledge membership of the discipline of Design, in the above extract Amanda ascribes her affiliation with this field of practice as being 'colonised', thus suggesting a negative association with the discipline within which she is an insider. In this way, she expresses her conflictual relationship with the Design discipline and the possible tensions in the identity construction of herself as an 'insider'. Furthermore, in Amanda's description, the discipline of Design is presented as 'exclusive' and requiring participants to have 'a particular way of seeing'. Our students are in a similar position to the one we were in when we took our own pathways to becoming part of the design field. In order for our students to gain membership to this field of practice, they have to display or enact an identity that has a Eurocentric gaze.

Membership to Design is also represented and displayed through the use of appropriate language and terminology associated with the field. While we accept that most disciplines and fields of practice require their participants to use their own unique language and terminologies, we know this can be a barrier to participation, especially for novices like our students. This awareness is translated into our classroom practices and the importance we ascribe to our attempts to mediate students' acquisition of the language of design.

**Amanda:** *I would never use the actual term because for a while, I suppose I think that it doesn't make sense to them yet. So when you're learning, for example, if it's their first typography project, I'm not going to say, 'Look at your kerning', I'm going to say, 'Look at the spaces between your letters...'*

Here Amanda describes how she initially uses words and terms that would be familiar to all her students, rather than the design-specific terminology. However, the importance of building students' design vocabulary is emphasised by Cheri below. Also noted is how the use of the 'right language' is an important 'signal' of membership of the field. As Cheri notes, this could entail being able to 'sound like you know what you are talking about'.

**Cheri:** *We say to students, 'You have to start using the right language. So that when you talk about things, you sound like you know what you're talking about.' But to me, there's a difference between sounding like you know and actually knowing...*

Part of our role as lecturers is to socialise students into the design traditions, but we are keen to not only see the students through the identity they are expected to have acquired by the time they graduate. We also want to recognise who they are when they arrive at our classroom doors for the first time.

**Amanda:** *But I think this idea that students arrive as a blank canvas, that I think is a barrier. Because if we accept that they are these blank canvases then we don't recognise that maybe they do know, but just in another form that we don't recognise.*

**Cheri:** *Students coming here, being blank, knowing nothing, that's a scenario that doesn't exist for me. Simply because a curriculum has been set up in a particular way that may not show a student's strength, it does not mean they come here without any strengths. I believe that when people come to university, they have 18 years' worth of life experience.*

In these two extracts, we stress the importance of acknowledging that students bring resources to the university classroom, even if these resources are not overtly recognised by the curriculum. Additionally, we also allude to the idea that our curriculum might be unable to fully appreciate or provide opportunities to 'show students' strength', but for us it remains crucial to recognise the resources, experiences and life histories that students arrive with when then they start our programme.



## **REFLECTIVE INSIGHTS: How we understand design teaching in ECP**

The 'decolonisation turn' has had a profound influence on our ongoing re-evaluation of our identities as designers and design educators. Not only have these debates about decolonising curricula become the catalyst for our critical reflective enquiry, but they have allowed us to critique the adherence of the current design curriculum to the Bauhaus tradition and promotion of the Eurocentric design gaze. We raise questions about the degree to which our current

curriculum overtly excludes knowledges and practices originating within African design traditions. Furthermore, the wholesale reliance on the Eurocentric gaze, implies that the design aesthetic which our students bring along to our classrooms is either ignored or dismissed as inferior. This dismissal highlights how the intentions of our curriculum and pedagogic orientations actively act against more socially just intentions, which would afford all perspectives and points of view a more equal representation in our classroom.

Our membership of and identification with the Design discipline is a source of discomfort and tension. We straddle two worlds – that of the design canon of Bauhaus and that of the spaces marked and defined by our histories as black women from working class environments. Much of our narrative picks up these tensions and how we are attempting to ensure that these histories are not discarded in our teaching identities. Like our students, who have to traverse different worlds, forge new identities and lose part of their home identities as they become socialised into the Bauhaus tradition, we continue to struggle with our own shifts as members of the Design Department at CPUT. However, central to our pedagogic practice is the importance of mediating the transitions which students have to make. This also means ensuring that our classroom setting and what we teach contain elements with which students can identify while affirming their aesthetic gaze, even if it contradicts the canon.

A somewhat challenging realisation from this critical reflection is our self-identification as ‘colonised’. It acknowledges that up to this point, we have been less critical about our socialisation into the discipline of Design and its consequences for our identities. We recognise how unquestioning we have been about our disciplinary values and norms and how these have been transferred seamlessly to our teaching practice. The notion of decoloniality, however, offers a productive middle-ground – allowing us to acknowledge how we can at the same time be part of the ‘colonised’ design world while also critical and disruptive of its norms, values and conventions. Our histories and dual identities mean that we can relate in authentic ways with our students’ lived experiences and therefore, central to our pedagogies is the need to recognise, accept and find ways of validating and affirming what students bring to the ECP design classroom. Students are not ‘blank canvasses’ and our pedagogies have to reflect this. The institutional context of CPUT and the ongoing process of coming to terms with our ‘new’ merged CPUT identity remains a significant influence on our evolving pedagogic practices. We still carry our Pentech values with us, particularly our connection and affiliation with the marginal communities we served. This association is not always recognised in the now merged teaching environment. However, the decolonial debates have created particular

affordances for our position in that all staff and colleagues have had to pay closer attention to who they teach, what they teach and include other voices in the conversation about what is appropriate and suitable for curriculum and pedagogic decision making. It also means our voices are more likely to be heard.

Overall, the most valued insight gained through our critical inquiry was the capacity of our narrative dialogue to expose the underpinning values, philosophies and tensions that define and influence our teaching practice.

## Conclusion

Through our conversations, we had the opportunity to share and reflect on our narratives. This led us to critically reconsider our identities, and in so doing, we came to recognise more fully who we are, where we are from and what that means for our teaching. Our personal narratives thus act to disrupt the normative ideal of what it means to be a lecturer in the design field. We now have a deeper understanding of how we are using, or can use, our histories to guide our students as they too strive to become designers.

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## CHAPTER 3

### Shifting the power boundaries in a physics class

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In formal learning contexts, the relationship between the two main participants, the teacher and the student, are frequently constructed through relations of power. This relationship is mostly unequal. On the one hand the lecturer, in the university learning setting, is imbued with power through institutional and disciplinary structures that position her as the knowledgeable other and university insider. On the other hand, the student is relegated to a lower status because of their outsider status to both the discipline and institution. In the extended curriculum environment where I teach first year physics, these relations of power between the lecturer-student, student-institution, and student-discipline are exacerbated and amplified in particular ways and create serious imbalances of power.

In this case study, I take a closer look at my role in these different relationships and whether and how I might be able to interrupt or shift some of these power imbalances through my teaching practices. In order to critically reflect on my teaching practice as an extended curriculum programme (ECP) physics lecturer I posed this question: In what ways does my positioning of physics, my students and myself as lecturer shift or entrench power boundaries? To answer this question, I analysed videos of the initial lectures of my 2018 course, exploring the ways in which I positioned my students and the discipline of physics, in what I said and did. I also analysed my positioning of myself as the lecturer – as representative of the discipline in the lecture context. This analytical tool helped me focus on my action, rather than the intention behind the action. I used the initial lectures because they are important in establishing the boundaries of the course and setting up expectations. My actions took place in the context of students' engagement in the lectures, however, while student response to my practice is important to me and I also have obtained their feedback on the initial lectures, due to the constraints of scope it is not the focus of this chapter. I start by describing my teaching context and the methodological approach which I used, before presenting the outcomes of my reflective analysis and insights into the ways in which the ECP space creates particularly productive opportunities for shifting the balance of power in my physics classrooms.

## **ECP physics at UCT**

The context of my reflective analysis is a particular course within a particular faculty at a particular university. The university is the University of Cape Town (UCT), an elite university, which markets itself as the top university in Africa, based on world rankings. As a result, many students from around the country choose UCT, and UCT thus draws its students from the cream of South African school leavers. However, longitudinal research into student experiences of their transitions to and success at UCT point out that despite their schooling backgrounds students encounter challenges, especially when their socio-cultural experiences do not neatly line-up with UCT's largely Eurocentric cultural norms and values (Bangeni & Kapp 2017). Additionally, UCT positions such students as 'disadvantaged' and in using such terminology frames the problems of transition or success as residing with the students rather than seeking to interrogate how institutional cultures and structures create and reinforce barriers to student success. In the Faculty of Science, while the augmented extended curriculum model is used, all students start their degree in the mainstream programme. After the first tests, students may choose, in consultation with a student advisor, to transfer to equivalent ECP courses for some or all their courses. They then move to the ECP courses for the remainder of first year and usually continue with follow-up ECP courses in their second year as well. An interesting, but equally problematic feature of this placement approach in the faculty is that while the ECP option becomes available to all students who fail their first tests, in practice our classes are made up of predominantly black students. The lecturers who teach on the ECP courses are located in their disciplinary departments and generally also teach in other mainstream courses in the faculty. We also sometimes co-teach courses, thus I might teach a three-week subject area in another ECP course. My own teaching involves the first year physics ECP course, third year projects and some postgraduate supervision. I started teaching the ECP Physics course in 2011 when I moved to UCT. My previous teaching experience was at a secondary school and at the University of the Witwatersrand where I taught BEd students who were specialising in mathematics and science teaching.

The ECP Physics course is expected to be equivalent to the mainstream course for non-physics majors, however it includes supplementary material and makes allowance for additional time-on-task. The ECP Physics course has four 45-minute lectures, a 45-minute Friday tutorial, and a Tuesday afternoon session which alternates between laboratory practicals and whiteboard tutorials. The course has traditionally started with a 'Tools and Skills' module which focuses on some of the mathematics that students need for physics (Allie & Buffler 1998). Since 2012, I developed a 'Tools and Skills' section on 'scientific reasoning' which I now teach at the start of the course. The lectures which I used for this reflective analysis are part of this 'scientific reasoning' section.



## Teaching ECP physics at UCT and my students

As the ECP lecturer, it is my belief that if I am to assist my students to become successful in physics, I need to go beyond simply transmitting physics knowledge through thoughtful and well-prepared lectures. One of my pedagogical goals is to shift the balance of power between physics and my students, through the way in which I lecture physics. My own power in the classroom has a bearing on this goal. Sociologists often cast teachers as powerful and students as powerless. However, Hayward (1998), drawing on Foucault, rejects this binary between powerful and powerless. Instead she sees power as a network of boundaries that delimit, for all, what is socially possible. The repertoire of behaviour available to a person in a particular context depends on the person's subject position within that context. In a university lecture, the subject positions of lecturer and student are available and there are boundaries which set up what these positions allow. Thus a lecturer has boundaries on what she can and cannot do – she is expected to behave in certain ways by the institution, the social context of the classroom and the students. Therefore, in the contemporary university, students now have some recourse to complain to higher authorities if they are not satisfied with how their lecturer has enacted her role and position. Subject positions are constituted through discourse, with people positioning both themselves and others through what they say and do (Davies & Harré 1990). For example, when a person tells others something in a way that implies that the others do not know it, then the person positions themselves as 'knowing' and their audience as 'unknowing'. People may accept or resist the subject positions made available discursively in a context. In Hayward's view, shifts in power happen when the boundaries on what is socially possible are renegotiated.

I regard the students in my ECP Physics course as students with good ability in mathematics and science, who have possibly experienced the adjustment to UCT as difficult or found the time pressure in tests unmanageable. In my first ECP lecture of 2018, I asked my class why they 'didn't do so well in the first physics test'. Many chose options such as 'It wasn't about the work or teaching style, it was all the other stuff about university' and 'it's hard being a long way from home'. Furthermore, for many, the monolingual environment (compared with the code-switching with which they were familiar at school) and the non-African accents with which English is typically spoken at UCT were additional obstacles to learning. In this way my students confirmed how challenges relating to their transitions to university and having to adjust to institutional, departmental and individual classroom norms and practices around, for example language use in the classroom, created particular barriers to their learning and success in the first few months at university. With respect to the position students occupy in my classroom, first year students are typically positioned to have low power in the university, in part because they do not yet have the powerful knowledge which

the institution is expected to impart. As the lecturer imbued with this powerful knowledge, I am conscious of how power is thus distributed between myself and students. An additional feature of this power dynamic is the consideration of how physics as a discipline is constructed. Sociology of knowledge scholars refer to the discipline of physics as 'powerful knowledge', because of its abstract nature and its distinctions from 'common sense' knowledge acquired through everyday experience (Young & Muller 2013). The power of this kind of disciplinary knowledge is said to come from how this type of knowledge is both systematic and generalisable beyond specific cases. Again, first year ECP students, who were identified as not being able to demonstrate a basic grasp of this 'powerful knowledge' because they failed their first test at university, are further relegated to an even lower status position in relation to the discipline than their novice peers in the mainstream. The recognition of the compounding effect these multiple mechanisms in the curriculum structure has had on creating the low status position of my ECP students, has been significant for the analysis activities driving the reflection on my practice I describe in this chapter.

### **Methodological approach**

In order to undertake a reflective analysis of my practice, I used existing lecture videos. In all UCT's larger lecture venues, videos are routinely taken by an automatic system. The videos show the lecturer, chalkboard and screen. The videos are intended for student use and are available through the course website. While giving these lectures, I had no intention of watching the videos or in any way using the lectures as a research site, as I had not yet had the idea of analysing lecture videos to interrogate my practice. I used the first seven lecture videos because, by the seventh lecture, all modes of delivery of the course had occurred at least once, including a laboratory practical, an afternoon whiteboard tutorial and a morning tutorial.

In the analysis, I started by identifying moments in which I positioned the discipline, my students or myself as the lecturer in what I said and did. For example, the act of asking students about their feelings positions students as having feelings, and positions the lecturer as concerned about students as well as wanting feedback. Here I note that there is also positioning which happens more subtly, for example, through absences, whereas in this analysis, I have focussed on words and actions. There are also power relations operating outside lectures which affect students' experience in lectures, but in my analysis, I looked only at the discursive positioning within lectures. I transcribed the approximately 300 statements and actions in which I identified such positioning. This was done six weeks after the lectures occurred. I then used an iterative grounded analysis (Strauss & Corbin 1998) to develop different categories of positioning. In the

next section, I describe these categories, illustrating them by means of my words and actions in the lectures.

### **My positioning of physics, the students and myself**

My analysis showed me positioning physics as a discipline comprising simplified models of the physical world. After the first laboratory practical, I made this comment, 'Physics is always a simplification of reality. The real world is very complex, so physics simplifies with models that, under the right conditions, can be used to tell us useful things about the real world.' I used students' laboratory results to show that models only 'work' in reality if the model's simplifying assumptions (for example, 'friction is negligible' or 'energy is conserved') are valid in a particular experimental situation. In addition, in the fifth lecture, I positioned physics as one 'knowledge space' (Turnbull 1997) amongst many, by comparing science, religion and indigenous knowledge in regard to the different ways in which authority and communication operate in each space. I described the three knowledge spaces as 'three different games, three different ways of doing things. They've got different rules that you play by'. I noted that 'within a particular knowledge space, there's a particular system for deciding what's truth and what's not; what counts as knowledge and what doesn't'. I pointed out that 'in any knowledge space, there are particular people who have more authority than other people'. I also presented Barbour's (2000) typology of different epistemological views on the relationship between science and religion by concluding that 'these are all perfectly valid ways of viewing the relationship'.

In my role as lecturer, I consistently positioned myself as fallible. In introducing the course, I said, 'You need to check your marks and speak up if something is wrong. If there's a mistake, hey, we're all human, we all make mistakes.' In addition, rather than putting up the 'right' answers for exercises given in class, I almost always introduced the answers along the lines of, 'Check whether I've plotted the graph correctly. You can't trust me; I make mistakes very easily'. In every lecture, I positioned myself as someone who required feedback from students. This feedback was mostly in regard to their content knowledge but also included their feelings ('give a mark out of five for how you're feeling'), and metacognition, for example, 'Give me a mark out of five for whether you've learnt something useful today'. This desire for feedback can also be interpreted as positioning myself as interested in students and their work. I also positioned myself as the one who frames the content, pedagogy and pacing of lectures, and who makes decisions on the nature and weighting of the assessment of the course. In addition, I positioned myself as one who has a right to regulate what students do, both in lectures and beyond, for example, '...at least organise yourself a Saturday morning study group'.

In every lecture, I positioned the students as capable and having relevant existing knowledge. Often, I did this by asking content questions before giving any input,

with an expectation that they could be relied on to know the answers. I also signalled the capability of students through regular positive feedback, particularly where students performed well on challenging tasks. For example, my feedback on the first whiteboard tutorial included, ‘This was a complex equation and you guys handled it really well. You cracked it.’ At the same time, I positioned the students as still developing, and as needing to change some of their study habits, in particular, needing to sleep more. I also positioned them as needing to take responsibility for their learning. These are qualities of students, but on two occasions I positioned them as scientists. For example, I showed them a graph of physics test marks from a previous class versus the amount of sleep each student had the night before the test, and asked, ‘You are good scientists... what do you notice?’ I also positioned them as diverse, both in their backgrounds, and in their learning, for example, ‘your lecture notes should capture your own unique learning journey’. Lastly, I positioned the students as having feelings, by making comments which expressed the hope that students would find lecture exercises interesting, satisfying or fun, and by asking them to give ‘a mark out of 5 for how you’re feeling this morning’. I also noted in the fourth lecture, ‘Your feelings are really important actually, they give you important information. And we spend a lot of time in our heads, we need to check into our hearts every now and again.’

I have presented the ways in which I observed myself positioning physics, my students and myself as lecturer in the first seven lectures of my ECP course. Some results were unexpected observations, for example although I generally aim to position the students as capable and myself as fallible, I was surprised to discover that I did both in every lecture. Mostly such positioning was not a conscious intention at the time. Instead, I asked questions before teaching for the pedagogic purpose of connecting new content with what my students already knew. Likewise, my positioning of myself as fallible mostly happened for the practical purpose of getting students to speak out if I made mistakes or if aspects of the course pedagogy did not work as expected, for example, if there was a problem with lecture recordings. My reflective analysis was thus helpful in allowing me to gain a fresh perspective on my teaching practice.

### **Have the power boundaries shifted?**

Given that my intention is to shift the power differential between physics and the students, the key question is whether these positionings entrench or shift power boundaries. ECP students typically view physics as a discipline with two parts: theoretical ‘facts about the world’ which the student is required to recall, and a set of equations used for doing calculations (Allie & Buffler 1998). They see both parts as having been proved correct by experiment. My reflective analysis

illustrates how I dethroned physics from a position of ‘truth about the world’ to a mere modelling activity, a view consistent with that of physicists (Hestenes 1992). This was reinforced by the way I positioned physics as one of many ways (or ‘games’) for making sense of reality. By deliberately positioning physics as a modelling game, the boundary of what physics can ‘do’ was shifted. While physics is powerful knowledge because it is systematic and generalisable (Young & Muller 2013), its power is limited to providing simplified models of reality. The positioning of the lecturer also impacts the power relationship between physics and the student, since the physics lecturer represents the discipline of physics in the context of a lecture. Positioning the student as capable and knowing while positioning the lecturer as fallible reduces the traditional power differential between lecturer and students. These boundary shifting moves also challenge the ECP deficit narrative that runs deep at UCT, which positions ECP students as less capable and knowing than other students. Strengthening the position of the students creates opportunities where they are more able to speak back to the discipline, especially on those occasions where I deliberately position them as scientists. In general, this critical reflection has highlighted instances where role renegotiation has led to shifts, however subtle, in the power boundaries and positioning of lecturer, student and the discipline.



### **REFLECTIVE INSIGHTS: When existing boundaries are entrenched**

However, there are also ways in which I entrench existing boundaries, most significantly the boundary which places all decisions about course content, assessment and pedagogy within the lecturer’s power. These are the aspects of the course which hold the greatest power. They limit the student to operating within the boundaries set by the lecturer if they ultimately want credit for the course. I also unwittingly play into the university narrative when I position students as needing to change in particular ways, since that supports the university position that the problem lies with the students. These positionings undermine the ways in which I have sought to disrupt the power boundaries. Here I note that, whilst I could certainly involve students in some pedagogy and assessment decisions, there are also boundaries limiting my behaviour.

I mentioned previously that various roleplayers have expectations about a physics lecturer’s job, and hence there are boundaries on what behaviour is deemed acceptable in a physics lecture. This reflects the unspoken ‘didactic contract’ which operates in classrooms, in terms of which the teacher has a role to perform. Here my own positionality is of relevance in the context of my particular discipline. Although being middle class and classified white endows me

with unearned power in the South African context, my gender poses a problem for students who have been schooled to believe that physics is best done by men. Thus, to fail to do my 'job' in terms of pedagogy and assessment might be a step too far for students who might be doubting my capability as a knowledgeable, yet female physics lecturer. I can only engage in unusual activities to the extent that my class collude with me in disrupting the boundary of what is permissible in a physics lecture. I therefore need to negotiate the boundaries of 'acceptable physics lecturer behaviour' with my class. I did this explicitly in the opening lecture, after asking them the reasons for their poor performance in the first test, when I pointed out that I did not believe that merely teaching them more physics content would solve their problems with physics. This suggests that an ECP context can create particular productive opportunities not readily found in mainstream courses. For example, while my course is expected to be equivalent in physics content to one of the mainstream physics courses and needs to operate within the constraints of time slots indicated to me, I have a free hand in the selection of the supplemental content and have additional time to explore these in creative ways in my classroom. Besides this, my well-resourced teaching context at UCT has created the scope through which I can widen my pedagogical options – an opportunity that is typically not available for either mainstream or ECP lecturers in many other university contexts. The ability to capture my lectures seamlessly in video format and then gain effortless access to these recordings has thus made this critical reflection on my practice relatively easy to accomplish.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, my reflective analysis shows the ways in which I have negotiated my own position and power in a particular ECP context, in a discipline which is heavily scripted from above. I have illustrated how productively using certain affordances of my ECP space may have allowed me as ECP lecturer to position the discipline of physics and my ECP students in a more productive relationship. I also note certain limits on this repositioning. I have shared my perspective on how this happens within the lecture setting in my course. By seeking to reduce the power differential between ECP students and physics, valuable opportunities are created for students to speak back to the powerful knowledge of physics when producing laboratory reports and problem solutions, and this goes some way to improving their competence in physics. However, there are questions which remain unanswered regarding how students read my positioning, and the ways in which my actions in lectures ultimately affect their view of physics and their journey through it.

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## CHAPTER 4

# Protecting the learning space: reflective insights on the role of academic administration in extended programmes in the sciences

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### Introduction

The different roles and responsibilities of those working in the university is typically divided using the rather simplistic distinction between administrators and academics. This rudimentary division, however, masks the interdependency of these roles and the activities of both administrators and academics for ensuring the academic integrity of courses and importantly, the quality of the student learning experience. Since the academic role attracts more status in the university, the significance and centrality of the multiple and complex administrative activities that occur in the shadow of any course or larger academic programme, especially undergraduate ones, often go unrecognised. Strong administrative and course-coordinating activities can sometimes hold the key to the successful implementation of curriculum and pedagogic innovation. In this chapter, I make a case for the significance of my specialised role as academic coordinator for one of the signature courses of the extended programme, *Introduction to Science*, in the Faculty of Natural Science at the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

As the course coordinator, I inhabit a somewhat non-traditional position as I infrequently come face-to-face with ECP students in the classroom as a lecturer might, yet I play a central role in protecting the learning space for the more than 240 ECP students in the faculty. I offer a description of the course *Introduction to Science*, which attempts to support ECP students in their transition to the academic communication, literacy and cultural practices of the university and the specific disciplinary discourses of the science qualifications in which students are enrolled. I also explain the main functions and activities associated with my role before describing two critical incidents that highlight some of the complexities around staff relations which challenge my attempts to protect the learning space in the *Introduction to Science* course. By offering my reflective insights on these events, I highlight how the academic coordinating role is a fundamental element required to maintain the academic integrity of the course.

## ECP in the Faculty of Natural Science

In the Faculty of Natural Science, the curriculum design of all the ECP offerings follows the augmented model where the students complete a combination of specialised extended and normal first year mainstream courses over the first two years of their degree programme. There are nine degree programmes with an ECP pathway and these are divided into the two main streams of Physics and Life Sciences. Table 4.1 below illustrates which degree programmes have an ECP component in the faculty. In the first year of study, students complete ECP-specific courses which are common depending on the chosen stream. When they reach their second year of study, students complete a combination of ECP and normal mainstream courses which are particular to their specific stream and degree programme.

**Table 4.1** Overview of ECP degree programmes in the Faculty of Natural Sciences at UWC

Physics Stream	Life Science Stream
Applied Geology Chemistry Computer Science Mathematics and Statistics Physics	Biodiversity and Conservation Biology Biotechnology Earth and Water Science Medical Bioscience

*Introduction to Science* is the only compulsory course for students across all the ECP degree programmes in the faculty. It can therefore be regarded as a faculty, rather than departmental, course.

### Introduction to Science: curriculum and pedagogic intentions

When the course was piloted in 2011, it was positioned as a means of addressing the ‘articulation gap’ between the schooling the students have completed and the expectations of the university regarding the academic practices, psycho-affective dispositions and social and cultural capitals seen as central for student integration and success within the university. In its contemporary configuration, *Introduction to Science* continues to promote the previous agenda of the ECP project to enable access and success for students. This occurs through the careful integration of core academic and study literacies alongside supporting students’ transitions. Giving attention to these areas is seen as enabling students who are completing an ECP pathway to develop the competencies, dispositions and practices valued both in the university and the science disciplines more generally. The main curriculum and pedagogic intentions of this course are to continue to provide students with scaffolded learning support.

The course content addresses five main topic areas: academic literacy, quantitative literacy, information literacy, computer literacy and life skills training

(see Table 4.2 for an overview of these topic areas). These topics are, however, presented in an integrated manner to avoid fragmentation or the creation of content silos. The organisation of the curriculum has therefore demanded strong collaboration between disciplinary departments to ensure the development and inclusion of relevant discipline-based content. The assessment strategies closely align with the integrated nature of the curriculum and great emphasis is placed on providing formative assessment opportunities in the classroom. Summative assessments are managed through transparent and clear rubrics. Furthermore, assessment feedback is conceptualised not as an afterthought, but as an essential part of student learning development. Written comments that offer the student guidance on areas of achievement while identifying areas requiring further development is a crucial part of the assessment approach. Students also complete an assessment portfolio. This portfolio acts as a repository able to track and represent a student's learning journey over the duration of completing the course. The portfolio allows students to record their learning experiences and their perceptions and reflections on what or how they are learning. This record-keeping function has the intended purpose of helping students to identify the nature of their learning and cognitive development. As the academic year progresses, the tasks for the portfolio become incrementally more demanding and students are required to take more responsibility for the quality of their learning activities. They must also provide increasingly sophisticated motivations for why and how their portfolio inclusions show that they are developing the attributes of a university graduate.

**Table 4.2** *Content topics for Introduction to Science*

<b>Academic Literacy</b>	<b>Quantitative Literacy</b>	<b>Information Literacy</b>	<b>Computer Literacy</b>	<b>Life Skills Training</b>
Assist students to develop their critical academic reading, writing and communicative skills and abilities. Expose students to the core academic discourses and practices linked to science disciplines, e.g. annotation.	Introduce students to the use and understanding of quantitative data in science disciplines.	Introduce students to finding information using the internet and library resources, judging the credibility of sources and learning how to reference sources and avoid plagiarism.	Build students' confidence to work on a computer and other technologies and to use various software programmes to create assignments in different subjects.	Assist students to build resilience, develop positive study skills and cope with everyday stresses through addressing various psycho-social and affective topics. This aspect is facilitated by experienced counsellors.

Two distinct theoretical strains underpin the curriculum and pedagogic intentions of the course: social constructivism and reflective learning. As a result, attention is given to creating enabling social contexts for learning and encouraging students to take a more central role in their own learning, while the lecturer is given the role of the facilitator of this learning. Students are organised in groups and are urged to make sense of and construct their own understanding of knowledge with the help of the facilitator. Emphasis is placed on helping students to become independent and responsible learners able to seek out and effectively use the multiple resources available at the university. The curriculum aims to develop reflective learners through processes which promote awareness of meta-thinking and learning strategies. Reflective learning (Moon 2005) is incorporated pedagogically through reflective discussions that happen individually or in teams and through reflective writing, which is frequently a component of many classroom and assessment tasks.

### Team teaching approach

The complex and integrated nature of the curriculum and the fact that it caters for students from multiple disciplines in the faculty has necessitated a rather innovative, non-traditional teaching arrangement. The pedagogic delivery uses a team-teaching approach and more than 40 staff members can make up the teaching team for the course, depending on student numbers in any given year. The different roles in this expanded team are organised as follows:

**Table 4.3** *Overview of the teaching team roles and responsibilities*

<b>Role</b>	<b>Employment contract</b>	<b>General responsibilities</b>
Coordinators (2)	Full-time lecturer contracts	Administration, design of activities, setting tests and examinations, oversight and quality assurance for the entire course
Teaching Assistants	Post-graduate students on part-time contracts	Designing classroom activities, running classes, facilitating in classes, giving feedback on activities, marking assessments, overseeing facilitators and tutors and moderating facilitator marking
Senior Facilitators	Post-graduate students on part-time contracts	Designing classroom activities, supporting the teaching assistant, giving feedback on activities, marking assessments, overseeing facilitators and moderating facilitator marking with the teaching assistant
Junior Facilitators	Mostly post-graduate students on work-study contracts	Facilitating in Academic Literacy classes, giving feedback on activities from these classes, marking term assessments and portfolios

Tutors	Mostly undergraduate students on work-study contracts	Facilitating in Computer Literacy and Quantitative Literacy classes, giving feedback on activities from these classes
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## The students

University students at UWC, like elsewhere in South Africa and indeed globally, are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of their academic and social backgrounds and academic needs (Boud & Molloy 2013). This limits the kinds of assumptions academic teachers can make about their student cohorts. As the teaching team for the course, we recognise that a student's ability to qualify and gain entry to their degree programme at university suggests their potential and that, with careful and responsible support, they have a rightful place as a university student who is capable of success. The ECP students in the faculty typically arrive straight from high school, although some are repeating the course. While students arrive from all the provinces in South Africa, the most prominent languages spoken in our classes are Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. Like many students who arrive at a South African university for the first time, many of our students face a range of non-academic challenges associated with being at university, such as financial constraints, living away from home and various psycho-social issues which impact on their abilities to focus on their studies. As many of the schooling backgrounds of our students involved highly didactic modes of knowledge transmission, students find the interactive pedagogies used in the classroom challenging. They also often find the lack of specific content a source of discomfort and there is often a disconnect between students' understanding of the tasks and the expectations of the teaching team. These issues or points of challenge have the net result that frequently students are unsure why they are completing the course and become resistant to the teaching and learning approaches promoted in it.

## Highlighting my role as course coordinator

In this section, I describe how my role is essential in creating a protective and engaging learning space where the curriculum ideals can be realised. These ideals focus on helping students to fully engage and make sense of new knowledge, develop the necessary academic practices of their disciplines and ensure that they can become independent, but critical and effective learners. My primary responsibilities thus cohere around managing the people and the academic material resources that constitute the learning environment that defines the course. Both of these responsibilities require an enormous administrative commitment and, in offering this overview of what it means in practice, I hope to highlight the complex, but central position of academic administration that defines my academic labour.

***Academic administration and oversight functions***

- Alongside my colleagues, as one of the two coordinators, I am responsible for most of the curriculum revision and redesign activities. Together, the coordinators provide the necessary guidance for the development of lesson plans and classroom worksheets, and ensure that the teaching teams are suitably prepared for the weekly sessions.
- As coordinators, we devise most of the formative and summative assessments. I also mark the major summative exams, act as moderator for the various subject areas covered in the topic areas and take responsibility for marks administration.
- I have an oversight role in the training of the junior facilitators and help to ensure that they can understand and appropriately implement the pedagogic approaches that underpin our curriculum.
- When required, I must be able to ‘stand in’ for any member of the teaching teams and, in these instances, I interact and engage with students directly in class. I also deal with most student referrals from the teaching team and where necessary am available for student consultations to discuss any concerns they might have about their learning or progress in the course.
- Alongside my colleague, I recruit the different team members, oversee teaching budgets, schedule part-time hours, ensure that a full complement of facilitators, assistants and tutors are present at all sessions and deal with all teacher-student problems that might arise during the year. I also have consultations with members of the teaching team and help them navigate the various pedagogic and relational challenges they find in the classroom.

An appropriate way to conceptualise my role is as the custodian of establishing, developing and then maintaining a community of practice (Wenger 2011) constituted by the teaching team. Without such a strong community of practitioners who share common understandings, values and commitment to the overarching curriculum and pedagogic approaches, it would be almost impossible to create the integrated but also deeply responsive and supportive learning environment for our students. To illustrate the complexity associated with my role and highlight the crucial function of team management and the extent of administrative oversight that helps to ensure the smooth running of this course, I describe two incidents involving junior facilitators and then subject these to critical reflection

## **Finding suitable teaching team members**

One Monday morning just before a session, my colleague and I arrived at a classroom session to find only the Teaching Assistant and the Senior Facilitator present. All the junior facilitators assigned to this session had not arrived and not one had sent a prior apology. My colleague and I quickly had to step in for the missing teaching team members during this session.

Finding enough facilitators for the academic year and especially for the academic and information literacy topics has become an increasingly onerous task. Mostly, our primary selection criterion is the facilitator's availability to fit their study schedule into our timetable allocations. We have a probationary period for all new facilitators, but this has proven to be a less effective screening mechanism to ensure that we have a group of reliable and committed staff members. The probationary period is, however, helpful in that it allows the teaching assistant and senior facilitator to assess the competencies of junior facilitators while they interact with the students in the classroom. This is something I am unable to assess through the normal job interview process. Sometimes, the probationary period helps potential facilitators to reach conclusions for themselves about their suitability for working as part of our teaching team. Sometimes, the facilitator resigns once they realise that they are not comfortable with the pedagogic organisation and teaching approaches we favour.

On reflection, the characteristics most valued for teaching team members are their willingness to adopt a strong work ethic and to learn, a sense of responsibility, and an indication of their capacity to care for others. Failing to arrive at a session without notifying the coordinator calls into question these characteristics. However, and unfortunately as the above incident highlights, these characteristics are frequently only made visible over time. With this insight, I am prompted to reconsider the recruitment processes and how best to manage the probation period so that it better serves my needs for selecting suitable facilitators while giving potential facilitators a more accurate view of our pedagogic practices as well as the work ethic and commitment required from them.

## **Awareness of teaching team needs**

Part way into the year, a promising facilitator resigned because he was unable to balance the teaching workload of the course with the deadlines for his own studies. He returned the term assignments that were his responsibility unmarked. These scripts were then divided between the other members of the team.

Subjecting this incident to further reflection, what became clear was the demanding nature of the team teaching, the pedagogic approaches of the

course and the impact of the workload especially on our postgraduate and part-time team members. This particular staff member had integrated well into our community and had ‘ticked all the boxes’ when it came to interaction with students. However, there were clearly issues external to the academic or work environment of the *Introduction to Science* course that impacted on his capacity to fulfil his responsibilities. I realised that I had not always paid attention to the needs of my teaching staff, especially with respect to their ability to manage their studies and the demands of part-time work in the teaching team. I employ students at different levels of post-graduate study and this affects their availability at different times of the academic year. For example, Honours students have rather compact programmes and little control over the deadlines they must meet for their studies. They therefore often struggle to meet the timetable requirements and teaching demands of *Introduction to Science*. Master’s and Doctoral students have greater flexibility as their key deadlines are usually at fixed periods in the academic calendar. In addition to finding team members who match the ideal characteristics, this incident has highlighted the importance of being aware of all the other external academic pressures my team members may be facing and how these might impact on their teaching responsibilities.



### **REFLECTIVE DISCUSSION: Constraints placed on the teaching team community of practice**

The reflective insights presented above point to the complicated, yet central, staff-relation function the coordinator role has to manage. This complexity is further amplified when budgetary constraints and attempts to manage the workloads of team members enter the fray. While the suitability and fit of individual teaching team members can only be ascertained over time and often only once the team itself has been established, when team members do default and fail to uphold the expected work ethic and accountability, the knock-on effect across the team can be dramatic. Budgetary pressures frequently mean that we cannot readily appoint additional staff to stand in or offset problems caused, for example, by absenteeism. The resulting impact on workloads, however, threatens the stability of the community and, more importantly, negatively affects the quality of teaching and learning provision. As student to facilitator ratios increase, the capacity of the facilitators to provide the necessary level of teaching quality, especially regarding feedback, is challenged. A secondary consequence is that competent and more suitable facilitators are placed in positions of strain, and the demands of their teaching roles come into conflict with their own study workloads, again threatening their willingness to remain part of the teaching team.



## Conclusion

Previously, I noted that my role as course coordinator could be conceptualised as establishing, developing and maintaining the community of practice made up of the extended teaching team of *Introduction to Science*. My reflective review of this conceptualisation has identified the challenges associated with each of these functions and their interdependence when considered in the light of some of the staff-relation challenges I had to manage. The responsibility for enhancing the quality of students' learning experiences is frequently placed squarely on the lecturer who has to design and deliver course content and manage the teaching-learning interaction in the classroom. Yet as this case study illustrates, a strong argument can be made for the centrality of the multiple and varied academic administrative responsibilities required to ensure these very same objectives.

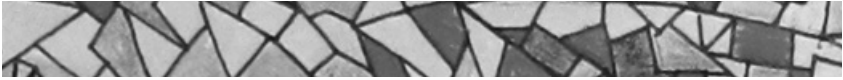
The compulsory course, *Introduction to Science*, is a specialised, innovative attempt to attend to a concern about students' transitions to university, by addressing the 'articulation gap' alongside the students' emergence into their various disciplinary knowledge practices. The curriculum and pedagogic arrangements required to realise these intentions therefore necessitated bold reconfigurations of the traditional 'lecturer' role. These arrangements follow from the historical context within the Natural Science Faculty and UWC described earlier. The augmented curriculum model has allowed for these combined configurations which create the necessary nurturing conditions in the current form of *Introduction to Science*.

While I am a recent member of the coordinating team, this reflection on my work and role as custodian of the community of teaching team practitioners has reaffirmed the significance of my academic and administrative activities in protecting the learning space for the extended curriculum students in the Sciences.

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## CHAPTER 5

# Constructing the ECP lecturer as giver and receiver of care through an analysis of student's reflective essays

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### Introduction

In this chapter, we borrow from an ethics of care framework to make sense of our pedagogic practices as lecturers in an academic literacies course. This course is taken by black, first year Humanities students on an extended curriculum programme (ECP) at a historically white, higher education institution in South Africa. ECP students are selected for the course based on their English Grade 12 results. Here, we explore our pedagogic practices, those approaches and activities that inform our teaching of academic literacy practices such as reading, writing and critical thinking. To do this, we conduct a retrospective analysis of two texts which together form reflective moments of our teaching practices. Each text is composed of two parts: The first is one of the reflective essays written by students at the end of the course, which captured their commentary on the course, and the second is a lecturer's retrospective commentary in response to the student's reflective essay. We use these reflective moments as a nexus to heighten our understanding of our responsiveness to students' needs and experiences during the course. However, through the analysis of these reflective moments we show that our pedagogic practices – informed by a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler & Zembylas 2003) – when viewed through an ethics of care framework (Tronto 1993; Tronto 2010), demonstrates that care cannot be established by lecturers alone. We argue that care is relational, or co-created by lecturers and students and therefore, the identity of care-giver and care-receiver can be taken up by both lecturer and students.

### Historical and conceptual shifts in the course

The academic literacies course at the University of Cape Town (UCT) originated in the 1980's, a turbulent period marked by violent student protests against the apartheid regime and its racially skewed and restrictive education policies.

Located in what was referred to then as a 'white English university', the course was first termed 'English for Academic Purposes' (EAP) and formed part of the university's Academic Support Programme (ASP). The latter was associated with supplementary programmes designated for small groups of English as an Additional Language (EAL) students, whose status as black and disadvantaged deemed them 'underprepared' for university study.

The EAP's initial focus was to 'help' black students acquire the requisite academic literacy practices needed to succeed at university. However, the 'help' offered to black students undermined the resources they brought along with them. In addition, this approach tended to be insular, generic and separated from the disciplines, which added to EAP's marginal and invisible status in the institution. Since then, concerns about improving the status of black students have accompanied the movement towards developing a deeper understanding of academic literacy. This resulted in an important shift from the perception of EAP as a separate skills-based course to one that is incorporated into the teaching of the discipline, to ensure that black students gain epistemic access to legitimate ways of knowing in the academy. So, emphasis was increasingly placed on developing students' capacity adequately so that they could access disciplinary knowledge (cf. Scott 2017). As mentioned in the introduction chapter, this shift in how EAP was conceptualised at UCT, also epitomised in the movement from the narrow idea of academic support to a broader institutionally based understanding of academic development, which adopts a more longitudinal and holistic view of dealing with the challenge of student diversity across the university (Moore et al. 1998: 11).

The issue of diversity is an important one in our present context since black South African students, who now make up half of the undergraduate student population (UCT 2016: 10), enter our ECP classes from varied socio-economic and schooling backgrounds, ranging from township and rural schooling to private and ex model-C (previously white) schooling. Our course, in its current state, operates independently within an augmenting curriculum model and is located outside of a discipline. However, it acknowledges that reading and writing do not exist in a vacuum but are informed by their contexts (Lea & Street 2006: 370). It therefore draws on academic literacy practices and concepts from multiple disciplinary locations in the Humanities. In so doing, it acts as a conduit for the acquisition of such literacy practices in the disciplines. We adopt a thematic approach to the teaching of academic literacies, using as content, core concepts from the Social Sciences, such as language, culture, gender and race. These are held together by the overarching theme of identity, which is understood as something that is socially and therefore contextually constructed in relation to others (Woodward 2004). We employ a blended teaching approach

comprising three face-to-face teaching sessions and one online teaching session a week. The online platform focuses on the writing of short self-reflective tasks, which make up a portfolio. This serves as a rehearsal space for students' coursework tasks on the one hand, and for their reflections on the nature of their learning on the other.

As part of our pedagogic practice, we ask students to consider ways in which their own contexts have shaped various aspects of their identities and how this relates to other identities they encounter. It is here, as part of these discussions around difference both inside and outside the classroom, that notions of discomfort usually surface and these almost always involve issues related to identity – both conceptually and experientially. We have come to view our pedagogic practice as one of discomfort, in line with the work of Boler and Zembylas (2003) and Zembylas (2015), since new concepts exist in a dynamic and sometimes uneasy relationship with students' brought-along experiences. In this way, we create a space for combining disciplinary knowledge and students' acquisition of academic literacy practices through the acknowledgement and incorporation of students' own discourses, knowledge and lived experiences.

### **Students' reflective essays**

In 2017, we introduced a reflective essay, written by students at the end of the course. Since our pedagogy acknowledges diversity within the classroom and disciplinary diversity, we introduced the task to incorporate different writing genres and create space for students' brought-along discourses through the use of their personal experiences. Students were required to reflect on their learning journey, with the central question being: 'What happens to your identity when you move across borders?' Broadly, this involved students reflecting on their journeys as they moved through the course, engaging with various authors and concepts. Students could draw on their online writing portfolios as data for how they felt and thought as they engaged with sections of the course. They could also reflect on what they believed about this engagement in the present. We believed that the task would prompt a response that engaged students in a process of thinking and feeling. Our intention was that the task would facilitate a process where our students could reflect on their learning journey; that it would allow them to draw on personal experiences as evidence, outside of seemingly 'rational' responses to texts in conventional academic essays. An unexpected consequence of the task was that it allowed for reflections on our pedagogic practices, as we illustrate below.

### **An ethics of care framework**

To describe our intentions and engagement with the students' reflective texts, we developed an analytical framework to explore if and how care manifested

in the classroom, with student texts and our own reflections forming reflective moments or data for this process. This framework is informed by Tronto's (2010) overarching considerations for ethical care, namely, power, particularity and plurality, and purposiveness, which are explained below. These are in addition to Tronto's five micro elements or actions for care discussed in her earlier work (Tronto 1993): attentiveness (noticing that a need should be met), responsibility (focussing on contributions to those needs being met), competence (ensuring quality care), responsiveness (the care-receiver acknowledging the care provided), trust and solidarity (issues of reliance, but also acknowledging differences in power in the caring relationship).

We envisage care as creating spaces for students to use their lived and personal experiences as tools for writing critically about concepts and ideologies. Tronto's (2010) overarching considerations inform how care is enacted. A consideration of the political nature of care includes acknowledging how power operates in relations within and outside the immediate caring relationship. A consideration of particularity and plurality signals cognisance of diverse needs and diverse attitudes on how these needs should be met. A consideration of the purposes of care signals the necessity for the representation of, and discussion around, the ends of care (Tronto 2010: 162).

## ECP lecturer reflections

Below we present two reflective moments, consisting of two student reflections and the lecturers' reflections that these texts prompted.

An extract from Linda's reflective essay

*When I began the first reading on identity by Woodward (2004) I took it with a grain of salt and a great deal of doubt and denial. The idea that our identity – the very essence of who we are – was nothing more than a social construct, and furthermore had to be validated by others in order to be real, was unnerving, to say the least. ... As much as a big part of me wanted to hold onto the comfort of what I've always known – even if it was wrong – a much bigger part of me could no longer deny the truth as I read more of the course work and re-examined my own life. ... When I finally understood what a social construct was, ... I began to see how this had affected nearly every aspect of my life without realising it ... mental, emotional and social boundaries. I had no idea to what extent they had been controlling my life, choices and the roles I played... One of the big turning points for me was the McKinney (2013) reading ... feeling like outsiders and often being silenced due to their Cape Coloured accent was a situation that I was all too familiar with. It was at that specific moment that the information and concepts I had been reading about for weeks became real.*

**Gideon's reflection**

Linda was a mature student who had matriculated two years earlier and had studied elsewhere before coming to UCT. As such, I knew that she carried some resentment in being placed on the Humanities ECP. She had made this clear to me during our first encounter. Her first interaction with identity theory through Woodward (2004), was one of reluctance and anger, and so she had purposefully closed herself off to the possibilities that Woodward was proposing. I developed a rapport with Linda; a sense of trust in which intimate realisations and views were shared. I sought out her opinions, her criticisms and her reactions to the narratives that other students were constructing about their lives. Narratives about my life, my students' lives and that of Linda's, became the basis for interrogating the theoretical concepts of the course. Prompts such as: 'So how does this relate to your experiences?' forced a specific type of interaction with the theory that left students such as Linda with information at their disposal, information that they themselves had constructed. In my view, this information offered them possibilities for thinking differently about themselves and their relationships with others and the world. I also felt it offered them a choice, which once made would be difficult to 'unlearn'. This means I knowingly invite risk into my students' lives, motivating them to confront the discomfort of this risk.

An extract from Dineo's reflective essay

*Discussing the work of Ngugi and problematizing his argument has opened my eyes in a sense that aside from the colonization of our country...our oppressors found a way to forever keep us subjugated. The best example I can use is that of the Extended Degree Programme at UCT, the programme was initially introduced as an aid for those students that show potential to flourish in University but do not quite have the matric marks to meet the stringent requirements of the University...people of colour are still unable to escape the socio-economic issues that we have been dealing with since the colonial powers first made their appearance. The difference between now and then is that the boundaries are no longer physical...the boundaries have become subliminal and you will only notice it if you are truly conscious...It is epiphanies such as these that I had throughout the course and that has reawakened an anger inside of me reminiscent of the time I first learnt of the system of Apartheid...*

**Sean's reflection**

Like Dineo, I am drawn to Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Mbembe best expresses it when he states that Ngugi asks us not to teach 'to some generic figure of the student, but to the African 'child'' (2016: 35). He calls for a refocusing on the local, not in isolation, but in dialogue with the global. There is diversity in this approach, and a recognition of context. In one of my earliest encounters with Dineo, she related structural inequality to a hip-hop artist she was fond of. This was my own

epiphany. I introduced her to my PhD supervisor who writes about the local hip hop industry. He first introduced me to hip hop as a form of expression and knowledge in my first year. They called him 'Dr Hip Hop'. I had forgotten this and Dineo's writing reminded me about my own entry into the university, having entered the space from the Cape Town township of Hanover Park with an under-resourced schooling background. Since interacting with Dineo, I have drawn on the work of hip-hop artist Dope St Jude in my classroom practices to illustrate the intersections between gender, race and sexuality. Each time I play the track, 'Keep in touch' (Dope St Jude 2015), the introduction which starts with a familiar sound, a gaatjie (the equivalent of a train conductor) shouting 'Cape Town!' takes me back to my younger self, prompting a continual reflection on my own historical location and entry into academia. My academic literacy practices now include a sampling of hip hop. I hope this shows how in my pedagogic practice I am able to recognise 'epistemological and discursive diversity' (Cadman 2014), as a way of engaging with plurality and difference.

## Discussion

The students' reflections about the course served to help us explore our responsiveness to student needs. We analysed these texts through Tronto's (2010) notions of the political nature of care, plurality and particularity, purposiveness, responsiveness, trust and attentiveness, noting how these were appropriated and, to some degree, applied to our pedagogic practices. What we have found is that care-giver and care-receiver are subject positions jointly shared by lecturer and student. The students' reflective essays became an opportunity for them to trace and reflect on their academic journey through the semester, and in addition, privileges 'attentiveness' on the lecturer's part (Tronto 2010). Attentiveness here is two-fold: attentiveness to students' experiences, and attentiveness to students' feedback about the course and about the lecturer's ethics of care. In Gideon's reflection, he mentions seeking out Linda's opinions, criticisms and reactions to narratives constructed by other students in the class. He goes on to note that he also drew on narratives about his own life to show how these reflect the contradictory nature of identity construction, a key theme raised by the theoretical concepts of identity construction discussed during the course. Here Gideon's narrative serves as a form of attentiveness to particularity (Tronto 2010), namely the uniqueness of the student's experiences. Gideon writes that the narratives of his and his students' lives became the basis for interrogating the theoretical concepts. This also serves to build a relationship of trust, a sense of identification and mutuality enacted through Gideon's vulnerability in sharing his experiences (Tronto 1993).

The reflective essays not only acted as confessions for students, but also occasioned deep empathy from the lecturers. In Sean's reflection, the role of care-giver is not necessarily only occupied by the lecturer but is unwittingly taken



up by the student. When Dineo mentioned that she linked the discussions in class on structural inequality in South Africa to hip hop, it reminded Sean of a moment in his first year when his lecturer, 'Dr Hip Hop', suggested that hip hop was a 'form of expression and knowledge'. This moment between student and lecturer became an 'epiphany' for Sean who then decided to incorporate the work of hip-hop artist, Dope St Jude, in his repertoire of learning materials to illustrate the intersections of gender, race and sexuality. In this instance, it is the student's reflections on the course content that served as a stimulus for Sean to review his own 'historical location and entry into academia'. This 'epiphany' results in Sean adopting an approach to teaching academic literacy that challenges the 'genres of power' (Luke 1996) in institutions such as the academy. He asserts that his academic literacy practices now include a sampling of hip hop. He links this decision to Cadman's (2014: 182) advice that academic literacy lecturers need to recognise and give space to 'epistemological and discursive diversity' if they want to ensure meaningful access to the academy. One way of doing this is to challenge the hegemony of dominant forms of writing.

Sean's decision to use hip hop results from this moment of interaction between ECP lecturer and student, where the roles of care-giver and care-receiver become fluid and relational (cf. Tronto 2010). While dialogue and the listening that characterises it, is at the core of an ethics of care (Tronto 2012), Bozalek and Carolissen caution that in such relational moments between lecturer and students the activities of the lecturer 'has to be part of a component of engagements that has reflexive self-problematizing' (2012: 15). We argue that, at this point the care-giver/care-receiver relationship became dialectical, in that the care-giver might also require care. Additionally, we saw our weekly staff meetings as an opportunity to share possible realisations, excitement, vulnerability or angst arising from the proximity we shared with our students – thus creating a place where care could also be shared amongst lecturers.

The student's reflective essays yielded opportunities for them to critique the course and lecturers. This process could induce a level of discomfort and uneasiness for both students and lecturers, while offering possibilities for students to confront how we reinforce and maintain hegemony (Boler & Zembylas 2003: 108). Thus, the process could be regarded as an opportunity to flip the power relations in the classroom, surfacing the political dimension of an ethics of care (Tronto 2010). However, Tronto may not have anticipated the moments of self-critique, where students distanced themselves from their previous selves. For instance, in writing about identity as a social construct, Linda points out her realisation of the extent to which these constructs had been controlling her life. These moments of self-critique also presented some tension about what might lie at the heart of our pedagogy in an ECP. Was the aim of the

ECP curriculum to assimilate students into the academy or was it to validate and nurture heterogeneous voices in academia? To what extent were we as lecturers being complicit in maintaining the hegemonic norms of the institution and possibly sidelining the less dominant ways of being or knowing, under the guise of care? What did it mean to care in an ECP environment?



### **REFLECTIVE INSIGHTS: Purpose of care**

The responses garnered from the reflective task prompted lecturers to ask deep-seated questions about the purposiveness of care, in terms of what and who care was meant for and what it was achieving. If care was meant to ensure that students felt integrated through a process of alienating themselves from their past selves, then ‘care’ would not depart much from the modernist agenda of ‘development’. However, if care is meant to give reassurance to students as they ‘oscillate’ between various ways of being, then our role as ECP lecturers would be that of questioners adding new items on either side of the scale, calling on students to weigh them, rather than that of judges giving finality to any one given response. Gideon knew Linda carried some resentment and thus used prompts that served to offer care in such moments of instability. This care resides in ‘normalising’ the discomfort through dialogue, hence enabling the ongoing flows of critique and self-critique to find a productive place in our pedagogy.

The process of responding to our students’ reflections highlights a central dynamic; a paradox between particularity and plurality that we find productive on multiple levels. Lecturers need care. They require the affirmation that the care they are giving does not harken back to paternalistic or deficit models of care, which involved fixing ECP students into a homogenous category of care-receivers requiring particular, rigid forms of care. In the old models of care, lecturers also get locked into the role of the sole givers of care. Here, particularity can lead to the marginalisation of ECP students who begin to internalise their fixed status as mere receivers of imposed, decontextualised care. In our ethics of care approach, we recognise the heterogeneous nature of student experiences in our classrooms. This requires that we also engage with the particularities of student experiences so that individual needs for specific types of care (revealed in their reflective essays) can be identified and incorporated into the plurality of responses needed on our part to address such needs. At the same time, our need for care and affirmation also surfaces and so we too are constructed through this plurality of responses. It is through this process of recognising, identifying, responding and receiving, that we as lecturers get a sense of the multiple and overlapping levels that make up an ethics of care pedagogy. This kind of pedagogy is dynamic, organic and responsive to the plurality and

particularity of needs that are simultaneously exhibited by both the students and the lecturers.

## Conclusion

The reflective moments signal a curious irony when we view our pedagogic practices through an ethics of care framework. Care does not manifest from the lecturer alone. This means that as lecturers we are not anchored in the position of care-giver but are both in need of and beneficiaries of care from one another and from our students. Students prompt us to use our histories and experiences as part of our pedagogic practices as we engage with the course content. The focus on identity in the course allows us to centre discussions on how we see ourselves and how others position us. This is fertile ground for talking and writing about both lecturer and student transitions into the academy. Being located outside of a discipline allows for flexibility, giving us the opportunity to introduce the reflective task, which does not work with a particular rubric and thus is open to diverse responses. The overarching concept of identity and its subthemes, such as culture, language, gender and race, are an entry point for the teaching of academic literacies in this Humanities-based course. Thus, writing becomes a space for students to draw on their own discourses and lived experiences, creating room for the affective aspect in ways which other, discipline-specific courses may not allow. It is in these spaces that care and discomfort manifest. These moments of discomfort are not ignored, nor are they simply resolved but it is in the mutuality that underscores these moments that a relational process of becoming, learning and caring is evident.

## Ethics statement

*Ethics clearance for the use of student texts granted by the Department of Students Affairs (DSA) and the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED) Ethical Review Committee at the University of Cape Town. As part of this process, students gave informed consent to their participation. As far as possible, anonymity has been adopted as a guiding principle.*

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## CHAPTER 6

# Releasing hope: transforming the lecturer role in an extended commerce course

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### Introduction

One of the main challenges for academics working in the context of the extended curriculum programme (ECP) is to understand the nature of their identity as lecturers. In this chapter, I use two sets of data as the starting point for a reflective enquiry into my identity and my practices in the ECP classroom. I reflect first on a small-scale research investigation I conducted. This focused on my classroom practices while seeking to promote student engagement and feedback. I then review a second set of qualitative data based on interviews with a sample of my former students who were then in the final year of their degree programme. This data provides insights on the role of peer group interaction and its relation to student persistence. Tinto's model of student persistence (1993: 119) is an important theoretical framework which grounds this reflective activity helping to explain students' responses to my teaching, reactions to the feedback intervention, overall participation and engagement with their peers.

My reflective insights suggest that my students often depended more on their peers, especially in their informal interactions, than on the academic support I provided in classroom. Furthermore, it appears that students tended to organise themselves in both formal and informal ways. These insights raise vital questions about my role as lecturer, given the extent to which students seemed to function in self-directed and self-sufficient ways. An analysis of the findings shows that students often depend heavily on their peers. It further demonstrates the ways in which students organise themselves formally and informally when engaging in academic discourse. These insights have created levels of ambivalence for me especially with respect to the role I fulfil in trying to transform my classrooms into more inclusive spaces, where both lecturer and students can participate more fully. I therefore contemplate what it might mean to 'release hope' in the metaphorical sense that it can transform the role of lecturer into one of an enabler of student participation and engagement.

My decision to study at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) was the same as that which later compelled me to remain and become an academic. UWC has a long-standing history of about six decades in which it ardently fought against the ills of oppression, championing the cause of the marginalised and disadvantaged. While it has become synonymous with developing critical thinkers, it has also become well-known for its philosophy of foregrounding the interests of students before all else. At the heart of this underpinning philosophy is the impetus to ensure that spaces of care are created in the classroom where students can experience the university as a place where 'the doors of learning shall be open'. The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) is the largest faculty at UWC and currently responsible for educating 25% of the institution's student population. The phrase '*Where we are concerned about your future*' positioned above the Faculty entrance attempts to signal a commitment, especially for academic staff, to student engagement and the holistic well-being of students. It is within this climate that I have become rooted in the extended programme during the last nine years. I am responsible for lecturing Intensive Reading and Writing, a course that addresses the broad topic area of Academic Literacy. This course aims to develop critical readers and thinkers as well as to teach students how to write professional business documents such as reports, formal letters and effective emails. Students join the mainstream in the second year of either their BCom (General) or BCom (Accounting) degree. The curriculum model used in our faculty is an augmented one meaning that our students complete a combination of specialised extended courses and mainstream courses over their initial two years at university. The statistical tracking of our ECP students through their studies has highlighted some positive impact on student success and completion rates. However, our programme faces some of the same challenges experienced across the sector. For example, we have to cater to the increasingly diverse educational needs and linguistic backgrounds of our students. Moreover, students face multiple resource needs which sometimes compel them to have to decide whether to use their meagre funds to travel to university or buy food for their families.

### **Framing the rationale for my reflective enquiry**

The reflective enquiry I discuss in this chapter was initiated by a classroom-based study aimed at promoting student engagement. For many first year students, being at university is experienced as very lonely and isolating. Tinto (1993: 120) suggests that when students are unable to become active and involved in their learning, these feelings of disconnection and isolation can be amplified. With its central idea of 'integration', both social and academic, Tinto's model (1993: 119) proposes that the development of learning communities has a positive impact on student growth and achievement (Draper 2008; Tinto 1998). In my own

teaching context, this level of inertia has often been expressed through student resistance to the learning norms and conventions of my classroom and to the course content. Students who resist the academic reading activities required in my class and in the university more generally could, in Tinto's (1993: 121) assessment, merely be responding to either their lack of integration into the academic community as recognised members or expressing feelings of incongruence between their own values and those of the university. This raises questions about my role as a lecturer in assisting students to become 'competent members' (Barnett 2010: 122) of the academic community and how to promote this through my classroom practices. My pedagogic philosophies have long focused on creating a conducive classroom for students to become 'real' participants in the teaching and learning process. I have also believed that such participation in their own learning is key for students to become more academically integrated within the university environment. I have however, been influenced by social constructivist theories like those of Vygotsky (1978: 159) and therefore the social basis of learning has increasingly come to characterise my teaching practice. Coupled with the broader institutional culture that promotes the centrality of students in the teaching and learning interaction, student integration and activity in the community of learners in my classroom is thus a central tenet of my teaching practice. As I hold these teaching philosophies, I thus found it challenging when students appeared somewhat 'non-responsive' to the many attempts I made to draw them into more active and participatory roles. It was also difficult to understand why students failed to take advantage of consultation sessions and my offers to provide assistance beyond the classroom encounter. These challenges, and my frustration, pushed me towards reconsidering what I was doing.

The small-scale, classroom research I undertook therefore looked at how the introduction of an opportunity for formative, anonymous feedback might encourage student participation in my classroom. This feedback was structured as follows: a red box was positioned at the back of all my classrooms and at the end of each lecture, students were encouraged to 'post' written feedback about the lecture. A key consequence of introducing this formative feedback strategy was that it ensured a more responsive approach to student needs. By asking for feedback at the end of each lecture, rather than at the end of a term or semester, I could respond to student concerns in a timely manner. This obviated 'sitting' with feedback and suggestions for improvement that I could not implement because the cohort of students had already completed my course.

When I introduced the red box, I outlined to students that the intention of this feedback strategy was to improve the nature of interaction in the classroom. I reminded students that their feedback would be anonymous, that they could raise or report instances where concepts were still unclear, simply offer their reflections on any matter related to the class they had just attended or make

suggestions for new topics that needed further discussion. I also reassured students that I saw the exercise and their submissions as a means whereby I could learn more about their academic needs.

In the first two weeks there were a few responses, but these tended to address matters unrelated to the course content or teaching and learning. However, as the practice became a regular feature, the comments became more focused on specific aspects of the teaching and learning experiences students were having in my classroom. Some of the comments pertained to moments when students struggled to understand particular concepts; when they felt the need to comment on the nature of the lecture presentation; when they had a breakthrough related to my lecture and when they required me to explain a particular part of the lecture in more detail. It is also noteworthy to acknowledge the tremendous maturity with which the students embraced this classroom activity. Along with an increase in the number of comments left in the red box, I also observed changes in student behaviour and interaction in my classes. A key realisation was that presenting students with an opportunity to comment on my lectures meant I was making myself vulnerable to students. I could then harness this vulnerability, concede when I made mistakes and position myself as human—capable of not always being on top form for every lecture. Conceding to these ‘mistakes’ also created a new opportunity to draw students in to the teaching and learning relationship. The quality and depth of learning, for both myself and my students, appeared to increase. I was able to reposition myself, not only as the ‘knowledgeable other’ (Vygotsky 1978: 160) but as someone continually learning about myself, my teaching practice and about my students and their learning.



### **REFLECTIVE INSIGHTS: Recognising my own humanity**

Some key reflections from this exercise related to the recognition of my own humanity and how this could contribute to enhancing my relations with students. Fundamental here was acknowledging the importance of listening to students. Secondly, I became more aware and accepting that students have different learning styles and therefore sometimes my teaching practices might not suit or be appropriate for the entire class. In opening myself up to also be a learner in my classroom, I realised that a valuable lesson learnt from my students was the central role of laughter and how learning often needs to be layered in amusement.

Returning to Tinto’s (1993) concern with students’ lack of integration, the following salient points from his model of student persistence are relevant to understanding how the introduction of the red box impacted on student engagement in my classes.



The relationships between a teacher and his or her students are central for Tinto (1993). Also important is the educational structure of the classroom and the student's level of involvement in the class activities. He further suggests that these relationships between students, as well as between student and lecturer, are likely to be vital in settings where involvement is not easy to achieve, especially where you have non-residential students or those who are working and commuting to university. All these components contribute to a greater involvement in classroom activities on the part of the student. In turn, this leads to enhanced learning which in many ways can also heighten student participation. The outcomes of the red box activity appear to echo Tinto's (1993; 1998) argument. Thus, once students became members of the community of the classroom, a portal was created for greater student participation in class. It also became apparent that once students were engaged in the classroom, this facilitated an atmosphere where meaningful relationships were established.

### **Moving beyond the red box – insights from interviews with my former students**

In 2017, I conducted another small-scale investigation on the general topic of student persistence and, in particular, the role of peer groups and academic integration. As part of this study, I interviewed 20 of my former students. The process was particularly useful as I was given a further opportunity to gain student feedback on my teaching practice. The interviews, however, highlighted some unforeseen aspects of my pedagogy. Students spoke about their feelings of marginalisation in my class and noted that there were insufficient opportunities to share their knowledge and understanding during class. When confronted with the complexities of the course content, instead of bringing these concerns to me, they frequently relied on their peers to help unravel and make sense of topics discussed in class. This reliance on peer groups was especially pronounced with students who lived in university residences, who saw their peers as their extended family. Garn and Ort's (1991: 109) observation that cohesiveness and family-like bonds help students to create a sense of belonging, is a particularly useful insight. When considering this insight into students' reliance on peer groups, I wondered if this was a possible reason why my students seemed to thrive when working together in this way. What is particularly significant when reflecting on these student accounts of my classroom practices, is the realisation of their great sense of agency; thus, their capacity to seek assistance from their peers and to form peer support networks, especially outside of the formal classroom setting. This meant that students organised themselves informally by having regular social gatherings which became the launch pad for informal academic engagement. Students further indicated how informal conversations often led to opportunities to discuss mutual struggles with course content. It also

became apparent that students organised themselves informally by collaborating with each other using social media to lean into one another and provide support to one another.

### **Concluding reflective comments**

One is rarely able to make a positive impact on students unless one is intentional about it. In order to make a significant change it often requires one to deviate from that which is familiar so that one can unlock that which is hidden.

The introduction of the red box facilitated a process which changed the trajectory of my teaching practices and how students experienced being in my classes. When, as a lecturer, I was willing to open myself to my own fallacies and vulnerabilities, I was able to see myself as a custodian of hope in the classroom. The reflective insights noted in this chapter have drawn attention to how allowing myself to be vulnerable as a lecturer has directly changed my academic practice. It has created opportunities for students to perceive me differently and has helped to disrupt the status and rank automatically conferred on me by institutional structures. My reflective activities have highlighted that it is particularly important that my students are able to see me as human and as one who is also fallible. When students are able to see me in this way, and can thus identify with my humanity, opportunities are created for them to draw on this sense of humanity for their own interactions with each other and with me. In addition, this might be an important component of how and why students experience an increased sense of belonging in my classrooms. It might also be a catalyst for ushering in further opportunities for students to become ‘competent members’ of the learning community (Barnett 2010: 89). Such competence enables students to not only establish networks of learning in the classroom, or what Tinto (1993: 122) refers to as ‘learning communities’, but to also enrich the quality of engagement among students and between students and lecturers.

Considering the insights provided by my former students, it would appear that heightened levels of engagement and community can even extend beyond the boundaries of the classroom into more informal learning spaces. Collectively these reflective insights suggest productive ways of harnessing my own vulnerabilities in the classroom and drawing on student learning communities to make a difference to the quality of both teaching and learning in my ECP context.

I realise now that the words etched on the walls of the foyer of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, *‘Where we are concerned about your future’*, is not merely a phrase that denotes wishful thinking. Instead, this is a sentiment which connects strongly with my personal intentions as an ECP lecturer. My pedagogic intentions mirror those inherent in the Faculty’s commitment to be ardently concerned about the well-being and the future of our prospective UWC graduates.

**Ethics statement**

*I hereby confirm that I received permission from the University of the Western Cape to conduct a formal study. I obtained consent from participants and ensured that anonymity remains an imperative.*

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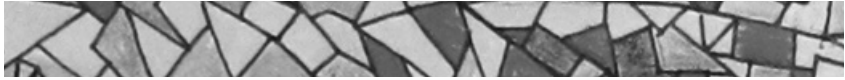
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## CHAPTER 7

# Dealing with anxieties associated with quantitative literacy learning in extended programme classrooms

[Mark Winter \(University of Johannesburg\)](#)

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### Introduction

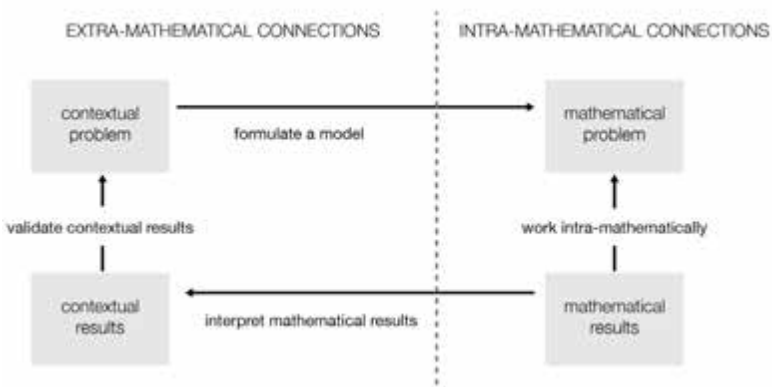
Understanding basic mathematics and quantitative reasoning often empowers individuals towards becoming participating members of the society (Rossnan 2006). The frequency at which quantitative information presents itself in everyday life remains high. Thus, in order to make informed choices and meaningful decisions, everyone has to develop fairly complex abilities to interpret and use quantitatively represented information. As a mathematics lecturer working in the extended curriculum environment, I am particularly interested in addressing some of the challenges and especially apprehensions associated with the learning of quantitative reasoning and mathematics knowledge in university.

At the University of Johannesburg where I work, many of the programmes are structured around the foundation ECP curriculum model. This means that students in these programmes complete a preparatory year before joining the regular first year for their respective diploma qualifications. Students need to pass foundation subjects before proceeding to the regular first year course. At the university, ECP provisions are organised and administered in two ways: faculty-based and centralised approaches. The faculty-based approach allows students to complete their foundation year within their faculties, while the centralised approach sees students from different faculties completing their foundation subjects under a centralised unit, the Academic Development Centre (ADC), before they join the regular first year courses in their faculties. I work in the ADC, and I am responsible for teaching mathematics and quantitative literacy courses for ECP in a range of disciplinary qualifications. In this chapter, I share my experiences of working with ECP students completing a Management diploma. The Management diploma is a three-year programme. Typically, Management diploma students at the University of Johannesburg are accepted into the ECP with very low mathematics/mathematical literacy (ML) marks. ML is a school subject in South Africa that aims to develop learners' skills and competencies that enable them to analyse problematic situations that contain

quantitative information (DBE 2011). In order to respond to the manner in which the articulation gap with respect to students' mathematics knowledge has impacted on the level of these Management students' basic mathematical literacy, ECP students on this programme have to complete a compulsory subject in Quantitative Literacy (QL). QL has been described as the ability to 'competently use basic mathematical skills in critically analysing various scenarios they encounter and further creatively solve these realistic problems' (DHET 2017: 3). This subject area therefore aims to develop students' understanding of contexts using mathematical skills (DHET 2017). This implies that the understanding of contexts is the primary goal in QL, and mathematical skills are used as a vehicle to achieve this goal. The rationale for including QL in the Management programme stems from the fact that the management field requires some fundamental understanding that relates to working with budgets, invoices, statements, bills, and so on, which contain numerical information.

Having taught this subject area for the past five years, it has become apparent to me that many ECP Management students fail their QL course in the first term. For example, in 2016, of the 64 students in my QL class, 19 (30%) obtained a mark less than 50% at the end of the first term. This prompted me to reconsider the ways in which I could support students to achieve better results, but also enhance my own understanding of why this subject area presented such problems for students. My curriculum and pedagogic response were aimed at helping students develop knowledge relating to the mathematics problem-solving cycle which can be classified into two pedagogic components, namely intra-mathematical connections and extra-mathematical connections. Figure 7.1 shows the differences between intra-mathematical and extra-mathematical connections, as they relate to QL teaching and learning.

**Figure 7.1** *Quantitative literacy problem-solving cycle*



Source: Adapted from Winter (2014), OECD (2013)

The intra-mathematical working skills help students to enact solution procedures correctly and coherently. In particular, intra-mathematical working involves mathematical computation and manipulation of mathematical statements. Extra-mathematical working skills help students to translate the problem contexts into forms of mathematical formulations or mathematical models, including translating mathematical results so that they make sense in the original problem context.

In this chapter, I interrogate how well I responded to the needs of my ECP QL students, particularly those that showed signs of struggle during the first term of the year. I use notions of ‘mathematical anxiety’ (Beilock & Maloney 2015) to contribute to this intention. I start by contextualising the QL teaching and learning, which is followed by a presentation of theoretical lenses that underpin my argument. I then present my reflections relating to a QL intervention that I designed for struggling students. I finish by summarising my reflections, pointing to what worked well and the ongoing challenges associated with QL teaching and learning.

### **Curriculum and pedagogic approaches to QL in the ECP Management programme**

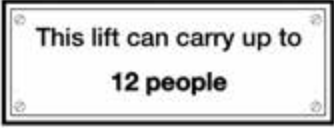
The QL course sought to develop students’ skills in relation to the following learning areas: 1) number skills and calculations, 2) percentages, ratio, rate, and proportion, 3) indexed numbers in business, and 4) data handling and probability. These learning areas were selected because they offer essential quantitative skills, which are fundamental in management decision-making processes.

The specific aims of the course included the following:

- solve problems and use the results to make judgments
- collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information
- communicate effectively using different representations i.e. visual, symbolic and explanations
- work as individuals and as members of a team.

During the first two lecture sessions, I gave the students contextualised ‘motivational’ tasks to engage with. They completed these tasks in groups and reported the results back to the class. My main goal for giving them these kinds of tasks was to help students understand the key features of typical QL tasks, namely: the context-content translation, thus translating text into mathematical statements, intra-mathematical working involving manipulation and calculation and content-context translation, thus validating answers. Table 7.1 below provides an example of these kinds of tasks.

**Table 7.1** *Example of a contextualised task with the solution*

Task 1	Solution to Task 1
<p>This is the sign in a lift at an office block.</p>  <p>In a morning rush, 51 people want to go up in the lift. How many times must it go up?</p>	<p>Divide 50 by 12  <math>50 \div 12 = 4,167</math>            If the lift goes up 4 times, it will carry  <math>4 \times 12 = 48</math> people only.            However, the remaining two people also want to go up, hence the lift should go up one more time. The correct answer is 5 times.</p>

In this example, I used a context drawn from real life. I wanted the students to notice that it is the context that dictates the kind of mathematics calculation needing to be performed. After the mathematical answer is found, it is validated so that the answer makes sense within the context of the given problem situation. Thus, understanding the context is primary in QL.

My teaching during the first quarter was focused on the first learning area of the course (i.e. number skills and calculations). Throughout the course, I adopted group work and investigative learning approaches, where students reported their results back to the class and I constantly gave feedback. During the first quarter, I gave the students three formative assessment opportunities in the form of an assignment and two tests. The aggregated score from these assessment opportunities constituted a term mark.

Students' feedback from the QL activities and assessments pointed to some aspects of the course that needed my attention during teaching. I realised that I should have explained in detail how to translate a contextual problem to a mathematical problem, particularly focusing on the meanings of contextual words and phrases that have a mathematical meaning, for example, 'proportion, altogether, estimation, the sum of' and so on. My students came from a diverse background and for the majority, English was their second language. The language demands of most QL tasks tend to act as a barrier to successful engagement with these kinds of tasks. Linked to the context-content connection is the translation of the mathematical result so that it makes sense in the original problem situation. For example, some of my students struggled to provide the correct answer to Task 1 – leaving the answer as '4,167 times' or '4 times', answers that could not make sense in the problem context. When I asked the students why they left the answers as 4,167 or 4, I realised that they did not refer back to the question after obtaining the mathematics result, therefore they did not attempt to validate the results.



## The 'I can do Maths' intervention group

As previously noted, in the first term of 2016, 30% (19 students) of the ECP Management students achieved less than 50% for their QL term mark. I responded by devising a specialist pedagogic intervention in Term 2 that aimed to help students with more individualised support based on an evaluation of which specific barrier they experienced in their learning of QL in Term 1. For the purpose of this chapter, my 'I can do Maths' pedagogic intervention will be used for critical reflection. I therefore subjected this intervention to a more in-depth reflective review grounded by the theoretical insights I have gained from the concepts linked to anxiety associated with learning mathematics (Beilock & Maloney 2015).

The starting point for the intervention was to establish why students thought they had performed poorly in the QL course. This enquiry was focused on finding out if students believed their poor performance was a result of 'fear' associated with doing a mathematical course. This was done to separate the students who failed because of other non-anxiety related reasons, for example, financial, ill health, and so on. Of the 19 students, 14 students responded 'yes' to the question and they were invited to participate in the 'I can do Maths' intervention group. Within this group, I asked each student to indicate the QL aspects they found problematic. Given that solving QL problems involves making sense of situations using quantitative skills, I gave the students three options to choose from: 'mathematics content', 'decoding a context' or both. Informed by their selection, I allocated the students to two subgroups based on the options chosen. In the 'mathematics content' subgroup, I had ten students, while the 'context' subgroup comprised four students.

I scheduled two sessions each week across 18 weeks (Term 2–Term 4). The first session of the week was focused on further developing the students' knowledge relating to fundamental mathematics and it was attended by students who were struggling with mathematics content only. These content sessions focused on the mathematics concepts covered in the syllabus for that term. The second session of the week sought to address concerns around understanding the contexts as well as translating the contextual text into some form of mathematical formulation. The context sessions focused on a range of different situations, which could be solved using the QL course content. Some of the contexts were brought to the sessions by the students and were drawn from finance, shopping, and personal domains. I made it compulsory for every participant to attend the second session, because translation skills are key in QL.

I structured the sessions as follows: one student had to volunteer and demonstrate how to work out a solution. While one student was demonstrating,

the other students were allowed to ask questions and provide commentaries where necessary. As a lecturer of the course, I only facilitated the sessions and ensured that each student was coping with the work assigned to them during the sessions. The rationale behind this approach was that students' learning becomes more meaningful when the students themselves become active participants in the learning process. In addition to facilitating the sessions, I verbally motivated the students; encouraging them to participate and practice what they were learning. My intention across these intervention sessions was to create a learning space where students felt encouraged to try to solve more tasks without the fear of being judged. The support afforded to the poor performing ECP students in the QL course is summarised as a model presented in Figure 7.2.

**Figure 7.2** *A model for addressing context and mathematical anxieties*



In Figure 7.2, I illustrate my understanding of how to identify the causes of the students' poor performance in QL courses. It starts with giving students an assessment opportunity, which allows me to identify which students are struggling with the course content. These students are then categorised according to their needs and this is followed by interventions that are focused on further developing the students' knowledge relating to either quantitative skills or contextual understanding.

### **Theoretical framework**

In order to learn more about my own pedagogic approaches, I draw from notions of mathematics anxiety. I found these notions very useful for the reflective activity related to the intervention I introduced with my ECP Management students. These theoretical lenses were helpful in allowing me to explore and understand students' feelings of fear related to solving QL problem situations and ways in which I could address these fears. The experience

or feeling of fear and apprehension when faced with the prospect of doing mathematics is referred to as mathematics anxiety (Beilock & Maloney 2015). Their article uses ‘mathematical anxiety’ to refer to fear associated with solving QL problem situations comprising quantitative information. Empirical evidence shows that causes of mathematics anxiety include poor self-image, poor coping skills, lack of confidence, and an emphasis on learning mathematics through drill without understanding (Norwood 1994; Greenwood 1984). Rossnan further notes that mathematics anxiety develops ‘as a result of a student’s prior negative experience when learning mathematics’ (2006: 2). Despite these anxieties, extended Management diploma students are expected to achieve some level of mathematics and contextual understanding during their first year to enable them to successfully engage with quantitative information in their future academic endeavours or at work places.

Both local and international researchers (Hlalele 2014; Mutodi & Ngirande 2014; Zakaria & Nordin 2008) appear to focus more on anxieties related to learning mathematics in the mainstream university programmes, where students are accepted having achieved significantly higher mathematics scores from high school. Such research offers guidelines in terms of how the teaching and learning methodologies can be structured to help students overcome their lack of confidence in mathematics. However, limited research in this area has attended to the specific needs of QL learning-related anxieties among ECP Management students. Because of their low matric scores in mathematics or ML, extended students and particularly those in management programmes, are more likely to show signs of anxiety than their mainstream counterparts.

In the reflective activity which I report on here, I highlight two effects of mathematical anxiety which relate closely to how the relationship between anxiety and performance in assessments manifested with my ECP Management students. Firstly, research suggests a direct causal relationship between mathematics anxiety and achievement. A study conducted by Zakaria and Nordin (2008) indicates that mathematics anxious students tend to struggle in mathematics assessments. Similar results were found in studies done in other contexts (see Lee 2009; Ma 1999; Ashcraft & Faust 1994). Secondly, anxious students tend to acquire limited knowledge due to their anxiety. Furthermore, they are more likely to be ‘less fluent in computation, less knowledgeable about [basic] mathematics [concepts], and less likely to have discovered special strategies and relationships [in the course]’ (Zakaria & Nordin 2008: 28). Within the context of my teaching and my own students’ learning, I have found that students with low matric results performed poorly in the QL course, especially during the first semester, with performance improving in the second semester. According to Miller and Mitchell (1994), overcoming mathematics anxiety

requires lecturers' deliberate efforts that focus on creating a conducive learning space for all students.

### **Context anxiety and mathematics anxiety: lessons and ongoing challenges**

Working with students in the intervention group made me realise the academic potential these students possessed. Their participation and active involvement in the intervention was very encouraging. I also learnt that I should have done more from the beginning of Term 1 by unpacking the contexts, explaining key phrases from the given contexts that provided pointers to context-content translation or extra-mathematical connections. Having problems with the contexts of the mathematics occurred more often for international students who completed their matric or equivalent qualification in a language other than English. One of the international students who participated in the intervention remarked in his notebook after providing written feedback to a contextual problem:

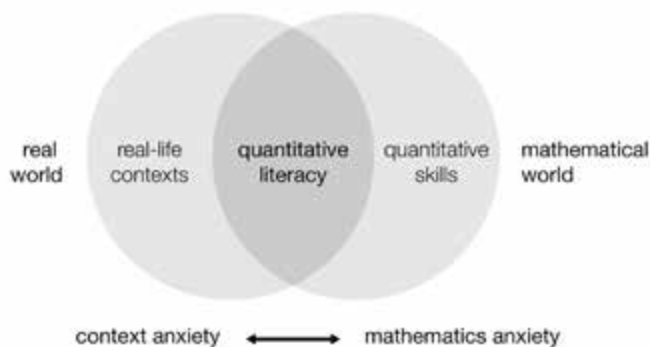
*It's difficult for me because we were learning in French, everything done in French. Now when I see many words, I get confused, and I don't know what to do. Sometimes I try but I don't know what the question is saying.*

According to this student, the difficulty relating to solving QL problems does not only lie at the level of mathematics content, thus intra-mathematical connections, but rather relates to language proficiency, 'when I see many words, I get confused'. The South African students appeared to have less difficulty with extra-mathematical connections. However, they struggled with manipulations and/or calculations. This means that, as a lecturer, I should develop a sensitivity and heightened attention to the diverse needs of different students in my class and tailor my support to students who struggle with either the mathematics content or the contexts.



### **REFLECTIVE DISCUSSION: The interplay between 'context anxiety' and 'mathematics anxiety'**

I found Figure 7.3 below to be useful in terms of explaining ways in which context anxieties and mathematics anxieties relate to each other. This model of illustrating the interplay between context and mathematical anxiety is significant within the classroom, as it requires that, as lecturer, I become more cognisant that both forms of anxiety create barriers for students' QL learning. Finding pedagogic strategies which are able to counter both forms of these anxieties can help to improve students' reception of QL material and ultimately their academic and assessment performance in my course.

**Figure 7.3** *Anxieties associated with QL learning*

*Source: Adapted from Ricchezza and Vacher (2017)*

## Conclusions

A fundamental question for me as a lecturer is, ‘How has this reflective inquiry into my pedagogic approaches in the “I can do Maths” intervention helped me to gain more insight into my teaching practice?’ It had become clear that much of my curricula and pedagogy did not appropriately understand or address the ‘articulation gap’ between school and university mathematics. I made too many assumptions about the pre-requisite mathematical knowledge and contextual disposition that students brought along to my classroom, without considering their diverse needs. Also obvious from my critical reflection is the acknowledgement of how student strengths can be used in the pedagogic context, for example, ways in which students with a good understanding in either content- or context-related mathematical knowledge can assist those who are finding these concepts challenging. In this way, students’ confidence and skills related to dealing with both contextual and mathematical anxieties can be further developed. While I have always previously focused on what students ‘don’t have’, this reflective activity has allowed me to recognise the strengths and understandings they do have. There are, of course, ongoing constraints on what is possible within the context of this ECP quantitative literacy course, not least the pressures of time; both in terms of curricular time allocated to the course, and the amount of personal one-on-one time needed to address students’ particular content- or context-related challenges.

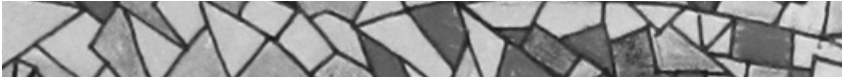
### **Ethics statement**

*This chapter has not been published in whole or in part before, and it is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere. As an author, I have been personally and actively involved in substantive work leading to the article. All the students who participated in the ‘I can do Maths’ intervention*

*group gave an informed consent regarding the use of their work for research purposes. The students were also assured about the anonymity of their identities in any research-related outputs. Their participation was voluntary and there were no forms of coercion whatsoever.*

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## CHAPTER 8

### **‘Teaching differently takes a lot of planning’: shifting discourses of writing in a communication classroom**

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A central tenet of my teaching philosophy has always been to encourage and engage students, however, much of my teaching practice was directed through the traditional lecture. I was the one primarily active in the class while students were at the receiving end of whatever knowledge or information I was hoping to impart.

In this chapter, I describe a reflective enquiry that I embarked on to problematise and question this inherent contradiction between my espoused pedagogic philosophy and my practice. As part of this, I describe a small-scale action research study which attempted to find clarity and respond to this contradiction and, thereby, raise student levels of participation in my classroom. The intention of this action research was to transform my pedagogic practice in the extended curriculum programme (ECP) in which I teach. I subject the findings and especially the data collected during the action research activity to deeper critical reflection, with a view to raising additional questions that interrogate how aspects of the broader institutional and curriculum contexts might be implicated in my classroom practices. While the action research study provided insights about how I could change my pedagogy and take more account of student reactions to my teaching, it remained largely silent about my own understandings of academic writing and communication and which conceptualisations and approaches were promoted by the curriculum. The additional level of reflection creates an opportunity to bring matters concerning the contexts and the underlying conceptualisations of writing, from both the curriculum and me, into the critical review process.

In this chapter, I rely on Ivanic’s (2004) discourses of writing to conceptualise my pedagogic practices in the communications classes I teach and to suggest which academic writing discourses are predominantly adopted in the faculty. I see both the action research undertaking and this further reflective interrogation

as central elements of my journey to become a more reflective practitioner. Being a reflective practitioner, for me, means becoming an ECP lecturer able to continually subject my teaching practice to critical review and to consider how changes to my practice might impact my students' learning experiences.

### **Teaching communications in the ECP setting at CPUT**

I have been teaching communications in the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) for the past three years. All communications lecturers are affiliated to a 'Communication Cluster' headed by the Faculty Language Coordinator. Additionally, the organisational arrangements for ECPs in the faculty means that I am responsible for teaching the *Communication 1* course to ECP students in three different qualifications. Therefore, I also must report to individual Heads of Department. The curriculum model used in all diplomas that have an ECP pathway in the faculty, is that of the extended model. Thus, students spend two years completing the normal first year subjects of their respective diploma qualifications. All students typically complete the *Communication 1* course in the first year of their ECP.

While the extended curriculum model from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET 2012) prescribes that ECP students should be taught and assessed separately from their mainstream counterparts, in practice this does not always happen. All ECP communications lecturers in my faculty use the same curriculum guidelines and syllabus, irrespective of their host qualification, and these, for the most part, simply mirror the mainstream communications syllabi. The main aim of the *Communication 1* course, as outlined in the subject guide distributed to students, focuses on 'effective communication skills' which are in turn regarded as important for success in both the 'academic environment of higher education and future workplaces' (see Figure 8.1). The subject guide provides an explicit signal to students that learning or developing these skills 'requires a great deal of individual practice and group interaction'. The assumption is that much of this practice will happen in the classroom and that students will undertake the 'practice', thus suggesting an active classroom role for students.

**Figure 8.1** Extract on ECP *Communication 1* from the 2018 Subject Guide

*The development of effective communication skills is a key contributor to our students' success in the academic environment of higher education and future workplaces, as employees will interact with colleagues, managers, clients and customers. These communication skills are, however, embedded in theory; therefore, our students are not only trained in vital communication skills, but also thoroughly guided through the theoretical understanding of these respective skills. Developing communication*



*skills requires a great deal of individual practice and group interaction. Hence, class attendance is compulsory. Also, marks will be awarded for classwork, orals and written assignments in addition to formal tests and exams.*

Source: CPUT, Faculty of Business. Subject Guide: Communication 1. 2018: 3

When the content topics of the *Communication 1* syllabus are considered, the communication skills given priority focus primarily on a checklist of written and oral activities such as ‘report writing’ and ‘presentations’ and providing students with information about how to discern different types of either oral or written communication (see Table 8.1). Each of these topics is generally assigned two weeks of classroom time. The syllabus and the subject guide do not discuss how students will be learning these skills or the extent of the practice opportunities created for them within the classroom.

**Table 8.1** Extract from the *Communication 1* syllabus

SEMESTER 2: TERM 3		
ACADEMIC WEEK NO.	DATE	TOPIC
1	16–20 July	ACADEMIC WRITING 2 Report writing Purpose, short report and long report Types of business reports (investigation, accident, feedback, research)
2	23–27 July	Focus Research report Components of a research report (title page, abstract, contents page, introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, conclusion)
3	30 July–03 Aug	Design a questionnaire Research report assignment brief Oral presentation brief
4	06–10 Aug	LISTENING Definition, Types of listening, How to improve listening skills, Barriers to listening
5	13–17 Aug	ORAL COMMUNICATTON Presentation types, Presentation process Key elements, Visual Aids Assignments
6	20–24 Aug	ORAL PRESENTATIONS
7	27–31 Aug	ORAL PRESENTATIONS
	03–07 Sep	HOLIDAY WEEK

## **My students**

Gee's (1996) concepts of 'Discourse' and 'primary and secondary Discourses' are helpful in explaining the linguistic and other social and cultural norms and values my students bring to their studies. Gee (1996) uses a capital 'D' for 'Discourse' and describes it as '...ways of being in the world'. This suggests that more than language is essential for making sense of, or communicating in, different social environments. The upper case 'D' helps to distinguish Gee's reconceptualised, more inclusive understanding from the narrow linguistic view of 'discourse' signalled through the use of a lower case 'd'.

For many of my students, their primary Discourse has included isiXhosa as their home language. Their secondary Discourses, such as those in their primary and secondary schooling, would largely have been acquired through isiXhosa. My students typically come to university directly from high school. Many of these high schools are located in black townships and are poorly resourced. The dominant modes of learning in these schools tend to assign passive roles to students, with the teacher fulfilling a central role in the transmission of knowledge. In addition, many students come from the Eastern Cape and have to adjust to living in residence or in the local townships on the outskirts of Cape Town, frequently without their normal familial support structures. Many are 'first generation university students' who have generally had little exposure to the norms, values and cultures of a university or what it means to study and learn at a university.

## **Using writing to increase classroom participation: an action research project**

Action research is a methodology used to investigate an identified area of concern in one's classroom through a series of different phases of activities in repeated cycles. Through critical reflection, one can identify and implement changes to improve one's pedagogical practice. I adopted Kurt Lewin's model of action research (in Mertler 2014) for my project with its clearly-defined stages which allowed me to thoroughly plan the four phases of planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

The main problem the project attempted to address was how I could adjust my pedagogy to respond more appropriately to what I initially perceived as a problem of student inactivity and low participation in the classroom. My action research project comprised two cycles of the four phases. Cycle 1 lasted four weeks and involved 15 classroom sessions, while the duration of Cycle 2 was three weeks with 12 lessons. In teaching across the three departments, my general observation was that my students did not participate in any oral or spoken activities. However, they appeared more enthusiastic to undertake and complete

written-based classroom activities. I was keen to see more balanced participation across spoken and written activities and wondered if written activities could be used as a springboard for increasing students' oral participation. I aimed to test the impact on levels of participation when spoken activities were introduced alongside written tasks. I also wanted to create additional oral feedback opportunities and therefore introduced structured paired or group 'reporting-back' tasks.

Starting off Cycle 1, I wished to expand my understanding of student participation generally and whether using these two modes of communication would increase levels of activity. Part of this investigation included discussions with other ECP colleagues and exploring the topic with students in class. It also involved a brief review of the literature on defining and understanding student participation in the classroom (Fassinger 2000; Dancer & Koumvounias 2005) and how to integrate writing and active learning in the classroom (Bean 2011). During this cycle, my main focus was on finding new pedagogic tools that could be incorporated into my teaching strategy. A key shift was the increased inclusion of various written activities. I also started to compile my observations about the implementation of my new teaching 'try-outs' in a reflection journal (see extracts in Figures 8.2 and 8.3 below). My observations focused on recording my new teaching strategy, reflections on my pedagogy, students' comments during paired or group discussions and the levels of students' oral participation. I planned lessons incorporating short written activities, where students were asked to respond in writing to two or three questions that I posed about the topic we were discussing in the lesson. These written responses had to be completed individually before they could be shared with a partner, and then with a small group or during a larger plenary session with the class.

When I began Cycle 2 of the project, it became obvious that my teaching practices were changing. I was more aware that I was 'reflecting-in-action' (Schön 1983), thus paying closer attention to what I was doing during a lesson and also responding more immediately to student cues, which prompted me to change track or adjust what I was doing. For example, during one lesson, I found myself explaining the structure of a paragraph in too much detail and thought about what I should do in the next lesson. Additionally, my 'reflection-on-action' (Schön 1983) was becoming more detailed and thorough. During exploratory discussions with colleagues, the issue of the importance of written activities to enable students to share their writing practices and processes of meaning-making (Lea & Street 1998) consistently emerged and my literature reviews focused more on this specific area of student writing development. To change my teaching practice during this cycle, I began to incorporate extended written tasks instead of the shorter activities introduced in Cycle 1. Students were tasked with writing

paragraphs, which again were always accompanied by a small group or whole class discussion. Another inclusion was that students were expected to undertake short written tasks throughout a specific lesson, rather than simply at the end of it. Often, I would provide formative feedback on these short pieces of writing. This was another adjustment from my previous practice that typically saw me only offer feedback on larger more substantial writing, usually in preparation for summative assessment tasks. I also included a written reflective task where students were asked to respond to the topic ‘A reflection on my participation in the classroom’. I was hoping this would provide valuable student insight and commentary on my teaching practice and whether or not my intentions of increasing their oral participation levels in class were being met.

### **Critical reflection on my understanding of academic writing: journal entries and student feedback**

I wrote the following journal entry after I introduced short written activities in my class during Cycle 1. This was my first attempt to teach differently. I started moving away from the syllabus by introducing more activities and creating opportunities for students to do more in my class.

**Figure 8.2** *Extract 1 from author’s reflection journal*

*07 August 2017, ECP Public Management Group*

*Teaching differently takes a lot of planning!!! It is much easier to just teach the knowledge and skills outlined in the communications curriculum. Teaching differently is also making me think about how do I approach marking? It’s become clear that maybe I need to move away from spelling/ grammar/ punctuation...but this is what I’ve been doing for many years, and this is what I know how to do best. But a skills-based approach to teaching is not what I think makes effective teaching. I really want to focus on what students know and bring and move towards meaning and understanding for students and not just on content, writing and reading skills and grammar/ spelling/ punctuation.*

*Source: Alexander M, 2017. Journal entry (unpublished)*



### **REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION: Recognising my past and present practices**

This extract from my journal raises a number of concerns for me, such as, which discourses of writing and approaches to the teaching of communications I am promoting and how I am teaching it. The most striking acknowledgement is that any shift away from the standardised curriculum and syllabus creates a sense of disruption as I start to weigh the cost-benefits of embarking on new pedagogic strategies. I lament the extra ‘planning’ required and how ‘it is much

easier' to adhere to the prescripts of the curriculum. I appear to be in a transitional space where I recognise my current and past practices and what 'I've been doing for many years' but also start to question the value and relevance of these 'established' practices, especially against the underpinning values of the new pedagogic strategies which are taking me in a different direction. It appears that I am 'speaking' against the values and prescription of the curriculum. The curriculum and its 'approach [to]marking' appear to value 'spelling/ grammar/ punctuation' and the reproduction of the academic components of writing, while I appear to want to focus more on 'what students know and bring' and to integrate 'meaning and understanding' into the classroom activities.

The following extract is taken from my journal after I introduced paragraph writing in Cycle 2. My second attempt to do things differently focused on creating multiple opportunities for students to contribute what they knew and what they had learnt.

**Figure 8.3** *Extract 2 from author's reflection journal*

*30 August 2017, ECP Public Management Group*

*Switching from short written activities to paragraph writing requires even more planning!!! My decision to take in the students' paragraphs and provide meaningful comments forced me to acknowledge what they already know and are contributing. I AM planning more but my 'teaching' is less. I am thinking more about how to balance the traditional lecture style with an active teaching approach. I wonder if it's possible to change the curriculum? How? How can CPUT support me in this endeavour to tailor a curriculum more suited to students' needs? Some of the comments students made in their final reflective paragraph:*

- *Lecturers can encourage us by giving clear feedback when going for consultation, not just saying, 'this is not the right way'.*
- *They can even start treating the students like teammates because we can achieve a lot together*
- *Make sure they accommodate all learners in class by treating them equally and not judging them.*

*Source: Alexander M, 2017. Journal entry (unpublished)*

This extract from my journal highlights my concerns around seeing the students as active agents in their learning. It also shows my determination to change my teaching practice, while highlighting some of the implications, especially given how tied I am to the standardised curricula and assessment practices in the faculty.

The second cycle has shown how continual 'planning' will have to become a normal part of my teaching practice. I do wonder if my 'previous' teaching did not include any planning. However, this focus on 'planning', although not unpacked in any detail, might indirectly be pointing to a realignment of what I need to do before I can step into a classroom where I take on a different role and my students are more active. Including the formative paragraph writing activity gave me an opportunity to properly acknowledge that my students 'already know [things] and are contributing'. I do not think that previously I would have readily seen or acknowledged what and how my students contributed to my lessons. My previous feedback practices always focused on pointing out errors and ensuring that students would not make the same mistakes again. I also introduced a short reflective activity and asked students to comment on their experiences of my classroom.

The students' comments show that they are very aware of the behaviour and actions of their lecturers. In many ways, they are also clear about the kind of 'teaching' they find valuable for their learning, for example, by pointing out that lecturers need to provide some detail in their feedback rather than simply saying 'this is not the right way'. This resonates with my insight above about having focused almost exclusively on correcting student 'mistakes'. In reality, how valuable is such attention on correcting surface level writing mistakes for students learning a new Discourse in the broader sense proposed by Gee (1996)? Also, how does a focus on correcting surface 'mistakes' detract from my role in helping them to become familiar with this new Discourse? The comments I make about the relationship between my teaching practices, my attempts to change these practices and the existing subject curriculum are significant. They point to how I cannot divorce myself from broader practices and Discourses located outside of my classroom. Although I do not explain in detail how I think my new teaching approaches might differ from the ones prescribed by the faculty curriculum, my comments suggest there is a difference. The broader curriculum does not appear to encourage or support the lecturer in redefining her role as 'facilitator' rather than 'transmitter' of knowledge, nor does it fully acknowledge that students might bring useful resources to the classroom and have clear ideas about what kinds of roles lecturers should play to support their learning.

### **Concluding reflective insights**

My attempt to transform my pedagogy initially stemmed from my desire to increase student participation in my classroom. Through reflective practice, I was able to critically examine my teaching practice and meaningfully think about and plan changes that could impact my students' learning. My new teaching approach tried to address my concerns about student writing within CPUT where the dominant approach is a 'skills discourse of writing' characterised by

the correct usage of spelling, punctuation and grammar rules (Ivanic 2004). Lea and Street (1998) furthermore describe this as a 'skills' approach that encourages the 'correct usage and adherence' to the formal features of academic writing. While universities of technology can be lauded for ensuring the link between the university curriculum and the workplace, the skills discourse approach adopted by the institution comes at the expense of the student. Writing skills and speaking skills are taught separately and assessment is undertaken according to how accurately these activities are reproduced (Ivanic 2004).

Our ECP students are problematised as failing in writing and reading as they are seen to not conform to the dominant discourses at CPUT, but no mediation or transformative practices are offered. This misalignment created tension in my teaching practice and my view on engaging students as active agents in their learning. With the recognition that students brought their own Discourses into my classroom, I sought to change my teaching approach through action research. Although the action research project allowed me to adjust my teaching to increase student participation in class, it was only through critical reflection on the process and the data in my journal entries that I developed a keen sense of the Discourses I was using. While I did contribute to a skills discourse of writing, I also included elements of 'process discourse' where I focused on teaching students the thinking and practical processes of creating texts (Ivanic 2004). Since my view of writing values participation, support and collaboration, and forms of social practice other than language, I realise I am shifting towards a social practices discourse of writing (Ivanic 2004). This is significant for me because I now recognise and acknowledge the Discourses my students bring along with them as part of the teaching and learning process in my classrooms. This awareness allows me to continually reflect on my practice, redefine my role as a facilitator, rather than a transmitter of knowledge, and create spaces in my classroom that encourage active student participation.

### **Ethics statement**

*The student participants in this research project were assured of the confidentiality of their responses as well as the anonymity of their identities. Participation was voluntary, and students gave informed consent for research and publication purposes.*

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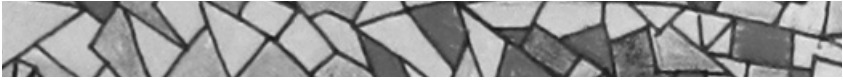
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## CHAPTER 9

# Building a community of practice in an extended curriculum: the intervention programme

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### Introduction

The October morning was crisp and full of anticipation as a small group of lecturers and students held hands to form a circle. In the centre of this circle stood a young African man with a drum made from wood and skin. Slowly he started beating out a rhythm. We joined in and clapped and clicked our fingers until perfect harmony filled the room, and then...we were one. We moved around, students and staff alike, speaking to one another, asking each other: ‘What scares you?’ ‘Do you feel you belong here?’ ‘What lies beneath the surface of the person I see in class every day?’ Outside, the University of Cape Town (UCT) was burning as a wave of red-hot anger swept across the various campuses. Ironically, in this space, staff and students in the Intervention Programme (IP), an extended curriculum programme (ECP), at the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), were healing.

The recent student protests in 2015 and 2016 remain a watershed moment for student activism in post-apartheid South Africa. The student outcry for social change in our institutions across the country became a movement, now known as #FEESMUSTFALL, which brought learning to a standstill at leading institutions, including UCT. The 2016 protest led to the closure of UCT and the suspension of the academic year, which particularly affected the pre-clinical years (1–3) in the FHS and other faculties such as Engineering. As a result, this placed pressure on course convenors and lecturers to adapt teaching strategies and timetable arrangements as a contingency plan to ensure the completion of the 2016 academic year. These events were notably traumatic for both protesting and non-protesting students and staff alike. It was evident that the protest evoked a range of emotions from fear and anger to passion and hope. As staff in the IP we noted how fragile and fragmented the university community had become in the face of the student protests. We were also acutely worried about the impact

of the protests and closures on the learning and academic success for both the IP and mainstream students.

Given that one of the principles of the IP is the creation of a strong community of practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger 1991), our immediate action was to protect our community of students and staff members. Due to the premature closure of the faculty, we feared that our students may be further isolated from the larger university community. As such, our approach was to create a safe space off campus for students and staff, where we would be able to listen, recognise and respect a diversity of views. It was especially important to foster our sense of belonging, within both IP and the larger university community, to preserve and deepen relationships in our community. Our approach was not unfamiliar as IP embraces an intercultural communication approach, which consciously creates space for multiple views not only to be verbalised, but acknowledged and respected (Hall 1976; Hofstede 1991). Indeed, our CoP approach, is the same one we use in facilitating active participation in our classrooms. The CoP approach utilises culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate methods that value and respect indigenous knowledge(s) as foundational for classroom dynamics and in the design of the IP curriculum. In our response to the protest, we moved away from the dominant approach of the mainstream programmes, which was largely concerned with issues relating to timetabling, making up tests and examinations, venues and platforms for lecturers and engagement with students.

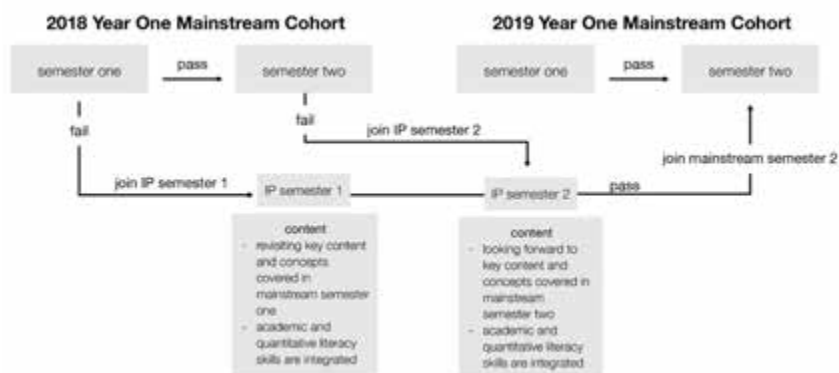
This chapter will introduce the design, structure and pedagogical approach in building a distinctive extended degree programme at the FHS. Drawing on the metaphor of building a house, we introduce the architects, builders, structural components and occupants of our home. Through the reflective narratives of three lecturers, we provide insight into the success and challenges of developing such a distinctive programme model. As we share our experiences, we reflect on the building tools used to promote a shared practice of learning and teaching amongst a small group of students and staff.

### **The Intervention Programme model**

The IP is a foundational programme for first year students that extends the regular programmes in the faculty by a year. It was first implemented in the MBChB (the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degrees) programme in 2002 and subsequently in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology programmes) in 2009. Both IP's are full year programmes that comprise two consecutive semesters (see Figure 9.1). Unlike traditional extended programmes where students enter upon registration, these students enter the programme halfway through their first year and return to the mainstream

programme halfway through their second year (see the section titled: Who are the IP students?). Our curriculum structure aligns with that of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) ECP two-year augmented extended model, where students complete a combination of both separate extended and regular mainstream subjects. This adds one full year to their degree programme. The IP differs from the mainstream programme in that all learning and teaching activities occur in small groups. The objectives of the programme include: creating a safe environment where students can develop and refine the skills and knowledge required to continue with their studies; allowing for opportunities to identify and correct the many reasons that impede progress; and aspiring to improve self-confidence to contribute to students' academic and personal growth and development. It aims at familiarising students with the modes of learning as well as the style of instruction that will be required of them in their mainstream classes.

**Figure 9.1** *Structure of the IP and student progression from and to the mainstream programme*



A key feature of the model shown in Figure 9.1, is that it provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they bring with them in the first six months. Through an assessment mode of teach-test-teach within a course, rather than an assessment mode of testing for placement upon admission (Ausubel 1978; Vygotsky 1978), this method of determining a student's readiness for university-level study is a more reliable approach of collecting data from multiple sources at multiple stages during the first semester (Ige et al. 2017; Hartman et al. 2012; Sikakana 2010). Through this approach, a profile of a student's academic successes and challenges is developed. Since students are placed in the IP based on their performance in the teach-test-teach phase in the first semester of the year, this is however, a 'fail first' model.

During semester one, IP teaching and learning is geared towards the concept of 'looking back' where difficult key concepts and core content from the previous mainstream semester are revisited to enable in-depth understanding. The second IP semester, places attention on 'looking forward', and seeks to prepare students for the challenging concepts that they will encounter when they return to the mainstream programme. In both semesters, academic literacy and quantitative literacy are provided and integrated where possible. This method of integration has proven to be effective as students are able to cover the relevant content while receiving additional support in academic literacy, communication, study and examination skills. After successful completion of the programme, they return to semester two of the mainstream programme to complete their first year of study.

### **Who are the IP students?**

Any student that fails one or more of their identified subjects at the end of semester one, may be required to enter the IP. In response to UCT's transformation agenda to widen access and promote equity for historically under-represented students in higher education, our target students are selected from working class backgrounds and rural areas. However, in the last few years the IP programme has witnessed the enrolment of students from former Model C Schools and even private schools. With more students being eligible for IP, our cohorts have become more diverse. After spending six months at UCT, students who were often the top achievers at primary and secondary school fail academically for the first time in their June examinations and are given the option to enter IP. Due to this fail first model, we have spent many hours in discussion with students, listening to their individual stories. While the stories differ, most of the students enter the programme with a sense of failure. Many feel they have not only failed themselves and their dreams, but also their families and communities. Long after these meetings, we continue to think about how best to promote a sense of belonging and encourage students to develop the confidence to succeed in an environment where they are not restricted by the fear of failure. To do this, we take the time to get to know each student individually and to listen to the story of their journey. As IP lecturers, the source of our strength and often success is drawing on our community, visualised as a roof over our endeavours (see Figure 9.2). We are the architects, builders and maintainers of the roof, daily ensuring it is stable by creating a safe space where all voices are heard and respected. Depending on the student, it is not always a perfect roof and we have had 'leaks'. A major cause of these 'leaks' is the selection criterion for the IP, which is that students who fail one or more identified subjects are required to join the IP. However, once in IP they must also repeat subjects they have already passed. As educators, this is a great challenge and raises questions for our pedagogy. How does one inspire a student who is angry and depressed to

learn a subject they feel they should not have to repeat? For some students, the anger and resistance prevail throughout the programme and they simply never open themselves up to seeing the IP as an opportunity to identify and develop potential to further excel in the subject. This anger often manifests in classroom incivilities which impacts on how peers interact with one another as well as on classroom participation (Hirschy & Braxton 2004). As lecturers in IP with small student numbers, these incivilities directly affect the socio-cultural community of learning we try to establish and maintain.

### **Pillars of IP community of practice: seeing, listening and speaking**

Building on the foundations of our IP model, lecturers in the programme began to develop what we called an internal model for interacting with students to foster learning. A sense of community is crucial to the internal model, where we actively listen to our students, we speak to them as legitimate members of the community, and we make every effort to ‘see’ our students. We illustrate these three pillars of our approach in Figure 9.2.

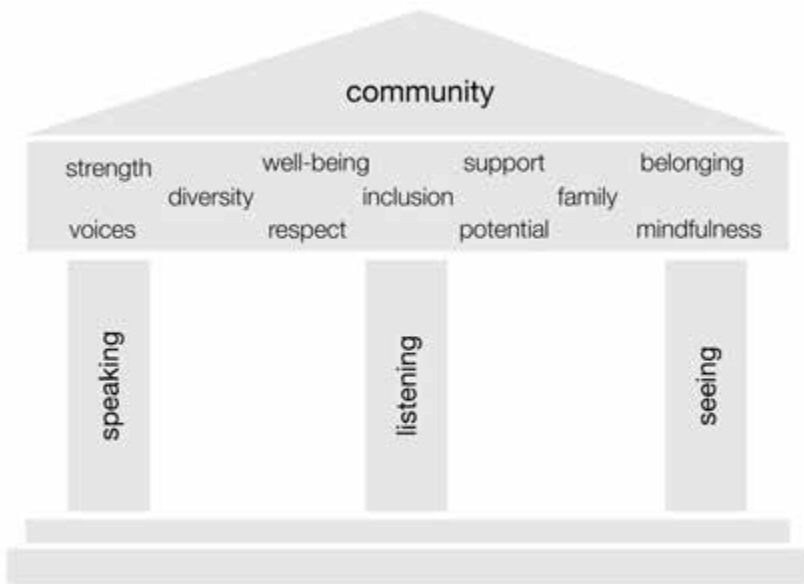
We have developed the initial model further, drawing strongly on Vygotsky’s social constructivism theory which fits well with the philosophy we have created in the programme. Vygotsky argues that learning is a social process dependent on the interaction between a mediator, learning tools and the learner. Whilst the term mediation can mean different things in different contexts, it has a specific meaning within the socio-cultural learning theory. In this case, a mediator is a person who puts themselves directly between the learning material and the student. The mediator arranges the material in a manner that ensures the student can cognitively access it. Gradually the mediator scaffolds the learning so that the student develops and strengthens higher order skills that enable them to learn the new information. Through mediated action the learner comes to understand the content of the subject (Wertsch 1991). Being a mediator is at the core of IP lecturers’ teaching practices. We see ourselves as agents of transformation, firmly believing that all our students have the potential to succeed at university. It thus becomes a matter of mediation – of placing ourselves directly between the learner and the learning, like a conductor of electricity so that potential can be unlocked. According to Vygotsky (1978), the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ refers to the place where cognitive functions are in the process of maturation. For people to move from their actual development to the point of unlocking their potential development, they need to be guided by a more knowledgeable peer or teacher to acquire higher cognitive functions. Within this zone of proximal development, the learner acts with the aid of a ‘knowledgeable other’ in order to understand and solve problems that he or she cannot solve unaided. This ‘knowledgeable other’ is referred to as a mediator and the process

that facilitates the move from actual development to potential development in the zone of proximal development is therefore referred to as mediation (Vygotsky 1978). We further use the concept of scaffolding to break down and arrange new information in such a way that students gradually, step by step, construct coherent knowledge.

### ***Speaking***

In all our teaching and learning activities, communication is key and we use the concept of ‘speaking’ as the mode of communicating information to students to stimulate learning. Students get constant feedback on their progress, and we create ample opportunities for them to give feedback to us on whether our teaching strategies are indeed addressing learning by being relevant to the socio-cultural worldviews of all our students.

**Figure 9.2** *The three pillars that support the principles of our community*



### ***Listening***

IP students, who represent the majority of South Africans, are ironically seen as peripheral members in the dominant academic FHS community. To ensure that our students see themselves as legitimate members of the FHS community, we view them as central to our IP community and the learning process. Here, our approach is to draw on Lave & Wenger’s ‘community of practice’ (1991). Our

students' socio-cultural backgrounds are acknowledged and celebrated by the entire IP staff and students. We strongly reject the notion of a deficit model, where students need to be 'fixed' because there is something wrong with them. For us, the student has as much to offer to the learning process as the lecturer has, and together we negotiate the learning journey by listening to their needs.



### **REFLECTIVE INSIGHTS: Questioning classroom and curriculum practices**

It was a class of 34 students from across the Audiology, Speech-Language Pathology, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy programmes (Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences). This was the first cohort of students and most of the class was unhappy and disappointed with their placement in IP. Preparation had been made in anticipation of emotional outbursts, by inviting previous MBChB IP students to share their experiences with students as a way to offset the anticipated anger that new students might express. Unfortunately, in this instance, this strategy was insufficient as students became increasingly disruptive and uncooperative in classes as the semester progressed. IP lecturers became increasingly concerned, which was cemented by the mass failure in the first class test. This was a turning point. Collectively we interpreted it as a large disconnect between their perceived and full potential which needed our urgent attention if we were going to ensure the success of our programme. As lecturers, we began questioning our classroom and curriculum practices in general. We decided to suspend normal classes for a day to create space for a deeper engagement with the students. We wanted to use this time to discuss their concerns and interrogate why they felt learning was not happening. We constructed this discussion as a shared space for both students and staff to engage in open, authentic and honest conversations about the IP. During this process, students publicly spoke about their frustration at the lack of transparency in how their placement into the IP was communicated. They raised some critical questions about how and why they were placed in IP. While we saw these questions as legitimate ones, we nonetheless felt ill-equipped to provide answers.

We could have easily ignored our student's voices and simply continued with the academic programme, but we needed to be mindful of both staff and student's emotional wellbeing. We brought together key stakeholders in various divisions and departments as well as student support and so on. This included Head of Departments, the undergraduate Portfolio Chair, staff from the Student Wellness Service, first year conveners and we met with the students for a conversation about IP and their new student status. This was only possible after we ourselves had confronted our own assumptions about our students. By the end of the week, the timetable was restructured to create

space for a weekly ‘debriefing session’ which was later renamed as the ‘Personal Development Workshop’. We then liaised with the Student Wellness Centre to engage a psychologist to facilitate these sessions. The shift was quick and positive; students suddenly began to participate, enjoyed learning in IP and we saw a drastic improvement in subsequent class tests. Our collective reflection had thus transformed our commitment to resolving the stalemate and had also created a space for deeper curriculum discussion with our mainstream colleagues. This reflective process helped us to acknowledge that despite careful planning, we had not expected, nor were we prepared for, the kinds of concerns that students raised. We believe that in this moment of crisis our true community of practice emerged. Collectively we devised a new plan. This kind of shift was only possible when we were able to recognise the need to understand the issue(s) from our students’ perspective, while setting aside our own preconceived ideas (Mezirow 1995; 1997). This reflective moment led to the deeper understanding of our mediation role where we had to expand our understanding of scaffolding the learning process. This incident showed us the importance of incorporating pedagogic strategies into scaffolding for every learning encounter. It also helped to highlight how non-academic issues can hamper student learning, while re-emphasising that the success of academic programmes is reliant on listening to student voices (Petersen, Louw & Dumont 2009). Furthermore, the recognition of students’ voices strengthens and legitimises their position as members of the IP community, as well as of the larger communities of practice in the faculty.

This was a significant moment as it helped to cement our adoption of the community of practice lens with which to build our overarching pedagogic approach to structuring the IP. It also helped to frame and develop our three pillars of speaking, listening and seeing. Without seeing, listening and speaking, we would not be able to uncover, question and challenge our assumptions regarding each student’s experience, knowledge, identity and viewpoints.

### ***Seeing***

The third pillar of our building is ‘seeing’ our students, which draws on the theory of ‘face’ negotiation. According to Goffman (1967) ‘face’ refers to one’s own sense of self-image, dignity or prestige in social interactions or contexts. In IP, we attend to the ‘face’ needs of our students by acknowledging and reinforcing their preferred self-image and dignity through our interactions and the learning activities. As lecturers we can recount many stories of student alienation because they seemingly do not bring along the kinds of cultural capital valued within the institution and our faculty. Our students are bright young people who have been accepted to study at the highly prestigious FHS at UCT. They come from communities where their successes are celebrated. However, on arrival at UCT the barriers created by the university are difficult to negotiate. Students come from schools that might not have the kinds of resources that would have prepared



them for the competitive environment of FHS; they cannot afford the textbooks and may become bewildered by the day to day operations of the dominant academic culture in the faculty, which does not acknowledge their 'face'. This can lead to alienation, silence and moving into more peripheral spaces, possibly away from the hive of learning and student activities. To offset these possible reactions to the dominant culture in the faculty, as lecturers we therefore negotiate 'face' with our students and in doing so we begin to 'see' beyond the mask they are wearing to cope with this dominant culture. Lecturers will often pay attention to student's psycho-social needs by ensuring that a student gets reading glasses, medical care, enough to eat, a safe place to stay. Students who successfully leave the programme are celebrated with a farewell session, where we send them off to reintegrate and become full participants of the wider UCT community. Previous IP students are invited to become 'elders' of the IP family and become mentors to newer students, providing peer-focused emotional and academic support. These activities have become part of our approach because we want to reiterate to our students that, 'We see you, we saw how you struggled and how you overcame barriers the system placed in your way, and we see your strengths'.

### **Our community of IP staff**

As IP lecturers we often ask ourselves: Why do we do this? What makes us different? The answer is empathy, which is a value we have internalised and integrated into our own practice (Stein 2008). We have become active listeners capable of developing a deep sense of understanding of our students. Once we have connected with our students, we draw on our intrinsic value of empathy to guide them in solving the problem or obstacle. In addition, we have developed the same connections among IP staff from where we all draw strength and share the successes and failures of our teaching and learning practices. Importantly, as we do this for our students, we also help each other through listening, seeing and speaking in maintaining our mental and emotional wellbeing and reducing stress. Without fellow staff members, we would never be strong enough to build and hold our community together.

### **Concluding comments**

The main element that is woven within our reflection is the effect of contextual factors on our attempt to build an IP community of practise. Over the years, IP staff have witnessed the influence of several factors such as cultural, financial, and socio-economic on our teaching and our students' learning. While the very model we have designed has inadvertently created unique challenges and tensions such as stigmatisation, anger and fear, these very factors have also resulted in the genesis of a community of practice. To address educational change, we continue to develop and implement teaching strategies that are deeply rooted within

Vygotsky's idea of social constructivism. Our approach endorses diversity and inclusivity that works with the realities of the individuals who are participating in the community. Every member's reality is visible, heard and articulated.

### **Dedication**

*With the tragic passing of our Dean, Professor Bongani Mayosi, we, mainstream and IP staff and students became united in our grief. We showed our sorrow to one another, and we allowed for spaces where both staff and students could show that it is normal to feel vulnerable in our communal loss. We would like to dedicate this chapter to Prof Mayosi, a true leader and 'father', who even in death has inspired us to come together as a family. Hamba Kahlle.*

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## CONCLUSION

### An ending and a beginning: reflecting on reading the case studies on teaching in extended programmes

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In this piece we reflect on our involvement as responders to the chapters. We choose the word ‘responders’, rather than reviewers, carefully. Initially we were each given a different batch of five chapters to read. Our brief was to comment on their alignment with the aims of the book and on the writing. We had a number of engagements which culminated in a recorded Skype meeting with Lynn, Lucia and Kibbie, where our discussions sparked insight and appreciation for the ECP project. It became clear that we wanted to read the case studies in an open, affirming way, rather than as critical reviewers in the traditional normative, often adversarial mode. We responded separately to each of our allocated authors, sharing our overall impressions, what stood out as being positive and areas for further thought. We returned to the transcript of our Skype meeting and agreed on the themes that structure this piece. It was interesting and reassuring to find that despite the variety of institutions, disciplines, models, theories and methods, there was resonance across our different papers.

Our readings of the chapters are informed by our contexts and concerns at the time. So we share these in the short reflections below.



#### **KIBBIE'S REFLECTION: My context and interests at the time of reading the chapters**

My reading of the chapters is through the lens of an academic staff developer and teacher of Sociology. As an academic staff developer my work involves providing development opportunities for academics to become better teachers which in turn contributes to improvement in the student learning experience. I hope that through their engagement with staff development, academics will recognise and exercise their agency in their roles as teachers. I wrote this after a difficult meeting during which the question of impact of staff development was discussed. One member of the meeting expressed

the view that as a head of staff development my work would have more impact if it informed policy rather than facilitated workshops aimed at providing opportunities for staff to engage in reflection on practice. This made me think about what ‘impact’ is. I do not particularly like the word ‘impact’, but I will use it here because it is inherent in the managerial, neoliberal context within which we work. I really question where the impact of academic development practitioners (and we are all practitioners irrespective of where we sit in the hierarchy) ought to be felt the most. For me it is at the level of the student. All the chapters in this collection reflect this. They show that at the heart of the work that an ECP lecturer does lies the student, their access to disciplinary knowledge, their well-being, their power and enhancing their experience. In order for ECP practitioners to meet the student need in the way they do, I think it is important to be acutely aware of who our students are, what they bring to the learning-teaching context and what helps or hinders their learning in higher education. It is this understanding that evidently informs most of the reflections and this is one of the strengths of the chapters in the book.



### **LUCIA'S REFLECTION: My context and interests at the time of reading the chapters**

I read the chapters through my background as a teacher of academic literacies, with a more recent special interest in alternative postgraduate writing pedagogies. I feel strongly that we need to re-think the relationship between research writing and knowledge-making. Prompted and inspired by student protests and the profound questions raised about the role of southern African higher education, I have come to see that we are in a moment where many are questioning whether the old forms, such as the traditional research article, are appropriate for the work of knowledge-making in such complex and contested times. All the chapters I read are written in a different, more engaged and accessible style. They convey a sense of the teacher as deeply involved, with the use of the personal, invested, accountable ‘I’ or ‘we’. Authors use the pronoun ‘I’ to locate themselves in the challenges, dilemmas, delights and decisions they face. Sometimes they write using ‘we’, to show community and solidarity with fellow teachers and also with students. This reminded me of, and gave substance to, Achille Mbembe’s call for universities to engage with creative strategies for ‘pedagogies of presence’. He says that ‘In order to set our institutions firmly on the path of future knowledges, we need to reinvent a classroom without walls in which we are all co-learners’ (Mbembe 2015). This idea of us all being co-learners is powerful in many of the case studies. The authors deeply value student presence, but they are also asking questions about

their own presence and identities as teachers, and what they might do differently. Through this focus on how lecturers and students see each other it is possible to create new relationships for teaching and learning. This valuing of presence was at the heart of the chapters I read.

Each chapter in the book is a case study that narrates a story on the extended curriculum experience of staff. The writers are located at different kinds of institutions – traditional, comprehensive and universities of technology – with a range of models of extended curriculum programme (ECP) delivery and disciplinary backgrounds, so the accounts are richly different. The University of Cape Town chapter based on the intervention programme in the medical school speaks to the value of building and working in a community of practice that ensures that ‘every member’s reality is visible, heard and articulated’. To speak your truth, to be heard and to be seen is so important to empowering students in higher education. Yet we all have experiences of the lecturer who asserts his or her authority by telling students that they are unworthy. The physics lecturer who deliberately positions herself as fallible and the students as scientists to build their confidence disrupts this narrative. The importance of the ECP as a nurturing and caring space is well argued in relation to the academic literacy programme in a historically white university. The authors maintain that care is relational and co-created by both students and lecturers.

The chapter on ECP in the design programme at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) offers an insightful account of the ways in which the canon determines what they teach and the challenge this presents in their endeavour to decolonise the curriculum. The University of Johannesburg quantitative literacies paper introduces a lovely piece of reflection on an intervention called ‘I can do Maths’ to grow confidence and address anxiety amongst ECP students on a QL course. The ‘red box’ chapter from the University of the Western Cape is a fascinating account of a journey of thinking about how to look differently at the lecturer-student relationship: the lecturer places a red box at the back of his classroom where students can give anonymous feedback. Out of this vulnerability, comes hope. An academic literacy teacher at CPUT starts off by wanting to improve student engagement in her classes, and through a subtle process of action research, she ends up with much deeper, nuanced awareness of the limitations of her own understanding of what writing is and how to teach it. A writing teacher at Stellenbosch uses autoethnography to explore the tensions in the transformation imperative at a historically white Afrikaans-speaking university. In a deeply critical engagement, she probes how teachers ‘adapt their pedagogies to maintain their own beliefs about teaching and learning – regardless of institutional pressures and constraints’. ECP lecturers often occupy multiple positions in institutions. The

complexities of the roles and responsibilities of ECP lecturers is highlighted in the chapter by Raitt who reflects on her role as coordinator and lecturer.

From our readings and ongoing discussions, a number of interesting insights stand out. These include the importance of reflection on practice, the shift to scholarship of teaching and learning and the related idea of how we theorise our practice, relationality and the importance of context. An elaboration of each of these insights follows.

### **The importance of reflection on practice**

What the chapters offer are opportunities for ECP lecturers to systematically re-evaluate an aspect of what they are doing. Whether it is curriculum development in response to decolonisation or arguing for an explicit care-giver role for the ECP lecturer, lecturers draw on subject knowledge, interpersonal relationships, professional judgement, pedagogical practice and educational theory to reflect on their work. They reflect on the impact of their teaching and change their practice in response to this reflection. The change in practice as a result of reflection involves a move towards reflexivity. Reflection on practice is an essential part of professional development in education (Brookfield 1995) and involves thinking about practice, dialogue with peers and students about teaching and issues that influence teaching. Such reflection does not necessarily result in transformation of practice. Transformation, by contrast, occurs through reflexivity. The sociologist Margaret Archer (2012) maintains that reflexivity is the internal dialogue that practitioners engage in which results in transformation in practice. This internal dialogue involves deliberation on both social and personal influences. For us, what distinguishes being reflective from being reflexive, is that the learning that occurs through deliberation results in transformation of practice and this is the process that many of the authors have engaged in. All authors seem to have found a research rhythm of sorts, through finding an apt methodology – an intervention or process of inquiry - that supports reflection. This could be action research, or autoethnography, or reflective narratives. This is what seems to give the writers the momentum, and once set in motion, we have the feeling that it will continue and that ECP authors will feel encouraged to keep the reflection going and find ways to share their work more widely in research vehicles such as this book. This involves taking the reflection a step further.

### **From reflection to scholarship**

In talking about the chapters and what stood out for us, we found ourselves thinking about our colleague Brenda Leibowitz, who in 2017 at a workshop in the Department of Commercial Accounting at the University of Johannesburg



distinguished between *scholarly teaching* and the *scholarship* of teaching and learning (SoTL). This distinction is useful in reflecting on the chapters. A scholar of teaching and learning, she maintains, engages in scholarly activity which involves drawing on the literature on teaching and learning to help them address questions relating to their practice in the discipline. All the contributors to the book display the characteristics of scholarly teachers who are familiar with the disciplinary content and the values and dispositions associated with their fields and are familiar with and apply different teaching approaches to their practices. The shift to a scholarship of teaching and learning involves the process of systematically researching practice with a view to sharing this through publication. Scholarly teaching and SoTL are related but have different purposes as explained by Rochlin and Cox (2004: 127).

The purpose of scholarly teaching is to affect the activity of teaching and resulting learning, while the scholarship of teaching and learning results in a formal, peer-reviewed communication in appropriate media or venues, which then becomes part of the knowledge base of teaching and learning in higher education. For many teachers in higher education the shift from being a scholarly teacher to engaging in SoTL is challenging and requires embarking on a journey with a guide who is familiar with the route. The role of 'guide' is often fulfilled by academic development practitioners and the process of writing this book represents this guided journey towards SoTL. The guidance and support offered to authors enables them to become part of the conversation and contribute to the discussion on teaching and learning in ECP.

Work in academic development (AD) is messy and complex in that AD practitioners often work on the margins of institutions and disciplines. They also work at the intersection of many different ways of knowing, doing and being in the higher education context and draw on a range of fields of practice such as disciplines, academic literacies and understandings of student identities to make sense of their work. This results in a struggle to explain their work, particularly to people who are sceptical of their contributions to higher education. The tensions inherent in occupying these complex spaces are explicitly addressed in a few of the chapters.

We had interesting discussions about theory across the various chapters. Initially, we were struck by how there seemed to be little similarity in the theories that writers are using to underpin and explore their projects. We agreed that this was a good thing, as there have been times when we have both felt that ECP scholars seem to be compelled to follow certain theoretical fashions. We wondered how staff get exposed to theory and how they become comfortable with it. If you have a heavy teaching function in your discipline and are not in a climate that values research, where will theory come from? It might come from within the

discipline, for example, Management Studies or Design, or from the field, as with academic literacies or quantitative literacy. Or it might come along with us from our prior postgraduate studies or from a recent seminar attended, or a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education or a staff development course. Either way, for most of us it presents a major challenge in our writing.

## Doing theory

Although we often experience theory as daunting, and as something that brings the momentum of thinking and reflecting to a standstill, theory also helps us to make sense. Paul Ashwin's (2017) notion of theory is about simplification. He argues that theory helps us simplify the complex social world and that different theories help us simplify in different ways. It is not surprising that in this book there is a rich variation in theoretical lenses – communities of practice, socio-cultural theory, ethics of care, critical discourse theory, design theories and decoloniality. In reading and discussing the chapters, we came to realise that although there is a productive variety of theoretical approaches, what connects them is that they are all interested in different forms of classroom presence. They focus on our relationships with students and with ourselves, in all its complexity and intensity.

Building on the momentum that methodology for these case studies has given the authors, they could approach theory in the same way – as an open-ended process of exploration. In this sense, theory becomes a verb, an ongoing process of doing, of finding out, rather than a noun, a 'thing' that gets fixed to an inquiry, in danger of turning into either a fetish or a fashion (Naidoo 2016). Theories that lend themselves to classifying a complex world into neat distinctions often do not do justice to this world of tensions, dilemmas, contradictions. This idea of theory as a verb is something that Lynn, Lucia and Kibbie have been thinking and writing about (Coleman & Thesen 2018, Naidoo 2016).

At its heart, theory is an explanation that is crafted out of two kinds of reading. One kind is about reading the situation in our practice: noticing, asking questions, trying out new things. Drawing on her experience of sociology, Kibbie relates this process to adopting a 'sociological imagination'. In his book titled *The Sociological Imagination*, C Wright Mills (in Naidoo 2016) suggests that transformation requires stepping back from daily practices and relating them to the broader social, political and cultural contexts within which they are located. Scholarship works best when the second kind of more conventional reading of authors, books and articles and their traditions and conversations is interwoven with the first. This can help us to stand back and link up with others in different times and places to find explanations and possibilities that become one of the resources available for developing a reflexive ECP practitioner identity.

## Relationality

Relationships in education are a lot more fluid than we think. Students ought not to be viewed as individuals who need to be socialised into a pre-existing stable world/discipline. The role of the teacher in relation to this view is to help them assimilate into this world, and become familiar with the knowledge, skills and attributes associated with the discipline. One of the authors grapples with this in her discussion of how she attempted to shift power relations in a physics class. What comes across in the chapters is the fluidity of relationships and the processes of becoming – for both students and lecturers. Several of the chapters grapple with the vulnerability and fallibility of lectures and some, such as the one on ECP lecturers as care-givers, illustrate that care is relational and co-created by lecturers and students and that ongoing dialogue is key to this process.

Given the struggles with identity that many of the authors wrestle with, it is not surprising that we noticed that most of the chapters do not shy away from reflecting on feelings and emotion. In this sense, the chapters are in tune with the ‘affective turn’ in critical theory (Clough 2007) and renewed interest in emotion across different disciplines. The affective turn places embodied presence at the centre of interaction and sense-making. It is also crucial to create knowledge and insight into ECP as a field, and to include in our understanding the emotional labour that ECP teachers are engaged in. This is often sidelined in institutions, with no clear avenues for forging pathways for the ECP career, yet the ECP carries the hopes and frustrations of the most talented students from our struggling schooling system. The value of the affective turn is that it explicitly acknowledges and theorises the importance of emotions. According to Bozalek and Zembylas, the affective turn in education involves a recognition of the ‘complex interrelations of discursive practices, the human body, social and cultural forces, and individually-experienced but historically situated emotions and affects’ (2016: 194). We think there is much to learn from colleagues who are exploring affect as a way of looking at complex embodied states such as shame, anxiety, alienation, laughter and dignity in the academy.

## Importance of context

Kibbie described her work in staff development as providing opportunities for academic staff to develop as agents of change in the teaching-learning context. In the chapter by Abrahams et al., the authors talk about ECP lecturers as agents of transformation who mediate student learning. That resonates with Kibbie’s sense of her role in staff development – as developing reflexive academics who are agents of change. The extent to which academics can meaningfully achieve this is dependent on a complex interplay of the extent to which academics feel that they have control and agency over their work and the broader context

(including structures, values, beliefs and histories) within which they work. Many academics we work with believe that the extent to which they can be agents of change is constrained by the contexts within which they work. Context matters and many of the chapters that we read located themselves firmly within disciplinary and institutional contexts. All authors provide a good overview of the immediate institutional context. However, what is missing is a sense of particular concerns within the broader ECP ‘movement’ nationally. As a result, reflection is yet to be developed on how ECP, more broadly, and AD influence their work, as well as how they could contribute to shaping ECP nationally. This would require practitioners to step back from their immediate concerns, relate what they do to the broader context and look at their practices anew. Having said this, some of the papers do examine their practice in relation to broader debates and take up the challenge in higher education to decolonise the curriculum and reflect on the extent to which students are able to see themselves in what they learn.

### **Closing thoughts**

This book is the start of a bigger national conversation about ECP and the scholarship of teaching and learning. The chapters are interesting and valuable and there are a number of lessons to be learnt and conversations to start from reading and critically engaging with these accounts. As academic developers we believe that chapters in this book are relevant not only to staff working in ECP. Innovative practices, the reflections on practice and the insights into teaching and learning are relevant to all teachers in higher education.

For all their contextual complexity, they play at the surface of what is a much more layered version of our practice in ECP and AD, offering what is to some extent a sanitised version of life and experience as an ECP lecturer. This is in part because the research genres in which we write, value objectivity over subjectivity and want clear lines between the questions, theory, method, data and findings. It requires effort and courage to write differently. This process of trying to make sense of the messiness, the contradictions, is what being scholarly is about. The scholar*ship* – the form that a completed, published text takes - is another matter. Perhaps the backstories of the chapters could be shared or writing communities could be formed where ECP scholars get together from different contexts to begin to address the broader ECP ‘movement’ together. In this way, we could be guides for each other. The variety of methodologies in the case studies could be used to inform other areas of teaching and learning in higher education.

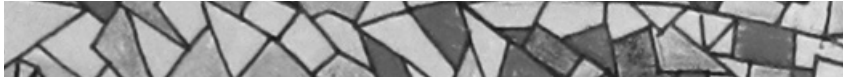
In these times of the ‘measured’ university, where so much of scholarship is reduced to countable outcomes, the pressure to publish is overwhelming, but in a way there has never been a better time for reflexivity and various forms of scholarship. The #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements has added

an urgency to the need to do things differently, to transform, re-size the colonial canon, to interrupt the patterns that have sustained us, often at the cost of socially just practices. Collaboration is crucial, and we believe that this is how the best scholarship emerges. Three of the chapters in the book were written collaboratively. While there are further lessons that can be learnt from writing as a collaborative process, we need to consider how we extend the collaboration beyond the publication. This is about acknowledging the contribution this book makes to scholarship and taking it further.

We return to the idea of pedagogies of presence and feel that the way staff have engaged in these case studies points towards possibilities for more reflection on how we teach and how we co-construct each other and what this means for developing more inclusive, relevant and socially just pedagogies. While debates on decolonisation correctly focus on the need to rethink what is taught, we think that ECP offers an interesting space to explore pedagogies that clearly have resonance beyond ECP in the wider teaching and learning space. The seeds for a pedagogy of presence are beginning to emerge in some of the chapters. Chapters in the book are important in beginning a conversation on what inclusive teaching and learning practices could look like.

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## Cover image designer: Buhle Qabaka

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The creative and vibrant artwork that features on our cover is the work of young, Graphic Designer, **Buhle Qabaka** an extended curriculum student in the Design Foundation at CPUT.

This artwork started in the ECP classroom as a Drawing/Illustration project. Students were required to take 'funny and expressive' selfies and then create a pencil drawing. They were then asked to 'deconstruct' this drawing and using mixed media give full expression to their creative-self. The end result was the striking, spirited, complex, multi-layered creation which so aptly captures the main themes of our book.

Buhle, describes himself as a dedicated student able to harness his creativity in abstract ways, while edging towards the periphery of what is 'acceptable' in design. His illustration work also gives expression to his creative and 'out-of-the-box' thinking, where he strives to give the viewer ample opportunities to reinterpret and find their own meaning in his artworks. A humble, calm but persistent person Buhle finds his design and artistic work provides a welcome way for him to give expression of the multiple founts of creativity in his being.



The timing of this book is highly appropriate. Extended degree programmes have been in existence for the past three decades. From soft-funded provision in historically white universities, they developed into highly regulated, state-recognised, funded and accredited programmes in most South African universities. They have served as a key mechanism for equity, according access to higher education for cohorts of students who would not otherwise have been admitted. Nonetheless, as higher education institutions have grown in number and diversity, the initial purpose of these programmes – to support minority groups of students from underprepared backgrounds – has not been fully realized. In addition, the 2015–2016 student protests raised critical questions about the ideological underpinnings of these programmes. The book's introductory framework speaks directly to this moment and outlines essential questions that need to be addressed going forward. Ultimately, what comes through most strongly is the care and commitment the authors have for their students. The pedagogy of presence is clearly demonstrated in the highly sensitive manner in which staff advocate for students.

**Prof Suellen Shay**

Professor of Higher Education,  
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This book is a welcome contribution to the pool of literature on pedagogical practices in South Africa. It offers a fascinating window into the world of the ECP classroom through the methodological lens of critical reflection. The book is unique through its personal, often searching, narratives and the richly experiential aspect of the writing. It offers a definite appeal to the target audience of undergraduate, extended and first year university lecturers. The book traverses a wide scope of different institutions, disciplines and faculties. The key strength of the book lies in the nuanced and reflective nature of each chapter.

**Dr Annsilla Nyar**

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for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition (SANRC)



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