CREATING CONDITIONS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

**Social justice
perspectives from a
South African university**

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ACADEMICS' USE OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY IN THE CURRICULUM

UNCOVERING THE MATTER OF CHOICE

Sonja Strydom

At the boundary [of functionings and capabilities] is the matter of choice, where a person exercises his or her agency, having the requisite set of capabilities, to make choices from a range of options and alternatives, if such a choice achieves his or her well-being. (Walker 2006a:105)

INTRODUCTION

The use of educational technology has gained prominence during the current Covid-19 pandemic when higher education institutions (HEIs) globally were compelled to adopt online modes of delivery in order to continue their teaching and learning activities (Czerniewicz et al. 2020). In the diverse South African higher education context, HEIs responded differently to these challenges and some institutions were able to move to online modes of delivery more quickly than other institutions. Although there are differences of opinion about the value of online learning and the current predominant status of educational technologies in higher education, there seems to be agreement that learning and teaching, as we knew it before the pandemic, will never be the same again (Van Schalkwyk 2021). Even if educational technologies do not fully replace conventional teaching and learning practices, it is argued that the use of educational technologies in the higher education (HE) curriculum will remain a given (Van Schalkwyk 2021).

Yet, the integration of educational technology into the HE curriculum has been high on the agenda of universities, both locally and internationally, for some time (Englund, Olofsson & Price 2017). Even before the pandemic, the broad HE context was being influenced by a number of factors that contributed to such priorities. These include, for instance, massification, increased internationalisation, and the needs of a more diverse student population. These challenges have been intensified by rapid external social, intellectual and technological transformations that often exceed the pace of internal institutional change (Aagaard & Lund 2020). In addition, HEIs are

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increasingly challenged to deliver graduates that are fully equipped to deal with and find solutions for complex modern societal issues (Hill, Walkington & France 2016; Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre 2018; Vasileiou 2009). Such expectations place further pressures on traditional forms of teaching (Quinn 2012). Consequently, academics, academic developers, and curriculum developers need to consider the value of technology in the curriculum and associated learning and teaching approaches that could potentially contribute to delivering successful graduates.

To respond to such demands, it is required of academics and academic developers to deliberate the reconceptualisation and redesign of the curriculum by means of, for example, extended degree programmes and the integration of technology in the curriculum. Technology is often seen as a 'solution' to some institutional challenges. As a result, the implementation of blended learning modes of delivery, and research related to this phenomenon (Halverson, Graham, Spring, Drysdale & Henrie 2014), have become prevalent at both local and international levels (Drysdale, Graham, Spring & Halverson 2013; Medina 2018). Educationally, some of the core drivers for the consideration of technology in the curriculum are the potential positive impact on the learning experience of students, the creation of more flexible course formats, increased access to off-campus students and meeting the needs and expectations of a more 'connected' student generation (Gregory & Lodge 2015; Medina 2018; Walker, Voce & Jenkins 2016). Such demands call for academics to reconsider the use of educational technology in teaching and learning and the curriculum.

Curriculum development is in its own right multifaceted and complex. The design process differs from discipline to discipline and in addition to accreditation criteria, professional programmes such as engineering and education have to satisfy the demands of professional bodies (Al-Eyd et al. 2018; Ashwin et al. 2015). This becomes even more complex when there is an overt expectation from university management that academics should consider the integration of educational technology as a vehicle for curriculum renewal. However, many academics are reluctant to consider the use of educational technology in their teaching and learning practices. Their conceptions regarding technology integration often emanate from the approaches and strategies they use when teaching (Englund, Olofsson & Price 2017), which are based on overt or covert assumptions of teaching and learning. Yet, little evidence exists of the 'uncovered' and even 'hidden' reasons why academics decide to embrace the use of technology in the curriculum or why they choose not to engage with it. Hence the purpose of this chapter is to engage critically with those factors that contribute to academics' willingness or reluctance to consider the use of educational technology in the higher education curriculum. Although strong educational, societal and contextual arguments support the prioritising of the use of

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technology, many academics are still averse to considering such alternative teaching and learning approaches.

I map this chapter against the capabilities approach to consider the role of capabilities and functionings associated with technology integration in the teaching and learning context. This approach provides an alternative narrative to human capital positions that are often strongly held in education (Walker 2006b). The chapter uses the capabilities approach by uncovering those aspects that impact academics' capabilities and free choice to engage with educational technology in their teaching and learning practice. As Walker (2006b:164) argues: "[T]he value of the capabilities approach, with its foregrounding of human development, agency, wellbeing and freedom, lies in the way it enables us to ask a different set of questions about education." In my research (Strydom 2018), I used an explanatory and exploratory research design situated in the postmodern research paradigm and interpretive phenomenological analysis to uncover the unobservable reasons for academics' choices regarding educational technology use.

I employed interpretive phenomenology as an analytical framework to reveal insights into the impact of educational technology in the lives of teaching academics. At the same time, I used the capabilities approach as developed by Sen (1980) and Nussbaum (1992) to uncover those social and agentic considerations within the higher education system that influence academics' choice to engage with technology-integrated practices in the curriculum. This chapter aims to show how our understanding of the complex interplay between social, economic and/or political expectations within the HE context and the important role of individual agency within such a process is advanced by means of employing these two frameworks (interpretive phenomenology and the capability approach).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Capabilities and functionings

The capabilities approach places humanity at the core. It emphasises the "understanding of central human functions and capacities" (Siddika & Baruah 2018:164) and underlines the freedom that individuals have to demonstrate agency. By developing agency, capabilities will evolve and add to further agency (Buzzelli 2015). This implies that individuals choose the lives that appeal to them based on the opportunities presented to them (Buzzelli 2015). These capabilities pave the way for functionings (Buzelli 2015); that is, what individuals choose to do with their capabilities.

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Whereas the ‘father’ of the capabilities approach, Amartya Sen (1980) distinguished capabilities and functionings, the essence of Martha Nussbaum’s (1992) approach is capability and not functioning. It is argued that within the HE context, institutions should afford students (and academics) the opportunity to develop capabilities, but their choice in acting on such capacities (i.e. their functionings) is neither determined nor controlled by the institution (Walker 2003).

Nussbaum (2003) proposes ten capabilities which she suggests are essential for individuals to experience a fulfilling life. These capabilities do not only emphasise economic freedom and choice, but also the value of interpersonal and personal growth situated within a broader social, economic and political context (Walker 2003). From Nussbaum’s (2003) list of human capabilities, the following resonate specifically with the topic of this chapter:

- *Senses, imagination and thought*: Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing or producing works and events of one’s own choice;
- *Practical reason*: Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s life;
- *Affiliation*: Being able to live with and towards others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another;
- *Control over one’s environment*: In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason, and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers (Nussbaum 2003:41-42).

As capabilities result in functionings, the number of functionings could be limitless. The distinction between capabilities and functionings is that the former resembles the opportunity to succeed whereas the latter represents the real accomplishment (Walker 2006b). With reference to the current topic, capabilities underline the opportunities created within the institution and the self to engage with educational technology in the curriculum. Functionings embody the outcomes of choices or accomplishments demonstrated by academics ensuing from their choices regarding technology use. Sen (1999) argues that the focus should not essentially be on functionings or accomplishments, but rather on the identification of those chances that contribute to the accomplishments (Walker 2006b).

Agency and freedom of choice

In the capabilities approach, Sen’s (1999) concept of agency freedom relates to the actions and changes being effected by an individual. Agency freedom also outlines the manner in which such accomplishments are evaluated against the individuals’

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own principles and outcomes (Walker 2006b). Social, political and economic conditions all affect agency and personal freedom. Such conditions could potentially provide opportunities or create challenges for educational prospects. For instance, the acknowledgement of academics' opinions in the creation of the curriculum could be diminished due to their different levels of access to and influence on the curriculum (Annala, Mäkinen, Lindén & Henriksson 2020).

Such a view of agency is of particular importance in a HE context where educational technologies are foregrounded based on either broader institutional agendas (Aagaard & Lund 2020) or responses towards the Covid-19 pandemic. It is therefore of importance to pay attention to both the position of individual agency and the accompanying social factors that have an impact on the scope of individual freedom (Buzzelli 2015). Of even greater concern is the potential role and influence of management on the institutional choices being made in relation to educational technology integration. For instance, in the current context of a pandemic-driven teaching and learning context, institutional management is obliged to think beyond the teaching and learning prospects for continuing the academic project, but also in terms of business-related priorities and commitments (Aagaard & Lund 2020). Such views and practices all have a direct impact on the agency of academics.

Such a freedom of choice approach towards agency should not be confused with neo-liberal agendas of individualism and individual choices which in essence resemble ontological individualism, but rather an ethical individualistic approach where inter- and intra-personal autonomy are highlighted (Walker 2006b:166). Agency, as underlined by Sen, refers to the outcomes that individuals regard as important (Walker 2006a).

Capabilities and human capital

As argued above, the capabilities approach focuses on individual autonomy and the nature of a context or environment which is fitting for individual progress. What is of essence is to acknowledge that there is no separation between autonomy and capabilities – it is within the process of making decisions about capabilities that autonomy and growth is established (Walker 2006a). The reference to individual autonomy and growth does not reflect a philosophical or abstract approach but rather an interrogation of the capabilities of individuals in their day-to-day lives (Walker 2006a).

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In this chapter, I aim to explicate the prospects that could lead to accomplishment in terms of technology integration in the HE curriculum. However, I need to clarify that 'accomplishment' does not necessarily reflect acquiescence with institutional expectations or current educational needs; I also include the credence that accomplishment could be associated with individual agency and freedoms of academics. By no means is this chapter a 'list' of actions expected from HE management to 'succeed' in the quest for educational technology integration into the curriculum, but rather an attempt to highlight overt and covert aspects that beg careful consideration by all role players involved in this phenomenon.

For the purpose of uncovering the reasons why academics decide to use or not to use educational technology in their teaching and learning practices, I deemed an explanatory and exploratory research design to be appropriate. The exploratory nature of the research design guided me in investigating this poorly understood phenomenon and in discovering important categories of meaning. From an explanatory perspective, I aim to explain the patterns related to the choice of technology integration as well as to highlight the plausible relationships shaping this phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman 2011). I made use of a purposive sample (Pietkiewicz & Smith 2014) consisting of 20 teaching academics representing five different faculties. The sample included respondents from the Faculties of Education, Science, Theology, Economic and Management Sciences, and Medicine and Health Sciences of Stellenbosch University. The selection criteria for these participants required academics who are involved in technology-related practices, but also made provision to include teaching academics who are openly resistant to using technology in the curriculum. Those who participated had to be actively teaching an undergraduate course in their faculty. All participants gave informed consent, and ethical clearance and institutional permission were granted by the appropriate structures.

Data were collected by means of 20 individual, semi-structured interviews that focused on aspects related to participants' views regarding the notion of technology integration into the curriculum, the factors that enable and constrain academics to consider technology in teaching and learning practices, and the role of the institution and agency within such a process.

Data analysis was done by means of interpretive phenomenological analysis. This approach requires a detailed analysis of each individual interview transcript in order to explore the meaning making of participants without attempting generalisation (Chapman & Smith 2002). The approach employs a double hermeneutics whereby the researcher seeks to engage with the meaning making of the participant inter-

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pretations rather than following a more linear approach that employs only one level of interpretation (Smith & Osborn 2007). The double hermeneutics required me to firstly interpret participant comments, and secondly to interpret his or her version of the former interpretation.

The levels of interpretation that followed included a descriptive, empathetic level of interpretation whereby I aimed to understand the lived world of the participants. This was followed by a more 'speculative and tentative' level of interpretation whereby I attempted to make further meaning of the interpretations of the participants (Willig 2013:275).

FINDINGS

Using the capabilities approach rooted in an interpretive phenomenological framework enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the nuanced factors at play in the lived experiences of teaching academics and their realities when faced with the expectations to integrate educational technology into their curricula. The approach afforded me the opportunity to acknowledge the value and importance of policy and educational expectations within specific educational contexts. It also provided me with the opportunity of assessing whether such expectations promote freedom of choice and foster agency in academics situated at the boundaries of individual choice and institutional expectations (Walker 2010).

The interplay between the first theme, individual agency (i.e. individual differences), and the second theme, context (i.e. the institution), manifests in the findings. An interesting third theme recognises both agency and the institutional or social context in terms of knowledge acquisition. The influences on academics' engagement with educational technology are graphically represented in Figure 7.1 below.

FIGURE 7.1 Influences on academics' engagement with educational technology
(Source: Adapted from <https://presentationgo.com>)

Notable sub-themes that underline these three influences include academics' attitude towards change, their levels of interest in technology and their individual support

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needs. Institutionally, it is evident that management's expectations regarding technology use should be clearly communicated while management should exhibit a sensitive awareness of the intricacies of change management and the effects thereof on academics. Rooted in both individuals and the institution is the notion of knowledge acquisition. Academics highlighted their need for furthering their pedagogical knowledge in terms of the use of educational technology and admitted the responsibility for developing a self-directed learning attitude towards such needs for knowledge.

When adopting the capabilities approach to further understand academics' choices with respect to educational technology, it is evident that there is a need to pay attention to the significance of individual agency and the encompassing social world in which such agentic practices will function (Sen 1999). The three themes and sub-themes are illuminated below.

Theme 1: Agency

The essence of the capabilities approach is located in the freedom individuals have to demonstrate agency. As can be imagined, many intrinsic and extrinsic factors contribute to academics' willingness (or not) to display agency within the context of technology adoption in teaching and learning practices. A complex sub-theme that should be further explored is attitude towards change.

Differences exist between academics who are willing to adopt new initiatives and endeavours such as the use of educational technology and those who fear changing their current practices:

I think it's a bit of both. It's a ... you get people to whom change is part of breathing and there's people to whom change is an end of the world thing that please don't let it happen to me too much. [E5]

Some people are change averse on the one sense, that's just how they are, they get into a comfort zone and that's cool, then we'll do it like this. It's working to a certain extent. I don't think they really question what they're doing in terms of that too much. It's like if there's a problem, they'll fix it but they're not going to look for problems where there's not – well, where the problem is not knocking on the door, saying 'Here I am'. [EM9]

Individual interest in technology is often the elephant in the room since it is institutionally difficult or even impossible to address such personal preferences. From the data it was clear that academics who embraced technology in their curricula displayed an interest in exploring new approaches related to technology:

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I sit nights, through the night, working on pulling in things, trying out new things and so on. So, it takes a lot of time but I wish I could focus on that but I have so many other interests also. [E14]

You want to, you know, to make use of blended learning because you have this natural affinity, what is the word, inclination for everything that's technology driven. I'm not putting it out there now correct, but so that one sometimes, I feel I struggle with. [E20]

As can be expected, such individual differences will call for diverse support opportunities.

The third sub-theme explores the complexities associated with meaning making in the educational technology field:

I think the problem with this for me is that if we relinquish everything without really thinking it through and thinking and looking at it, does this work for me? Is this what I want? Is this what's going to work in my space? [S8]

Carefully conceptualised programmes and courses should be considered to prepare academics for this 'new relationship' with technology in their teaching and learning practices. These sub-themes pose interesting issues related to the agentic power of academics.

Theme 2: Institution

The role and responsibility of the institution should not be underplayed in the midst of these complexities. As mentioned above, it is expected of institutional management to be cognisant of a number of factors when emphasising the importance and/or value of educational technology in the HE curriculum. This requires an understanding and acknowledgement of the intricacies associated with change management and clear communication about the institutional expectations at an operational level.

This was clear from the findings when academics mentioned that they experienced some confusion regarding institutional expectations. For example, one academic acknowledged the importance placed on the use of educational technology by senior and/or faculty management, but the level of engagement with such technology-rich approaches often remained unclear:

I think that would be very helpful for me because at the moment, I think I'm doing a fairly okay job. Our student feedback is relatively positive. It doesn't necessarily translate into better marks it seems, from our results now. So I'm not sure what the senior management would expect from us and I think that's where we need guidance. [S7]

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What they expect now, I'm not sure what they expect now. I haven't had much discussion with maybe senior management concerning these things. It would actually be nice if we had discussions maybe with senior management how they view the blended learning. [S7]

I might be generalising and it – maybe it's only something that happens in my immediate environment and not the other faculties. But ja, I think for a lot of people because it's not strongly encouraged that they actually would prefer to stick to the old way of doing things and not making use of the resources that are available. [EM1]

Closely related to the aforementioned statement is whether such expectations provide academics with a choice to engage or not. Do such expectations relate to a minimum requirement or rather a 'nice-to-have'?

There's information shared about courses that you can attend and people you can speak to but if you are someone who just does not want to engage with that then yes, there isn't any pressure to, which can be a good and a bad thing, I think. [EM4]

I think my sense of things has been that faculty doesn't really care what you do, so long as it's quality learning that the students are getting. If you wanted to do things the old-fashioned way that's absolutely fine. [H2]

One of the core aspects of the capabilities approach is the evaluation of the context of individuals or groups in order to determine their ability to react or respond to demands. Such responses could take place based on their access to resources at their disposal and converting them into functionings which further their individual agency (Renouard 2011). In this case, resources do not necessarily only equate to hardware, software or professional learning opportunities, but also to the clear communication expected from institutional management.

Another aspect that necessitates attention is the frequent disconnect between conceptualisation of policy and its subsequent implementation. The application of institutional policy at operational level often mirrors the need to acknowledge a myriad of factors:

People now tell me, you have to do even more of what you're doing. I mean in terms of capacity the expectations, just overall of what's expected at our work place is too much. [T15]

...that there is too much of a distance between the drafters of policy regarding these things, the policy makers and the coal face... [EM1]

It was also clear that a deeper level of understanding and appreciation by management of the impact of change on academics, could be of benefit:

It's coming in at the faculty level and we've got to make sure and I'm getting that message across to staff and so on. This thing is changing,

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the message is getting out but I think the practice, it will take a while to filter and understand. [S12]

The role and responsibility of institutions remain complex and multifaceted. Various factors impact academics' decisions to engage with educational technology. Many of those are directly related to the institution, its policy imperatives and clarity of communication.

Theme 3: Acquisition of knowledge

Another theme that draws on individual agency as well as on structural considerations is the acquisition of knowledge. It is often assumed that the development of technological skills is a priority for academics. This research, however, indicates that academics are more in need of the development of pedagogical knowledge in order to move from a praxis orientation to a theoretically integrated approach to technology use. This need for pedagogical guidance is expressed in the following extracts:

So, I think maybe the big challenge – maybe the big challenge is not necessarily in educating lecturers in the technology because that's going to change. But maybe just helping – maybe we should just get a better grip on how students learn, how you can try and use these different things if that makes sense. [H3]

My question is but hang on, I don't think that's why I want you here. I don't want you here to share information with you. I want to share with you what do you do with the information. [EM1]

As is evident in the quotations above, concerns also relate to developing an understanding of how students learn within a technology-rich environment:

Where does my software fit in, in this picture where it's actually now a total different pedagogy, it's a whole different methodology of teaching and if you either don't think the way you did it before has limits or you're too scared of trying to change the way you do it because what worked – but it's worked – what you've done before and you're scared of trying something new and it doesn't work. I think maybe that's where the problem comes in. [E5]

This responsibility for knowledge acquisition is not only that of the institution, but also calls for individual agency and commitment to extend one's own knowledge and expertise. This is particularly relevant in the rapidly growing field of educational technology:

But at the end of the day you've still got to be prepared to sit by yourself and figure them out and tweak with them and kind of make them your own. So I think that has been challenging but it's been good and I think

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unfortunately or fortunately, whichever way you look at, you've really just got to acquire those skills to a certain extent in our environment. [H2]

These sentiments were echoed by two other academics:

So, I think my ability is not that good yet but I am trying to learn all the time and educate myself... [E14]

I learn from everybody, my students, I will call them here, I'm having this, how do I do this and they will show me. Some students don't know they are teaching you things but I'm somebody, I like learning all these little – because even the simple Word document, we don't master everything. There are things that you want to do, you get stuck and a student can show you how to do it. [H17]

Knowledge related to educational technology use includes, for instance, technical understanding, pedagogically sound use, as well as the practical application in a course. What was evident is that the opportunity to further explore the pedagogical practices and processes associated with technology use and a willingness to continuously engage in self-directed learning practices could all potentially contribute to academics' use of digital tools.

INTERPRETATION ACCORDING TO THE CAPABILITIES APPROACH

The capabilities approach requires “that we do not simply evaluate the functionings but the real freedom or opportunities each [academic] has available to choose and to achieve what she valued” (Walker & Unterhalter 2007:5). In relation to this particular theme, this approach suggests that free choice in deciding to engage with educational technology or not is based on academics' deeper-rooted attitudes towards change, their particular support needs and, simply, their level of interest in technology. Agency is therefore seen as involving those aspects that individuals value and that are important to them within their given contexts. According to Sen's (1980) views that agency is closely aligned with well-being, a lack of agency could potentially result in a negative impact on the well-being of the individual. It is therefore important that education in itself provides opportunity for agency freedom, and in this quest then asks the question how educational expectations and/or policies contribute to the development of individual capabilities (Walker 2006b). To simplify: how then should institutional management and professional support services respond in order to present freedoms and opportunities to academics that will result in personally valued accomplishments? How are chances created that optimally contribute to functioning and personal well-being?

The relevant role players have the responsibility to consider the aforementioned in order to pave the way for agentic freedom that subsequently leads to functionings

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development. The emphasis from an educational perspective is then not on “equalizing resources but rather equalizing opportunities” (Buzzelli 2015:207). These assumptions, however, become more complex in HEIs that are driven by various external and internal demands and call for careful consideration, ongoing debate and a genuine interest in the well-being of academics in order to fully understand their willingness or reluctance to use educational technology as a vehicle in learning and teaching practices. One way in which such issues could be further explored is the consideration of capability spaces.

According to the capabilities approach, four capability spaces contribute to individual benefit. These are well-being achievement, well-being freedom, agency achievement and agency freedom (Alkire 2005:122). Individual benefit could imply very basic aspects such as developing a new skill, but could also include more complex and abstract aspects such as the development of self-esteem. Whichever the case, benefit could either refer to well-being, or agency achievement, or freedom. It is argued that these spaces are aligned with each other and they cannot be viewed in isolation (Alkire 2005). In relation to the topic at hand, conversations and understandings could be further developed by exploring what well-being achievement and well-being freedom will entail for academics who are part of an institutional hierarchy and who have responsibilities for providing optimal learning opportunities for their students. Does it imply a dichotomy between academics' well-being and those of their students? Similarly, does it also require an understanding of the value of agency achievement and agency freedom? This compels role players to display knowledge and sensitivity towards these needs that academics could overtly or covertly communicate to the institution.

A further way in which the institution could respond to the development of capabilities and functionings is to re-assess its provision in terms of diverse support and professional development opportunities. The introduction to technology is often marred by the assumption that technical knowledge and assistance will pave the way for academics to embrace alternative approaches to teaching and learning. Professional learning opportunities frequently emphasise the ‘how’ of using technology instead of exploring the ‘why’ or ‘the reason’ for such considerations (Kirkwood & Price 2013). In attempting to answer these questions sensibly, a careful balance between praxis and theory is required (Johnson, Wisniewski, Kuhlemeyer, Isaacs & Krzykowski 2012). This obliges academics to explore their own ontological and epistemological assumptions, to understand student learning, to be empowered to design student course material accordingly, and to have the skills to support students in the blended learning process (Islam, Beer & Slack 2015; Tondeur, Van Braak & Ertmer 2017). The aforementioned is necessary since transformative

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technology-enhanced practices require academics to move beyond replication and substitution of existing face-to-face pedagogical practices (Kirkwood & Price 2013). Consequently, professional development units should carefully consider their knowledge bases and the experiences of academic developers. Such units should therefore consider multifaceted, responsive and agile approaches executed by academic developers when addressing the diverse contextual needs of academics (Loads & Campbell 2015).

What is also of interest is the manner in which the ‘academics’ voice’ is truly acknowledged and explored before developing professional learning opportunities. One may ask whether such programmes and opportunities are context-specific and accurately aimed at the individual needs of academics as opposed to broader institutional goals and outcomes. For instance, a topic that is rarely touched upon in the field is the level of interest of academics in technology. Rarely are there conversations regarding individual differences, such as the ‘relationship’ of academics with technology. Expecting academics to engage with technology has potentially far-reaching implications for the well-being of those who do not display a natural tendency towards the subject and an interest in the field.

It is evident that individual differences create both exciting opportunities for and potentially inhibiting challenges to institutions that expect academics to abide by the expectations and trends of the day. Individuals are complex and have different backgrounds resulting in a range of emotional and cognitive responses towards a change process (Moffatt et al. 2018). The social systems in which academics operate are created to assist in organising and leading human activities. What complicates matters is the different interpretations of and attitudes towards societal beliefs and rules (Bandura 2006). This is then also the case with academics who are expected to use educational technology for learning and teaching purposes. Structural expectations and rules do not guarantee buy-in from academics since their needs, attitudes and own interests all add to the complex nature of the phenomenon.

The capabilities approach paves the way for a better understanding of how HEIs could support or prohibit academics in their actions and what they are capable of doing. Sen (1980:16) distinguishes between “shares of goods” and the “relationship between persons and goods”. According to Sen (1980), individuals’ achievement potential is associated with their ability to transform available resources into usable capabilities which will lead to the further development of agency. The focus is therefore not necessarily on the number of resources available to the individual, but rather the acknowledgement of opportunities used by agents to transform such opportunities into capabilities, which leads to further growth in agency (Buzelli 2015).

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It is evident that a reciprocal process should be considered in this regard. In order for academics to transform available institutional resources (e.g. professional learning opportunities, hardware, software) into usable capabilities in the curriculum, they are required to consider these opportunities critically. If, for instance, the opportunities for accomplishment are not clear, this should also be communicated to management. A dual responsibility resides in the clarification of expectations by managers on the one hand and the making of informed choices by academics on the other.

In order to further develop academics' functionings in terms of the use of technology in the HE curriculum, a proclivity amongst academics for self-directed learning is required due to the rapid development in the field. In a sense, this asks for the reformation of the self, integrated within broader personal, societal, and institutional structures (Light, Cox & Calkins 2009). What remains imperative, according to the capabilities approach, is the real freedom and opportunities of academics within such a process (Walker 2006b). Possible learning opportunities should be communicated to academics in order for them to make sense of the plethora of digital tools and approaches available to educationalists. It furthermore requires the empowerment of academics to understand how to manage their own learning in relation to their own disciplinary expertise and experiences. The interplay between structure and agency is evident in this sub-theme where it becomes the joint responsibility of the institution and the individual to acquire the appropriate knowledge necessary for technology use in the curriculum.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The consideration of technology in the HE curriculum enjoys a great deal of attention in the modern HEI. The use of educational technology for in- and out-of-class learning experiences has been well documented and explored (Drysedale et al. 2013; Englund, Olofsson & Price 2017; Halverson et al. 2014). Apart from the potential benefits associated with pedagogical practices, it is also argued that student engagement with technology contributes to well-rounded citizens and individuals that could effectively function in an ever-changing society (Carl & Strydom 2017). Despite these arguments, it remains imperative to consider the lecturer's prerogative and choices within such an educational context.

Walker (2006b:165) underlines that "capability is freedom and rationality combined. It is not to be understood in the much narrower sense of skills". The choice for inclusion of educational technology in the HE curriculum calls for a consideration of freedom and rationality. Academics' functioning relies on the agentic and structural circumstances that pave the way for potential to be realised (Walker 2006a:105).

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Without a doubt the capabilities approach opens opportunities for interesting debates regarding the extent of individual choice and self-perceived accomplishment within an educational context requiring the continuous use of technology in the curriculum.

The interplay between agentic perspectives, institutional accountability and the nature of knowledge contributes to the dynamics that have an impact on academics' preferences related to technology. I suggest the consideration of carefully crafted dialogues between academics and representatives of institutional management involved in the integration of educational technology. The rationale for the use of technology (Johnson 2013), an awareness of the complexities associated with change, the acknowledgement of individual preference and the prioritising of the well-being of academics should all be considered in this multifaceted process.

Further deliberations become essential in order to ascertain where these conversations and debates should be situated. Institutional communication often takes place through formal and bureaucratic channels and is then filtered down by faculty management. Due to the many limitations of these forms of communication, more personal involvement of management should be considered so that change initiatives could be contested or debated (Lasakova, Bajžíková & Dedze 2017). Such an approach requires that management be aware of the issues and debates related to initiatives such as technology integration and a willingness to participate in potentially uncomfortable conversations at an operational level (Kukulska-Hulme 2012).

What is required at a structural and agentic level is the consideration of academics' capabilities and how they affect the potential for mutually accepted accomplishment. This requires that role players consider whether institutional and educational expectations accommodate prospects for academics to experience or produce work of their own choice. It involves occasions where colleagues have the option to imagine the situation of other academics and how it translates to educational responsibility. HE practices could benefit from the consideration of practical reason and engagement in mutual recognition of individual choices (Nussbaum 2003:41-42), even if the notion of 'accomplishment' is differently understood by different role players.

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