Knowledge beyond colour lines

Towards repurposing
knowledge generation in
South African Higher Education

EDITORS

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10 TRAVERSING AUTONOMY PATHWAYS WITHIN THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH CONTEXT AS A DEPARTURE POINT

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Introduction

The experiences of academics who participated in a scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) programme is described in this chapter through the framework of the autonomy dimension of legitimisation code theory (LCT) (Maton, 2016:236). The notion of SoTL applied in this study hinges on Schulman's (2011:4) definition, which indicates that in order to be viewed as 'scholarship', teaching and learning must encompass the following triad:

- It should be public;
- It should be subject to peer review and evaluation; and
- It must be accessible for exchange and use by one's disciplinary community.

It must be noted that the application of SoTL in academic staff development is not common; even a rudimentary conceptual understanding of SoTL among academics might be elusive. A case in point is Nicholls' (2004:37; 40) study which distilled the perceptions and conceptions of academics from various disciplines and found that the respondents were unsure of the meaning of the term 'scholarship of teaching'. This could be because academic staff development is often dominated by a 'deficit discourse', which could obstruct SoTL from gaining traction. This 'deficit discourse' focuses on identifying problematic lecturers and departments for development, based on the premise that without this development, expectations for their achievement and success will not be met. Not only is this potentially isolating for lecturers and departments alike, but it could be counter-productive to the enhancement of teaching and learning (Clarence, 2018:208).

In response to this deficit discourse, Clarence (2018:212) advises:

Academic development should not be construed as a neutral space where lecturers can learn value-free 'tips and tricks' to improve their local teaching or solve individual

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problems, ... rather academic development locates itself within its local and wider political, social and institutional contexts and works to surface underlying tensions, goals and knowledges.

Indeed, academic staff development is transitioning towards a theorised, scholarly praxis (Clarence, 2018:210; Quinn, 2012) which could be useful, considering this: “Theory acts as a critical ‘lens’ through which we can ‘see’ our work, our context, our teaching” (Clarence, 2018:210).

When considering the context of higher education in South Africa, one should never overlook the legacy of apartheid, a system that was instrumental in promoting variances in students’ socio-economic and educational backgrounds, leading to extreme inequality (Clarence, 2018:210). As an increasing number of black students were being admitted to historically white institutions following the dismantling of apartheid, academic staff needed the appropriate skills to enable them to teach these underprepared students (Quinn, 2012:7). It was against this backdrop of better preparing students for tertiary education that teacher development was positioned as an ‘add on’ activity, with teachers acquiring a set of generic skills and tips for teaching. It can be argued, by contrast, that conceptualising staff development in terms of professionalising academics entails a more academic approach (Quinn, 2012:7).

To accommodate the developmental needs of academics within the context of a rapidly expanding, transforming higher education environment, Quinn (2012) argues that academic development should be viewed as a ‘meta-profession’ with its own scholarly foundation. This would entail steering away from ‘skills development’ or ad hoc development, devoid of deeper understanding (Clarence, 2018:211), and moving towards a scholarship that would entail systematic study and subsequent publication (Felten, Kalish, Pingree & Plank, 2007:94-95). Endorsing this viewpoint, Wood (2017:451) suggests an interpretation of ‘teaching excellence’ that recognises the conjugated nature of teaching and research in higher education.

Some researchers have lamented the tendency for SoTL to be conceptualised from an academic perspective (Brawley, Kelly & Timmins, 2009) rather than from the country’s cultural perspective (Blair, 2014:334). Others argue that scholarship is contextually bound in modernity and that academics need to apply their capacity for a scholarship while coping with professional life within a fast-changing, unpredictable world (Brew, 2010:111). That might be why it has been deemed more logical to strategically position SoTL as a means of development aligned with local levels of practice rather than as educational research (Geertsema, 2016:122).

If academics are to engage in a scholarly approach to teaching, they would need to reflect on the knowledge derived through education research in relation to the context of their

teaching and learning (Boyer, 1990). Interpreting Boyer's (1990) notion of scholarship, Geertsema (2016:125) suggests that a crucial hallmark of SoTL is applying knowledge, not simply discovering it, in real-world contexts. In this regard, Cranton (2011:75) argues for an 'emancipatory SoTL', centred around critical reflection and action on teaching contexts at various levels: the discipline, the institution, the community and the state and society. (This view of SoTL transcends its role in practical problem solving and enhancing teaching effectiveness.) Similarly, Simons and Taylor (2019:3) offer a four-tiered model for the contextualisation of SoTL:

- Micro (individual, within one's classroom);
- Meso (department, programme);
- Macro (institutional, across departments); and
- Mega (national or international, disciplinary).

Integrated leadership is crucial to bridge the gaps between these levels. The events that occur at each level must be respected in their own right (Simons & Taylor, 2019:12).

The advantage of focusing on contexts is that these contexts could potentially shape ideas and influence the very techniques used to implement them. For example, a conceptualisation of SoTL that recognises local contexts would provide academics with the means to design methodologies that are most relevant to these contexts (Blair, 2014:331-333). Some researchers like Mårtensson and Roxå (2016:194) reason that it makes more sense to align SoTL inquiry with the complex micro cultures of the meso-level context of institutions than to aim for a globally orientated SoTL. Other like-minded scholars allude to power dynamics, asserting that, in education research, it is crucial to ensure that the context of the global North does not dominate educational practices in the global South (Connell, 2007). One cannot ignore the reality that the importation of models of SoTL from the USA or Europe perpetuates the hegemony of first world countries.¹ There is also an inherent danger that the mere transference of SoTL from one context to another could render it "inherently flawed and methodologically naïve" (Blair, 2014:334). After all, as Nicholls (2004:34) purports: "The higher education community is not homogenous ...".

Student protests spearheaded the drive for decolonising South Africa's curriculum, resulting in a surge in the decolonisation narrative. However, as Heleta (2016:1) points out, South Africa's curricula remain predominantly Eurocentric and continue to reinforce white and Western dominance and privilege. It is precisely for this reason that South Africa must dismantle the epistemic violence and hegemony of Eurocentrism through the reconceptualisation and redesign of the curriculum (Heleta, 2016:1).

¹ See Blair, 2014:337.

The decolonisation of the curriculum is not unique to South Africa:

- Kan (2010:263) writes about the decolonisation of Chinese history curricula in Hong Kong;
- Cortina's (2014:1) book explores the development of intercultural bilingual education throughout Latin America and focuses on the endorsement and preservation of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the indigenous people; and
- Tamburro (2013:1) reports on the decolonisation of social work practice through the inception of the worldviews of indigenous North Americans, Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiians into the social work curriculum.

In Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada, higher education has also been dominated by European ways of knowing and being. The ever-present hegemonic power or particular epistemology (white) within the politics of knowledge at universities amounts to 'epistemological dominance'. This is evident in the course offerings and curricula at universities. The hierarchy of knowledge gives rise to a racial and colonial hierarchy of humanity. Therefore, it is not uncommon for those deemed to possess inferior knowledge to be regarded as inferior. Unsurprisingly, and because of the uneven institutional power accorded to non-European knowledge, there is a limited possibility for collaboration or dialogue across different knowledges within contexts framed by European epistemological dominance. However, it must be noted that the increasing number of indigenous and racialised students attending higher education institutions demands the disruption of Eurocentric educational norms (Naepi, Stein, Ahenaken & De Oliveira Andreotti, 2017:81-83).

To make a case for the consideration of context with respect to researching teaching and learning, the study described in this chapter has been anchored within the autonomy dimension of LCT (Maton & Howard, 2018:1-35). The literature on SoTL is light, particularly regarding LCT and autonomy, creating a vacuum which this study aims to fill. An interpretation of the LCT theoretical framework is discussed in the next subsection.

Theoretical framework

The autonomy dimension of LCT underpins this study. Autonomy is predicated on the notion that a set of practices comprises constituents such as actors, ideas, artefacts, and institutions related in a particular manner (Maton & Howard, 2018:6). Autonomy codes apply external classification and external framing to constructs of position, namely positional autonomy (PA), and principles, namely relational autonomy (RA) (Maton, 2016:237). Therefore, it can be said that autonomy comprises two codes: PA and RA (Maton, 2016:236). PA would occur between constituents positioned within one context or category and constituents positioned in other contexts or categories. RA refers to relations among constituents of a single context or category and relations among constituents of other contexts or categories (Maton & Howard, 2018:6). These codes can be strengthened

or weakened along a continuum to yield the following organising principles, represented as PA+, PA–, RA+, RA (Maton, 2016:236).

A strong PA (PA+) denotes that constituents positioned within a particular context or category are relatively strongly detached or insulated from constituents in other contexts. A weak PA (PA–) would demonstrate that distinction between constituents within and across contexts would be weaker, less insulated. A strong RA (RA+) means that the principles employed in governing how constituents relate to each other are relatively specific to that set of principles (for example, purpose, aims, ways of working and so forth). In the case of a weak RA (RA–), those principles may be drawn from a shared or external set of heterogeneous principles (Maton & Howard, 2018:6).

Placing the continua of PA and RA perpendicular to each other produces an autonomy plane (see Figure 10.1) (Maton, 2016:236; Maton & Howard 2018:7).

FIGURE 10.1 Autonomy plane (Maton, 2016:236).

The autonomy plane comprises four quadrants, each containing a principal autonomy code (Maton & Howard, 2018:7):

- Sovereign code (PA+, PA-): Status is accorded to strongly insulated positions and autonomous principles. Constructs and constituents from within the context or category are valued; that is, “internal constituents for internal purposes”.
- Projected code (PA-, RA+): Constituents from within the context or category, orientated towards ways of working externally, are valued; that is, “internal constituents applied to external purposes”.
- Introjected code (PA+, RA-): Constructs from other contexts or categories orientated towards ways of working emanating from within the context or category are valued; that is, “external constituents turned to internal purposes”.
- Exotic code (PA-, RA-): Legitimacy is derived from weakly insulated positions and heteronomous principles; constituents associated with external contexts or categories are valued; that is, “external constituents for external purposes”.

In this chapter, movements between these quadrants are discussed. Movements within or between codes are referred to as ‘autonomy pathways,’ of which there are four types, namely:

- Stays: remain within a single code;
- One-way trips: begin in one code and conclude in another;
- Tours: begin in one code, shift through one or more other codes and return to the starting point; and
- Return trips: movements back and forth between two codes (Maton & Howard, 2018:8).

For example, movements that go from the introjected code to the sovereign code and subsequently shift to the projected code constitute Maton and Howard’s (2018:8) term ‘autonomy tours.’ A key attribute of building knowledge can be found in autonomy tours.

This study portrays the movements made by candidates during their journey within a SoTL programme. Candidates started with knowledge of their own teaching and learning context within the introjected code before moving that knowledge into the sovereign code for abstraction and theorisation within the education discipline realm. They completed their tour in the projected code, where they transferred knowledge within their context. Some candidates did not complete the tour, though, as they dropped out of the SoTL programme and ended up in the exotic code. These movements help illustrate how knowledge was built by moving contextual knowledge towards abstraction for conceptualisation and was ultimately transferred back to the context for the application.

Context of the study and research methods

The SoTL programme in question was implemented at a Western Cape university of technology in South Africa. The main aim was to empower academics to become successful SoTL practitioners by developing a university-wide community of scholars. Firstly, the

programme aimed to inculcate knowledge and skills among academics across all faculties to enable them to conduct education research within the context of their disciplines; secondly, to encourage evidence-based teaching to improve teaching and learning. The SoTL programme ran for two years. In the first year, half-day, face-to-face workshops were conducted every month. In the second year, candidates worked with their SoTL mentors on their SoTL projects, and a writing retreat was held.

This study adopted a purposive sampling strategy to select candidates to participate in the study. Those candidates who had completed the SoTL programme were invited to participate, but only seven agreed to be interviewed, and this occurred during face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. These interviews sought to determine the respondents' experiences as candidates of the SoTL programme and their progress with respect to researching their teaching and learning practice and publishing and applying their research findings.

The small number of respondents was a limitation of the study. Nevertheless, using a theoretical framework helped generalise the data, allowing for transferability to other contexts. Adopting a qualitative research approach also provided sufficiently rich narratives from which useful inferences could be drawn.

The data were analysed using coding, categorisation and identifying themes in line with the organising principles of autonomy. A discussion of the findings is provided from this point forward.

Autonomy pathways in the SoTL programme

This study's purpose was to discuss candidates' experiences within the SoTL programme whilst employing autonomy in LCT to illustrate how knowledge is built from those candidates' everyday pedagogical contexts.

The findings are discussed in terms of the movements made across the autonomy plane as these relate to the SoTL programme. Each of the following movements that the candidates made will be discussed:

- Starting within the introjected code;
- Moved into the sovereign code;
- Shifted from the sovereign code to the projected code;
- Migrated from the sovereign code to the exotic code; and
- Travelled from the sovereign code to the exotic code and ultimately to the projected code.

Starting within the introjected code

‘Knowledge’ in a particular context would be located within the introjected code (Maton, 2016:236). This outside, everyday knowledge will have weak PA (Maton, 2016:236), but is still necessary if one is to understand the abstract, academic knowledge characteristic of SoTL in that context. Nicholls (2004:29) contends that when ‘context’ is omitted, ‘scholarship’ becomes abstract. One way to contextualise SoTL would be to consider the space within which it occurs (Blair, 2014:331). Fortifying the idea of the contextualisation of SoTL, Kreber (2002:7) describes SoTL as being contextually specific to the campus and the wider social context within which the product of SoTL is to be applied. He argues that this notion of SoTL is well suited to examining pedagogy within contexts characterised by unpredictability and complexity.

The mega-level context² that characterised this study was one of educational crisis and uncertainty with the emergence of a dissenting, anti-colonial student movement that, through sustained nationwide protests, demanded free access to higher education and the decolonisation of the curriculum (*Mail & Guardian*, 2017). This was in addition to academics’ challenges in dealing with diverse students, many of whom were perceived as ill-prepared for higher education.

Moving into the sovereign code

To strengthen its PA, contextualised knowledge needed to migrate into the sovereign code where knowledge is abstract and commonly referred to as ‘conceptualised knowledge’. In the SoTL programme, this entailed exposure to knowledge with respect to researching one’s teaching, thereby subjecting contextualised knowledge to rigorous analysis.

The SoTL programme provided access to the relevant literature, exposure to education research methods and theoretical frameworks, in addition to providing a milieu that was conducive to conversations with peers and experienced researchers. Feedback from one respondent in the Faculty of Health and Wellness revealed that the SoTL programme was useful for sharing new ideas in teaching and learning, for instance, discussions around the adoption of pedagogical strategies among diverse students.

It can be said that conversations among peers are key to the success of the SoTL process. Huber and Hutchings (2005) state that reflecting on one’s pedagogical classroom practice and sharing what has been learnt is just as important as undertaking education research within one’s discipline. In this space, academics committed to pedagogical inquiry and innovation collaborate to share perspectives about teaching and learning for subsequent

² See Simons & Taylor, 2019:3.

application in addressing the challenges of educating students (Huber & Hutchings, 2005). This corroborates the assertion by Geertsema (2016:124) that reflection on teaching and learning through SoTL could change how teaching and learning are approached since reflection on one's own practice after engaging with the literature could potentially help foster expertise in teaching.

A respondent from the Faculty of Engineering acknowledged the benefit of researching his teaching by soliciting student feedback then, for example, reflecting on the findings. He commented:

We have been left mostly to just focus on our field ... I felt that researching teaching and learning was not the priority for many of us. Sometimes you get so passionate about what you are teaching ... but you need to evaluate what your students felt about it. What better way to do this than to do research ... [by] doing research you get feedback from your students and you reflect on where you went wrong

Shifting from the sovereign code to the projected code

The movement into the projected code ensured that knowledge derived from SoTL could be practically applied to the educational setting of the micro- and meso- context of the university and other relevant macro- and mega- contexts.³

Candidates would have applied the knowledge and experience gained from the SoTL programme to other contexts by, for example, publishing articles, presenting conference papers, studying towards higher degrees and enhancing their teaching practice. Thus, inside knowledge moved to the outside context.

This movement was particularly poignant when it came to driving the agenda for the decolonisation of the curriculum, as illustrated by a respondent from the library:

I attended a seminar on decolonising the curriculum and was able to make a contribution to the discussion as a result of the skills gained during SoTL. We are not academics but I was able to use my library knowledge and fit it into the discussion. My colleagues from the Library could not understand how I was able to engage in [the] discussions at this seminar.

Furthermore, the movement from the sovereign code to the projected code prompted respondents to reflect on how they could improve pedagogical practice following research on their teaching. For example, a respondent from the Faculty of Engineering stated that he had introduced technologies such as Facebook, which students had once revered for engaging in collaboration, only to discover that WhatsApp had replaced Facebook. He

³ See Simons & Taylor, 2019:3.

explained that, had he not been researching his teaching, he would not have been familiar with his students' preferences regarding technology. He indicated:

Students feel more comfortable to do collaborative learning on WhatsApp than on Facebook, but if you are not doing research you will be stuck on Facebook and you will wonder why the students are not responding to you.

He also reported:

During the 'fees must fall protests' I tried to use the same technology that we used during normal class time. I got a serious backlash from the students. I had to do research from the 'fees must fall' students' perspective of the technologies I was introducing to them. I thought I was helping them during the 'fees must fall' protests to continue with their lectures, but I learnt that many of them don't even have computers. When I reflected I realized that we have all these beautiful technologies to implement but we never check the background of our students.

By employing evidence gathering and documentation strategies, academics are rendering their students' learning visible. They use their classrooms and programmes as impetuses to generate thought-provoking questions about learning and seek answers to these questions. This process empowers scholars of teaching and learning to develop their capabilities as reflective, innovative teachers, whilst contributing to pedagogical knowledge in their field (Hutchings, Huber & Ciccone, 2011), in addition to cultivating a culture of continuous improvement in teaching and learning (Mårtensson, Roxå & Olsson, 2010:51).

An example of innovative pedagogy within the projected code came from a respondent from the Hotel School in the Faculty of Business. She explained that she was exploring the extent to which restaurants were addressing the incorporation of local cuisine into their menus. She pointed out that most South African restaurants focused predominantly on European rather than African dishes. She stated that the inspiration for this study stemmed from the SoTL programme, adding that "the topics covered in the SoTL programme will help me do further research in my field". Thus, she had embraced indigenous knowledge in her teaching.

SoTL is flourishing in terms of indigenous education and evolving pedagogy. This is attributed to teaching and learning moving towards evidence-based curricula (Kersey, Lees, Conn, Cochrane, Williams & Narayan, 2018:3). In New Zealand, for instance, there has been a focus on collaborative, contextual research that embraces Maori and Pacific epistemology and world views that reflect the unique composition of the population in a bid to produce 'socially responsive' curricula (Kersey et al., 2018:4-6; Torres & Morales, 2006:348). However, Smith (2009) and Cooper (2012) caution that when indigenous knowledge is included in mainstream institutions, there could be a tendency to treat indigenous knowledge tokenistically and out of context. This would mean that the

Eurocentrism that underpins university curricula and privileges Western male colonisers' knowledge would remain unchallenged (Grosfoguel, 2012:83).

In addition to promoting indigenous knowledge, the SoTL programme led to many respondents publishing the findings from their research projects. A respondent from the academic development field stated that he had submitted three papers and a book chapter from his master's thesis as a result of having attended the SoTL programme. He reported that he could publish a co-authored article, *First-year students' essay writing practices: Formative feedback and interim literacies* (Esambe, Mosito & Pather, 2016).

A respondent from the Chemical Engineering Department reported that two of his papers for an international e-learning conference had been accepted for presentation. The first paper was based on evaluating the effectiveness of an e-learning platform in physics at the first-year level. The second paper dealt with students' blended learning experiences within a chemical engineering extended curriculum programme's physics course.

Through an overarching analysis of the role of SoTL in advancing online learning, Kreber and Kanuka (2006:110) concluded that there is a reciprocal relationship between online learning and SoTL. It was found that learners appreciate educational experiences that are authentic, active and context-dependent. Therefore, to facilitate such learning, university teachers must be familiar with blended learning designs. With the increasing prevalence of online learning in higher education, university teachers realise that they have to rethink their current practices. In this way, online learning is contributing immensely to SoTL (Kreber & Kanuka, 2006:124).

Nevertheless, another respondent from the Faculty of Education reported:

We have submitted a chapter for the textbook, *Multi-literacies in education*, and we are in the process of submitting two articles for publication. The title of our chapter is 'Developing cultural literacy through service-learning in teacher education'. The titles of the articles are: 'The development of a cultural competence framework for pre-service teachers: A social perspective'; and 'Service learning as a vehicle for the development of cultural competence'.

This demonstrates that respondents who researched micro-level contexts were in a good position to publish and present at conferences after having been exposed to the SoTL programme. In this way, they were contributing to knowledge in the field from the global South's perspective. Their projects had meaning for them because they focused on the peculiarities of their context. The SoTL programme enabled them to select topics that were more relevant to their context. Staff development was not imposed on the candidates; on the contrary, they had a vested interest in their development as it dealt directly with contextual matters that were aligned with their pedagogical practices. This could also be

why some of the respondents felt encouraged and more confident to register for a master's or doctoral degree after attending the SoTL programme.

It might be worth pointing out that all SoTL respondents in the study described were people of colour. Scholars such as Gay (2007:265) have confirmed that SoTL is regarded as a safe space for academics of colour to develop. Findings from Gay's (2007:265) study showed that, for graduate students of colour, doing their doctoral studies is a major challenge, and Gay (2007) suggested that what is needed is a curriculum, supervision and relationships culturally responsive to a diverse group of students.

Regarding acknowledging student diversity, Ahmed (2012) questions whether the term 'diverse students' should be adopted at all. By granting an offer of 'inclusion' to those who are 'different' or diverse, those who are 'the same' re-centre themselves and reassert their legitimacy over the institutional space. When students are depicted as 'diverse' because they are not white, it confirms that whiteness already belongs to the institution and that others are merely guests (Ahmed, 2012).

Migrating from the sovereign code to exotic code

Movements into the exotic code can also occur when, for example, there are deviations from achieving the purpose of SoTL, which is education research.

Some respondents drew on the knowledge and skills gained during the SoTL programme to focus on research and further studies within their discipline. For instance, a respondent from the Faculty of Business indicated that her PhD proposal had been accepted. Her topic dealt with the financial management of carbon trading in South Africa. Another candidate from the Faculty of Engineering ultimately registered for a PhD in engineering. However, a Faculty of Health and Wellness respondent stated that she had registered for a PhD in health informatics while participating in the SoTL programme. She claimed, "I can integrate SoTL into research in Nursing".

In some cases, though, academics joined the SoTL programme but eventually dropped out without producing any outputs. For example, one time-restricted respondent remarked that her goal was to write a conference paper, but she "never got to it". She explained that "time was not on her side" and that travelling 200 kilometres for every SoTL session constrained attendance. Other reasons for not achieving any research outputs were:

- a heavy workload;
- SoTL being undervalued by departments and the university;
- not yet having developed the knowledge necessary to cope with a new field.

The (teaching-intensive) university's rules and policies did not emphasise SoTL enough for candidates to focus on research, even though it was based on teaching and learning.

In a meta-analysis, Van Lankveld (2017) identifies twenty studies that mention the relationship between research and teaching: the common denominator amongst these studies is that teaching is construed as less valuable than research. Universities have been lambasted for sending mixed messages when they claim that research and teaching are equally important yet reward research more. Some studies have ascertained that even in teaching-intensive universities, teaching is viewed as a second-class activity. Osman (2016:1835) demonstrated that, at a research-intensive university, early-career academics, in particular, found it difficult to balance the demands linked to teaching and research within an increasingly competitive higher education environment. Boschier (2009:1) states that some of the reasons for the challenges experienced in obtaining buy-in for SoTL are the difficulty in operationalising SoTL and the discourse concerning SoTL being “anti-intellectual” and positioned within a “narrow neoliberalism”.

Travelling from the sovereign code to the exotic code to the projected code

While some candidates did not attend sessions regularly, they did return to complete the programme by producing research outputs. In this way, they moved from the sovereign code to the exotic code (temporarily) and later into the projected code. These were usually candidates who had made progress in their postgraduate studies and did not need to attend all the SoTL sessions. They simply utilised what they needed from the programme for publishing. They were thus independent, autonomous researchers.

Conclusion

Within a complex, changing higher education landscape that characterises South African society, the deficit discourse for academic staff development is hardly appropriate. It pinpoints what is not working and aim to provide superficial generic solutions employing decontextualised principles and processes. By its very nature, the generic skills model for academic staff development fails to consider the peculiarities of the pedagogic context within which academics find themselves. A model which provides academics with an opportunity to develop their own voice and take responsibility for their own development is more useful and relevant. As far as addressing the decolonisation of education is concerned, academic staff development must not focus on generic skills but on empowering academics to research their pedagogical contexts at a specific level. This must be done in a scholarly manner through research and theorisation of practice.

By researching their education practice through a SoTL programme, academics might be better positioned to conceptualise what needs to be transformed and how this could be achieved. Indeed, a new era in academic staff development has been set in motion – one in

which academics can draw their own inferences about teaching and learning without being influenced by those in powerful positions who seek to impose their values and beliefs on and about higher education.

As candidates embark on research within their own teaching, context becomes an important departure point. Thus, context renders SoTL more relevant. In South Africa, for example, the higher education context emphasises the decolonisation of the curriculum to keep colonialism at bay. Contextualised knowledge (outside knowledge), positioned within the introjected code, is not easily transferable to other contexts. There is a need to move towards abstraction and the conceptualisation of knowledge occurring within the sovereign code to achieve transferability. In this sovereign code, the SoTL programme, which provided conceptual knowledge and skills (inside knowledge), was located. Candidates moved from the introjected code to the sovereign code as participants of the SoTL programme.

When they produced outputs from their SoTL projects and applied their research to optimise their teaching, they would have transitioned from the sovereign code to the projected code. In the projected code, inside knowledge was externalised; applied in practice within the community. As candidates capitalised on the knowledge and skills gained during their SoTL journey to improve their qualifications with an education focus, career development emerged as an unintended consequence within the projected code.

Academic staff development implications are that academics are empowered by being given autonomy in researching and improving their own teaching practice in an evidence-based manner, without having to endure imposed development in a decontextualised way by proponents of the 'deficit discourse'.

Furthermore, despite repeated calls for the decolonisation of the South African curriculum, academics still struggle with its implementation. This gives the impression that they are procrastinating. In contrast, this lag could be a result of the challenges academics face when attempting to move directly from the introjected code to the projected code, bypassing the sovereign code and, in the process, circumventing the conceptualisation and theorisation of contextualised knowledge for subsequent application. This is what usually transpires in ad hoc programmes for academic staff development.

It can be concluded that autonomy can be applied for achieving knowledge building by travelling between codes. The dimension allows for contextualised knowledge from the outside to undergo abstraction on the inside before it moves back to the outside for re-contextualisation. This is important in terms of this book's theme, to move beyond the colour lines to integrate SoTL to develop a contextualised South African approach to higher education. This is not to say that the global context is ignored, but when candidates

undertake a literature review and analyse their research findings against what is happening in the global arena, they expedite the intersection of global and local contexts.

Finally, as the future beckons, academic staff development needs to be future-proofed. What is required are self-directed, autonomous academics who can scrutinise and critically reflect on their context, conduct systematic SoTL research and establish ways to address their contextual challenges, thereby transforming those contexts anywhere in the world.

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