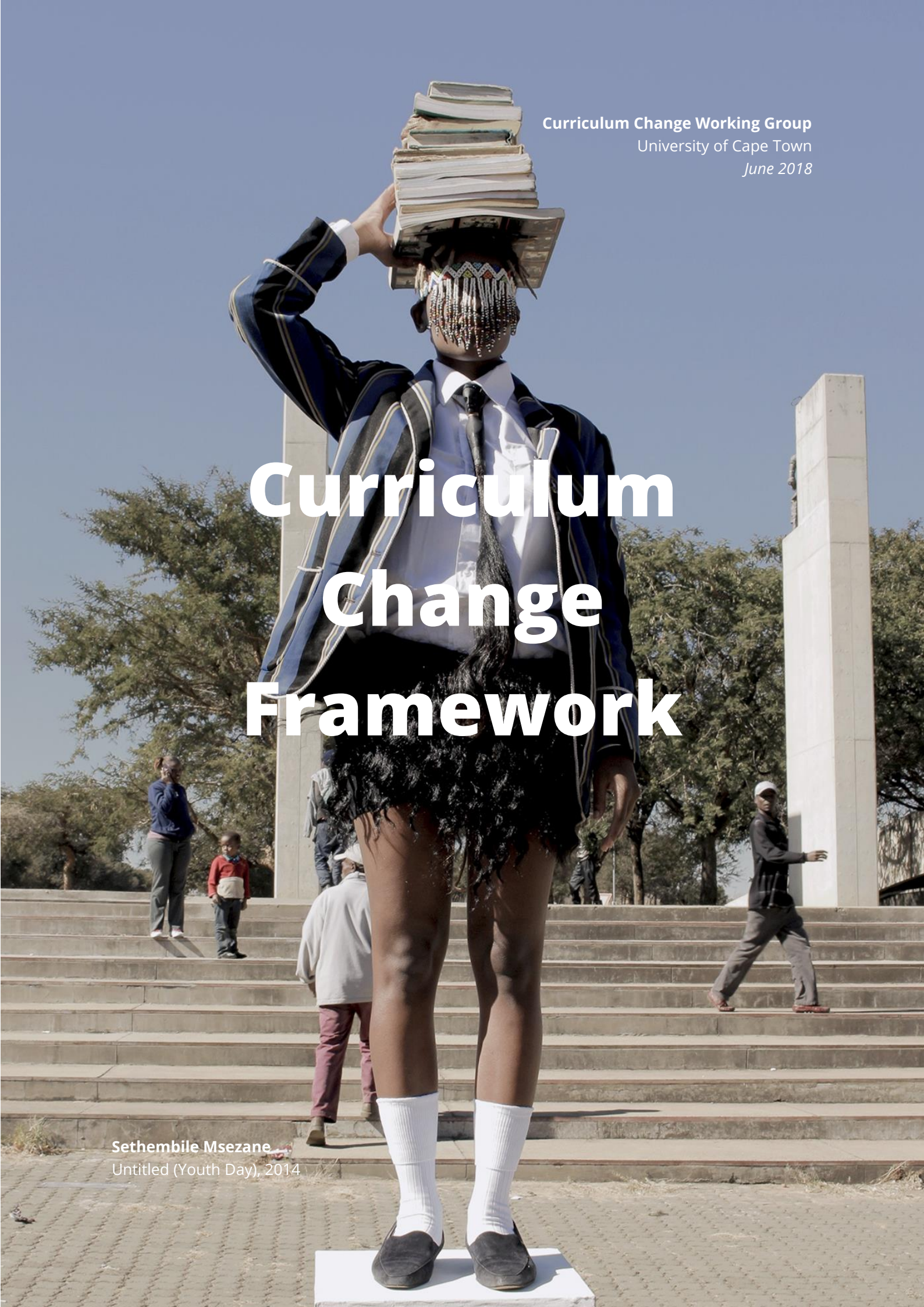


Curriculum Change Working Group  
University of Cape Town  
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# Curriculum Change Framework

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Untitled (Youth Day), 2014



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National and institutional student-led protests, under hashtag Rhodes Must Fall in 2015 and Fees Must Fall in 2015 and 2016, prompted the University of Cape Town (UCT) Vice Chancellor to set up task teams to respond to critical issues raised by students. The Curriculum Change Working Group (CCWG) was established in 2016 as one of those task teams, to facilitate campus-wide engagements on curricula in ways previously not explored. Three principles were key in establishing the CCWG, in order to safeguard the legitimacy of its work. Firstly, the group needed to be black-led, inclusive and broadly representative, comprising academics and students traditionally excluded from formal institutional structures and processes of curriculum oversight. Secondly, institutional support through the Office of the Vice Chancellor was required, as it was expected that the work of the CCWG would be seen by some in the university as a direct challenge to the authority ordinarily vested in formal institutional structures. Thirdly, the work of the CCWG was to be seen as intimately intertwined with student mobilisation around curricula issues. Student and staff movements and groupings at UCT had noted the slow pace of transformation in the institution, and had exposed the narrow approach often adopted in curricula, particularly towards scholarship on and in Africa. This approach was seen as perpetuating dominant cultural assumptions, and privileging particular epistemologies from the global North while reinforcing existing unequal and racialized relations of power.

The role of the CCWG was to facilitate dialogue across the university over a period of 18 months (March 2016 to September 2017), in order to shape strategies for meaningful curriculum change. CCWG engagements included discussions and debates on decolonisation; the role of the public university; pedagogical and assessment practices which are experienced as exclusionary; flexible learning pathways to ensure student success and retention; understandings of curriculum and its relationship to institutional culture; and the use of the wide range of linguistic, cultural and experiential resources which students and staff bring to the classroom. The outcome of the process has led to a Curriculum Change Framework developed by the CCWG, which highlights key pathways to meaningful curriculum change. This Curriculum Change Framework is fundamental to forging a new identity for UCT, which must regard Africa and her people as not only legitimate knowers and producers of knowledge, but also central to the academic project.

The Curriculum Change Framework is presented in two parts. The first part provides background, and sets the context for how the CCWG came about, who constituted it and why, its terms of reference, how it approached its work and what is hoped the framework would achieve. The second part provides the substantive elements of the framework. It contextualises student protest and curriculum change in terms of historicity, paying attention to both global and local socio-political factors. It also provides a conceptual basis for curriculum change work, an account of how the CCWG

went about engaging the UCT community, and concludes with an analysis of the ontological structures of power and knowledge production within curriculum practices across the university. Data sets for analysis emerged primarily from reading/study circles and three key sites of engagement on campus: the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Fine Arts and Drama Departments as well as the South African College of Music, where an extensive amount of time was spent by CCWG members during 2016 and 2017. The CCWG was specifically invited by students to engage deeply with critical curriculum change questions at these three sites.

The last two sections of the framework provide a conclusion, and a set of recommendations which can be summarized as follows:

- Authentic engagement drives meaningful curriculum change. This takes time and involves ongoing conversations with different stake-holders.
- Meaningful curriculum change requires leadership that has a proven track-record in addressing inequities in the academy, and that is sensitive to what it means and feels like to be marginalised.
- In order not to discard what works and to avoid pushing the institution into implosion, it is important to blend formal structures with new emergent structures.
- When the intent is to decolonize the mind, texts from the epistemologically disenfranchised that otherwise would be excluded, should become core-reading material.
- Knowledge production must always be regarded as potentially violent towards marginalized communities. This must be mitigated by individuals and groups from marginalized communities increasingly becoming drivers of research, as members of the academy. Institutional racism, ableism, sexism and heteronormativity need to be addressed with honesty and courage.
- Knowledge must be understood as both situational and relational, with questions rather than method, driving knowledge production. Transdisciplinarity must be encouraged.
- A pedagogy of being and doing should be embraced, so that pedagogic relationships are imbued with a consciousness that is inclusive, socially just and constructive.
- Assessment should be re-conceptualised as social practice in order to surface challenges that accompany it. Practices that encourage assessment *for* learning should be encouraged.
- Colonial lies embedded in disciplines, must be exposed and disrupted
- Students must continue to play a critical role in informing meaningful curriculum change

We hope that the framework will serve as invitation for academic and research units at UCT to reflect on their own understanding of curriculum change, as well as on past, current and future practices of curriculum review, innovation and broader change

within the academy. This framework should not be viewed as a bureaucratic tool for narrow and cosmetic curriculum review, but a result of deep scholarly activism on curriculum change that necessitates an honest appraisal of past and current practices in ways that confront injustice, and open up possibilities for resonance with students and their communities.

## BACKGROUND

### The Need for Curriculum Change at UCT

Curriculum in South African higher education (HE) has historically been an arena of struggle characterised by contestations about content, purpose, graduate identity, employment pathways, modes of delivery, and so on. During the student protests of 2015 and 2016, the university curriculum came under the spotlight when students severely criticised the academy's continued and uncritical use of traditional epistemologies, theories, methodologies and ideologies which reproduced the status quo in ways that are socially unjust, exclusionary and limiting. The call to decolonise the curriculum through research and teaching programmes became ardent and urgent while the need to advance knowledge of national and global problems through alternative methodologies and practices was pronounced.

When new frames for understanding transformation that include but also go beyond demographic change were flagged by students, and with the national landscape shifting in ways that defied a traditional approach to curriculum reform and review, the university was hard-pressed to respond in new and more authentic ways. The Curriculum Review Task Team (CURTT) which had been established in 2013 prior to the protests and whose scope was broadly framed around issues to do with the breadth and flexibility of the curriculum decided to disband. This was partly due to the Flexible Curriculum Proposal for a minimum four-year degree being rejected at national level. The CURTT had also considered a range of models based on a mapping exercise of existing initiatives on undergraduate breadth and interdisciplinarity both at UCT and other institutions, which was conducted by the Institutional Planning Department (IPD). After this mapping exercise, the view was that the #Rhodes Must Fall and #Fees Must Fall campaigns had surfaced other questions about decolonising spaces, teaching practices, symbols, and the curriculum, which could not be ignored, and which CURTT felt they were unable to address.

It is common practice for university curricula to be subjected to review and revision in response to discipline and/or market place shifts, programme and departmental reviews and accreditation requirements. This process usually takes place at the level of the individual course or programme. But students' critique of university curricula during the 2015 and 2016 protests was informed by a decolonial orientation to curriculum inquiry and shaped by a rigorous questioning of knowledge and its relation to society. Questions such as the ones below prompted the urgency to develop new ideas to the benefit of society at large:

- What knowledge?
- Whose knowledge?

- What/ who gets privileged?
- Whose interests dominate?

These are not questions that conventional department/programme reviews foreground in their considerations. In short, a different set of questions was called for, while necessitating a different mechanism and a different orientation. The CCWG sought to meet this need.

## **The Curriculum Change Working Group**

The Curriculum Change Working Group (CCWG), commissioned by the Vice Chancellor, Dr Max Price, was established in January 2016. The initial team consisted of:

- A/Prof Harry Garuba and the then Dean, Prof Sakhela Buhlungu, from the Faculty of Humanities;
- Prof Elelwani Ramugondo, A/Prof Denver Hendricks and Prof Harsha Kathard from the Faculty of Health Sciences;
- Dr Kasturi Behari-Leak from the Centre for Higher Education Development;
- Rhodes Must Fall student activist, Brian Kamanzi;
- Goitisione Mokou, postgraduate education student in the Humanities Faculty;
- The Student Representative Council (SRC) president, Rorisang Moseli;
- The SRC Undergraduate Chair, Nabeel Allie;
- Amanda Barratt and Judy Favish from the IPD, in their professional capacity of planning for and supporting the development of curricula at UCT;
- The then Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) for Teaching and Learning, Prof Sandra Klopper.

The collective wisdom in the group stemmed primarily from individual member's previous experience in tackling challenges of inequality in their research and teaching programmes, and their successes in opening up spaces for those previously excluded from critical curriculum discussions at UCT.

Together with academic and student volunteers, the CCWG engaged with faculties, departments, students and other constituencies within the institution to initiate deep curriculum conversations in relation to the challenges of transformation, as well as opportunities and debates that the call for decolonisation brought to the university. The CCWG expanded its core team membership in 2017 to include participation by postgraduate student members in the Social Sciences and Higher Education Studies and the DVC for Transformation and Student Affairs (Prof Loretta Ferris) as well as DVC for



Research and Internationalisation (Prof Mamokgethi Phakeng). At the time, Prof Sandra Klopper had left the DVC Teaching and Learning portfolio, and was replaced by Prof Daya Reddy, in an acting capacity.

## Terms of Reference

The [CCWG's Terms of Reference](#) (ToR) encompassed five key deliverables.

1. Document, archive and keep records of the process
2. Identify curriculum innovations and interventions already taking place in various parts of the university
3. Develop an enabling and responsive environment to facilitate organic curriculum change
4. Continuously identify, document and where possible disseminate information surrounding critical issues emerging from the curriculum change dialogue process
5. Conclude the formal process with a proposed framework to guide curriculum transformation

The CCWG met the deliverables in its ToR in the following ways:

- Identified and engaged with some curriculum innovations and interventions already taking place in various parts of the university.
- Worked at different levels with different sets of stakeholders to engage with the challenges of curriculum change.
- Coordinated key activities to promote and support curriculum change processes.
- Identified resources to support the process; disseminated information and reading resources across a vast number of collaborators via a Vula<sup>1</sup> site, aimed at supporting the growth of scholarly understanding on curriculum change work and the dialogical process.
- Promoted critical reflection on pedagogical and assessment practices perceived as exclusionary and stimulated debate around these issues.
- Used a generative and participatory methodology, in keeping with the ethos and culture of academic debate, to bring previously marginalised voices into the curriculum discussion space.

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<sup>1</sup> Vula is UCT's online collaboration and learning resource, accessible to students and staff.

- Encouraged discussion on ways of expanding opportunities for students to engage respectfully with communities beyond the university through community based education programmes, service or practice learning, or applied research projects.
- Developed an enabling and responsive environment to facilitate organic curriculum change across the university by working consistently and in a grounded way with key constituencies.
- Documented, archived and kept records of the process and disseminated information surrounding critical issues emerging from the curriculum change dialogue process on various platforms, including academic conferences both at UCT and beyond.
- Concluded the formal process with a proposed curriculum change framework presented in this document.

## **Engaging with the Curriculum Change Process**

The CCWG engaged extensively with various groupings, departments, constituencies and interested students and academics to identify, reflect on and discuss curriculum traditions, innovations and interventions already taking place in various parts of the university. To this end, the CCWG facilitated workshops, presented papers and seminars and engaged with scholars on curriculum change. Recognising that curriculum interventions and innovations were already taking place in various ways in some departments and faculties championed by individuals in some cases and officially sanctioned in others was a crucial first step in the CCWG's university-wide engagement.

The Institute for Creative Arts (ICA) at Hiddingh Campus has been an important and useful platform for sharing examples of decolonised curriculum interventions. The CCWG participated in the 3rd Space Colloquium hosted by ICA in 2016 and 2017 to exemplify, theorise, debate and critique curriculum innovations already taking place across UCT. Although these were largely in the Humanities, there were also innovations taking place beyond the creative and performing arts and the social sciences.

General interest in making innovations and interventions focussed on a decolonised curriculum were also evident in the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) proposals submitted in 2017 by a range of academics across different faculties. In keeping with the call by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) for submissions on decolonised education initiatives, these proposals indicate the propensity, enthusiasm and commitment of many academics, who have been key participants and contributors in CCWG workshops, to embark on curriculum change in a structured and formal way.

The CCWG has worked at different levels with different sets of stakeholders such as the Office of the Vice Chancellor, the Teaching and Learning Committee, the Dean's Committee, the Dean's Advisory Committee (Health Sciences and Humanities Faculties), the SRC, faculty as well as departmental and informal student groupings, in order to advance shared understandings on curriculum change and decolonising the academy. In addition, the CCWG developed an enabling and responsive environment for curriculum discussions across the university by working consistently and in a grounded way with the following key constituencies:

- Faculty Representatives
- Decolonial Scholars
- Study Circles

## **Faculty Representatives**

These representatives were nominated or (self) identified by their departments and faculties based on their strong interest in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment change and they included student representatives nominated through the SRC, faculty councils and other student groupings on campus.

## **Decolonial Scholars**

The CCWG hosted decolonial scholars such as Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Chandra Raju who visited UCT and engaged with various departments and students to deliberate on decoloniality as both discourse and praxis, and what this could mean in the UCT context. Further discussions with visiting scholars such as Gayatri Spivak, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Mahmood Mamdani provided opportunities for the CCWG to clarify its understanding of curriculum change in relation to what world renowned decolonial scholars have experienced in their own contexts. Four members of the CCWG attended the 2017 Decolonial Summer School at the University of South Africa (UNISA), and engaged with a range of well-known post-colonial and decolonial scholars including Pumla Gqola, Siphamandla Zondi, Tendai Sithole and Ramón Grosfoguel.

## **Study Circles**

Study circles were initiated by students in the core team and were informed by Paulo Freire's culture circles. This space enabled the development of a critical and collective (community) consciousness around issues of social and community transformation within a decolonial framework. These circles succeeded in creating critical awareness

around instances and practices of silencing, marginalising, oppressing, appropriating and violating the 'Other'. In short, they allowed discussion on issues often left unaddressed in traditional student-teacher relationships and pedagogic practices in the university. The study circles focussed on preparation for the CCWG Indaba Series which included 'The Role of the Public University in Africa', which was the first engagement and included speakers and audience members from the Western Cape regional universities.

The CCWG disseminated information and reading resources across a vast number of collaborators via a CCWG Vula site aimed at supporting the growth of intellectual understanding on curriculum change work and the dialogue process. Members of the CCWG who participated in the UNISA Decolonial Summer School in 2017 shared many sources of literature and critical discussions to shape contextual engagements at UCT. Members of the CCWG also engaged through various platforms such as conferences, research papers, discussion documents, keynote addresses and research seminars seeking to theorise decoloniality in our context and to generate knowledge from South Africa and the global South to enrich this field.

The CCWG core team used a generative and participatory dialogue methodology. This methodology was used alongside a set of key issues and drivers which guided the faculty representative workshops and deliberations around curriculum change. Participants were able to explore assumptions underpinning decisions about the construction of the curriculum, the purpose of the curriculum and the nature of changes in curricula and pedagogies needed to equip students to grapple with the challenges of post-1994 South Africa.

# THE FRAMEWORK

## Framework Vision

The outcome of engagements and discussions on curriculum change at UCT is the Curriculum Change Framework developed by the CCWG, recommending a detailed proposal for curriculum change as a fundamental contribution to building a new identity for UCT. The framework explores the CCWG's critical discussions with a wide range of groups, faculties, departments, units and individuals over 18 months, during the shutdown in 2016 as well as through continued work in 2017. The creation of the framework has been a collaborative endeavour. Using data from CCWG's engagements at various sites during the shutdown in 2016, continued work after the shutdown and in the course of 2017, the framework favours a grounded approach to research, curriculum development and pedagogical practices. Through the framework for curriculum change, the CCWG presents a critical analysis and a theoretical framework based on its participatory engagements in curriculum change across UCT.

The disciplinary traditions evident in the three sites selected for in-depth analysis (Faculty of Health Sciences, the Fine Arts and Drama Departments and the South African College of Music) provide a rich representation of the disciplinary spectrum across the university. These sites constitute the key data sets used in the analysis of and in the creation of the Curriculum Change Framework presented in this document.

During the campus shutdown as a result of student protests in 2016, the CCWG engaged deeply at the three critical sites, identifying and using generative and emergent cultural processes to offer a counter narrative to previously-held essentialist and reductionist positions of the curriculum, especially with regard to issues of identity and belonging and the ontological processes arising from these. Through the issues raised by students and academics at these sites, and through the facilitation provided by the CCWG, the possibilities of a re-imagined curriculum that offers opportunities to be socially just and inclusive became apparent.

It is envisaged that the UCT community will engage with the CCWG's Curriculum Change Framework not only to critique it but to gain a deeper perspective and understanding of contextual challenges and traditions at UCT that may have led us to this moment of change. Faculties need to find meaningful ways through critical reflection to implement changes, relative to their own desire to build an inclusive and socially just community that is well placed to excel and contribute to social justice, redress, equality, epistemological repositioning and innovation.

## Contextualising Protests and Curriculum Change at UCT (2015-2017)

### Historicizing Student-led Protests of 2015-2017

Student-led protests are not a new phenomenon in South Africa. The 1976 student uprising was a gruesome landmark in apartheid era protests. In the post-1994 era, protests against increases in fees at historically black South African universities have been a constant feature. The recent student-led protests in the South African Higher Education sector can therefore not be understood outside of the broader national and global political, economic and socio-historical context. That these protests were driven by a very strongly forged student-worker alliance is an expression of the underlying unequal matrices of power in our society, and structural histories of inequality that affect the poor and the working class, majority of whom are black.

In order to consider how broader national and global political, economic and socio-historical factors could have led to one of the most important student-worker struggles of our times – under the banners of #RhodesMustFall, #OutsourcingMustFall and #FeesMustFall – it is critical to pay attention to some key transitions that have affected universities worldwide, and over time. These transitions or temporal/conceptual frames have been well articulated by Maldonado-Torres (2016), drawing from his own previous works, as well as texts by Sylvia Wynter (1984)<sup>2</sup> and Walter Mignolo (2003)<sup>3</sup>.

While Maldonado-Torres's reading of the *longue durée* of student protests globally is informed by the Latin American context, there are many points of resonance with the African continent. Notable readings in this regard are texts by Saleem Badat (2016)<sup>4</sup> and Mahmood Mamdani (2017)<sup>5</sup>. For ease of reference, we shall name the four temporal frames proposed by Maldonado-Torres: (I) Absolutism and Austerity; (II) Colonization and Segregation; (III) *Divinitas* to *Humanitas*; and (IV) Battle for minds. Although these frames refer to time periods, they are not necessarily sequential in order. They also delineate conceptual frames for thinking through global processes of change in the university.

The first frame (Absolutism and Austerity) consists of a set of three absolutisms – technological rationality; efficiency and expertise; and austerity. Maldonado-Torres

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<sup>2</sup> Wynter, Sylvia (1984). The ceremony must be found: After humanism. *Boundary 2*, Vol. 12/13, Vol. 12, no. 3 - Vol. 13, no. 1, On Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism pp. 19-70

<sup>3</sup> Mignolo, Walter (2003). Globalization and the geopolitics of knowledge: The role of the humanities in the Corporate University. *Nepantla: Views from South*, Volume 4, Issue 1, 2003, pp. 97-119

<sup>4</sup> Badat, Saleem (2016). Deciphering the meanings, and explaining the South African Higher Education student protests of 2015-16. Retrieved from <https://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/documents/Saleem%20Badat%20-%20Deciphering%20the%20Meanings%2C%20and%20Explaining%20the%20South%20African%20Higher%20Education%20Student%20Protests.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Mamdani, Mahmood. (2017). Decolonizing the post-colonial university. T B Davies Memorial Lecture on Academic Freedom. University of Cape Town



argues that as the academy increasingly became vocation-led, technological rationality came to supersede everything else that could be of value, particularly about the humanities. This argument is supported by a sharp decline in student enrolments in the humanities, globally, during the 1970s to the early 1980s (Humanities Indicators, 2016).

Following the absolutism of technological rationality, were the principles of efficiency and expertise, which are strongly associated with the corporatized university. Corporatisation has become a driving force within the academy, and is a reflection of the global neo-liberal capitalist order. In South Africa, even as there have been very ambitious goals for transformation crafted in pursuit of social justice, economic development and democratic citizenship in the broader society post-1994, these goals have been off-set by policies, institutional governance mechanisms, actions and services which foregrounded growth, following the logic of the market economy (Badat, 2016).

It is not surprising therefore that universities have been framed within the narrow parameters of economic development (Berdahl, 2008), with their roles reduced to preparing students for the largely neo-liberal labour market (Badat, 2016), and their viability measured mostly in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as institutions that emerged during Neo-liberal American Imperialism, and that push developing countries to become more market oriented, play an important role in this. Outsourcing of non-core functions, such as what happened at the University of Cape Town under the leadership of former Vice Chancellor Mamphela Ramphele in the late 1990s, occurred within this mode of the neo-liberal and instrumentalist global imperative. Following the economic depression of 2008, corporatized universities globally responded with the absolutism of austerity. This was reverberated within the University of Cape Town in 2016 through staff cut-backs, and various cost-saving mechanisms in running the academic project.

The second frame proposed by Maldonado-Torres is colonization and segregation. The European colonial project has left behind a long-lasting legacy, with long-term devastating effects for colonized regions in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Mamdani (2017) concurs, noting that central to the European colonial project was the notion that everything in the West set the standard, while everything not-so-familiar (in the colonies) was regarded 'sometimes as not-quite-yet, [and] at other times as an outright deviation'. Black people in particular, were regarded as condemned by God to perpetual servitude, and in need of civilization (Nyamnjoh, 2016). This logic of segregation – the West versus the Rest – was broadly defined through what Edward Said (1978) refers to as 'Orientalism' in which the West (the Occident) exists ontologically because of the 'other', the 'Orient'. Using her naked body as an art installation, Berni Seale makes the experience of being placed under the colonial gaze of comparison and racial classification visually poignant. In *Not Quite White*, (Colour me series: 1998 – 2000 and *Returning the gaze*, 2000), Seale's naked body is covered in pea-flour; naturally slightly off-white in colour, and lies in a horizontal position as if ready for forensic examination, and framed by two measuring tapes from head to toe (Adendorff, 2005).

Maldonado-Torres also argues that where race served as a marker to dictate who can and can't have access to social goods during colonization, fees serve that purpose in the age of the corporate university, functioning as a way of sustaining or re-introducing historical patterns of segregation. In South Africa, the chronic underfunding of Higher Education has led to universities making up the short-fall through increasingly higher fees (Calitz & Fourie, 2016; Badat, 2016). Access and success in higher education unfortunately continues to correlate with race and social class, which in turn are often intricately linked. Where access to university for black students often depends on loans, and throughput rates are low, the result is massive historical debt. Central to the Fees Must Fall protests of 2015 and 2016 was a call for the de-commodification of higher education (Malabela, 2017; Ndelu, 2017). These protests revealed how the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), set up to provide financial support to indigent students attending public institutions of higher learning and training, was perhaps adequate for historically black universities such as the Universities of Limpopo (Turffloop) and Zululand (Malabela, 2017; Edwin 2017). These universities tend to have lower fees, but NSFAS is inadequate to cover exorbitant fees in historically white universities like the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand. In historically white universities, students whose households earn beyond the threshold to qualify for NSFAS but below R600 000 (The Missing Middle) were particularly vulnerable.

The third frame put forward by Maldonado-Torres is *Divinitas* to *Humanitas*, and it considers two sequential moments as suggested by the names. '*Divinitas*' marked a decisive divide within the academy between scholarships of the spirit (Theologies and religious studies) and those of the flesh. '*Humanitas*' signalled the departure of theologies and religious studies from the academy, or their spatial containment within established specialist academic departments. The discovery of the human, thus became a function of broader academic pursuits. This is the point at which, as Maldonado-Torres suggests, the distinction between 'who is human and who is not' emerges within the academy. This view is supported by Mamdani (2017), who notes that this distinction was borrowed from the European experience, partly informed by Renaissance intellectuals in response to Church orthodoxy, where the notion of human was forged as an alternative to that of the Christian, but also as a result of a self-Assertive Europe on its mission to expand as it conquered the New World, then Asia, and finally Africa, in its attempts to 'civilize' the expanded world in its own image. The academy, was thus founded in non-European worlds, including Africa, as a colonial civilizing mission.

The ejection of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes (its cartographic primacy at the University of Cape Town) - a catalyst to the #RhodesMustFall campaign - can be read as a response to the symbolic violence of the colonial 'civilizing mission' and its footprints on the UCT campus. In their earlier Facebook post explaining their occupation of the central administrative building (Bremner), the Rhodes Must Fall movement announced the following:

*“The statue has great symbolic power; it glorifies a mass-murderer who exploited black labour and stole land from indigenous people. Its presence erases black history and is an act of violence against black students, workers and staff – by ‘black’ we refer to all people of colour. The statue was therefore the natural starting point of this movement. Its removal will not mark the end but the beginning of the long overdue process of decolonising this university. (#RhodesMustFall mission statement, 2015)*

The fourth and last interpretative frame advanced by Maldonado-Torres is the ongoing battle for minds within the academy. By their very nature, universities ought to be celebrated as spaces for a vibrant contestation of ideas. The Westernised University (Grosfoguel, 2013) as inherited in much of the world, has unfortunately fostered an institutional culture where bodies of a particular kind (white, and generally male) are perceived as trustworthy, and are never to be challenged. Never before in South Africa, post-1994, has the rainbow nation narrative and the ‘born-free generation’ dictum with reference to those born after 1994, been more severely challenged than through the #RhodesMustFall campaign. It is in this vein that Tanja Bosch (2017) views this campaign as “a collective project of resistance against normative memory production” (p. 221).

## Historicizing Curriculum Change

Curriculum creation and enactment cannot be imagined as independent of a given socio-political structure and/or project. It is critical to consider not only the historicity of curriculum change within the academy and its relationship to socio-political projects throughout its history, but the very history and nature of the modern university in Africa. From a temporal perspective, we need to consider the University of Cape Town (UCT) as the bastion of the first Western University in this region and examine its relationship to the socio-political principles and objectives of the colonial project.

It has been the case in this country and elsewhere that different curricula, both in terms of their social and political projects, share similarities in the manner in which the inherent expressive and moral order - the regulative discourse which acts to construct and imagine the ideal learner or knower, or better yet, the ideal social subject i.e. learner-subject - is made manifest (Bernstein, 1996; Mokou, 2015). It is from this understanding of the curriculum as a construct, embedded in social processes, shaping the ideal social subject, that the current project (and by implication, this framework) seeks to consider ways in which the socio-political context and its inherent moral codes, act to determine the regulative discourse for content and pedagogy. Pedagogic reproduction manifests in features in the given curriculum and reflects the socio-political objectives and context of that given society. Ultimately, an enacted curriculum reflects the critical relationship between education and identity formation of the ideal learner-subject (Mokou, 2015). The purpose of curriculum interrogation, which was partly the goal of the CCWG’s engagements across UCT, was to explore or ascertain the

extent to which curriculum reproduction ensures a re-inscription of the social order to the exclusion of 'Othered' people and perpetuates their inability to actualise a life that encompasses justice, equality and inclusion.

Historically, in South Africa, from apartheid to neo-liberal rainbow-nationalism, curricula within higher education have always been embedded in the socio-political context of the society. If curricula cannot be removed from the socio-political concerns of the contexts within which they are realised, and if curricula are geared towards the realization of an ideal subject-citizen, then any curriculum change process must consider the question of unintended consequences for those who are powerless to self-determine and self-actualise in their own interests. Given the racial injustices historically inherent in the education dispensation for different races in South Africa, we need to question the consequences for black bodies and minds, entering schools and the academy. More specifically, we need to ask: what are the implications for knowledge and how knowledge making is perceived? What is the relationship between these black bodies, that are at once welcome and then unwelcome, and the knowledge making practices and discourses they encounter within this liberal education system? Moreover, what are the implications for these bodies and their potential for self-realisation as full human beings and citizens within the higher education sector in the 'post-apartheid' era?

It is with respect to the 'what' and the 'how' of educational knowledge production and enactment that this framework considers how curricula shape and regulate what can be done and who can do it. The regulative discourse, understood as the dominant social values, social relations and inherent social structures within a given social context which regulate forms of social practice, provides the internal logic for UCT's dominant epistemic and pedagogic discourse and traditions. This understanding of social construction within the academy speaks to subject-making and points towards a 'sociology of knowledge perspective' (von Krogh & Roos, 1996) wherein social relations are mediated by knowledge-power relations. Ultimately, the notion of the ideal learner speaks to the manner in which knowledge-power relations regulate what is considered legitimate knowledge and validate the reproduction of the ideal social subject.

## **Adopting a Decolonial Lens in Curriculum Change**

The *longue durée* of student protests and the history of curriculum change at UCT and in education in general, as described thus far, necessitates a decolonial lens through which to effect meaningful curriculum change. But before we offer particular understandings of decolonization and decoloniality that we have sought to adopt as the CCWG at UCT, it is important to point out the serious limitations that come with terminology. Terminology can be easily co-opted, misused or watered-down. There are plenty of examples in South Africa where this has happened, for instance with

'Transformation' and 'Ubuntu'. Notions of decoloniality and decolonisation are not immune to these problems. In the first of his ten theses on coloniality and decoloniality, Maldonado-Torres writes that "colonialism, decolonization and related concepts generate anxiety and fear" (p.8). He further notes that when these terms are mentioned and questions about their meaning are raised globally, they trigger 'typical bad faith responses' that aim to relativize and undermine the value of the questions as well as to delegitimize the role of the colonized as a questioner.

Universities as spaces for learning ought to allow for questioning, without any bounds. While some are simply disrupted by questions that unsettle the 'status quo', others immediately look for simple recipes, to decolonise this or that, which obviously does not work. A useful approach, we think, is one that reflects on what terminology and questions allow, and on how we relate to these, as individuals and collectives. Just reflecting honestly on this may be a very good starting point. Questions such as these can be useful beginnings: what does this term allow me to see? What does it allow me to do? How does it relate to me? How does it relate to what I do? And how does it help me to think about my work, and the bigger social or political project?

As the CCWG, we further believe that any person can hold a view on matters of decoloniality and decolonisation, and can advance an argument from their own vantage point. Academics in every discipline or profession in particular, have a responsibility to share with society whatever interpretation they make of these concepts. However, in doing so, it is necessary that the interlocutor disclose what their vantage point is. An undisclosed vantage point suggests that knowledge has no context; an argument which is often untenable.

The decolonial lens adopted by UCT's CCWG in its approach to curriculum change should be regarded as generative theoretical work, informed by many vantage points – partly embodied in the membership of the CCWG itself - in constant conversation with past and present interlocutors, between the local context and the global South, and located within and outside the academy. Our location within a university in Africa for instance, points us to Mamdani's (2017) reflections on the post-colonial African university. This, he argues, was inspired in both institutional form and intellectual content by the Enlightenment period in Europe. In its contemporary form, it has little to do with great examples of institutions of learning such as Timbuktu, Cairo, Tunis and Alexandria, which existed before European conquest. The African university, Mamdani further argues, began as a colonial project, and was a frontline of the colonial 'civilizing mission'. Brian Kamanzi, however, argues that the decolonial project would be incomplete, if efforts to address coloniality were only limited to the academy.<sup>6</sup>

While some African scholars on decolonisation have focussed mainly on colonisation as a historical phenomenon that was countered by liberation struggles across the

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<sup>6</sup> Kamanzi's argument is inspired by the Pan-Africanist logic of Kwameh Nkrumah and the ideas of collective self-reliance advanced by Steve Biko and broader Black Consciousness Thought

continent, offerings from Latin-America have emphasized coloniality as a notion that reveals a pervasive western-led mode of civilization and modernity, that continued beyond colonisation, and sustains racism as an organizing principle that structures all of the multiple hierarchies of the world system (Grosfoguel, 2011). In this vein, Sandew Hira, a Surinamese Economist and Historian, regards decolonial thinking of the current era, the third narrative of liberation, an alternative to Liberalism and Marxism (Hira, forthcoming), which both fail to account for collective historical oppression and systemic racism, alongside classism.

We have found the Latin-American perspective on coloniality and its reverse, decoloniality to be helpful, informed by scholars such as Wynter, Grosfoguel, Maldonado-Torres, Mignolo and Lewis Gordon. These scholars have unpacked these terms in relation to three concepts; Power, Knowledge and Being. This is work that Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni has also picked up locally. On the **coloniality of power**, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) suggests that it helps that we investigate how the current 'global political terrain' was constructed and constituted into an asymmetrical, modern power structure, resulting in unequal relations of power between the Euro-American world regarded as the 'Zone of Being' and the non-Euro-American world experienced as the 'Zone of Non-Being'. Coloniality of power as dominance over the 'racialized, gendered and despised other' asserts itself in various ways, through the aesthetics of being, expression and doing, within and outside the academy in ways that mirror power relations between the 'Zone of Being' and the 'Zone of Non-Being'.

On the **coloniality of being** – the central question to be asked is: what is it that gives a human being his, her or their ontological density? It is a question that resonates with what Lwazi Lushaba (2017) suggests decolonisation is - a reclaiming of our integrity of being. Coloniality of being, which essentially means dehumanisation or the disintegration of being, rests on René Descarte's '*Cogito ergo sum*' (I think, therefore, I am), which is in fact built on 'I conquered, therefore, I am' or 'I possess, therefore I am', if one recognises the genocide, epistemicide and pillaging of resources that accompanied the western colonial project (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Nyamnjoh, 2016) and the dominant narrative of 'discovery' in the non-Euro-American world.

Whiteness, a social construct which has less to do with skin pigmentation, but more to do with historical and intergenerational privilege and positionality, affords those historically placed opportunities that come with un-interrogated power, and the unquestioned culture of control and authority (Nyamnjoh, 2016) which arise from the colonial project. In this vein, Ndlovu-Gatsheni regards the decoloniality of being to be central in investigating how African humanity, for instance, was placed under question as part of the 'civilising mission', and in identifying processes that contributed towards the 'objectification'/ 'thingification'/ 'commodification' of Africans and by implication, their ways of being. The **coloniality of knowledge** is also rooted upon Descarte's motto '*Cogito ergo sum*', which projects the only legitimate thinker as white, heterosexual, able-bodied and male. Coloniality of knowledge is perpetuated through both the



Westernized University (Grosfoguel, 2013) and the post-colonial African university (Mamdani, 2017) through what is valued as knowledge, who gets privileged as a thinker and what interests dominate.

Decoloniality of knowledge troubles these patriarchal and heteronormative, racist and ableist assumptions about knowledge and the legitimate thinker, and challenges Euro-American authority on what counts as knowledge. The decoloniality of knowledge should be understood as a critical means of resisting the objectification of Africa and her peoples. It serves to counter the often false narrative about Africa, crystalized by Lesego Rampolokeng's observation that "Beyond the song and dance and the sound of gunfire, the African continent is inarticulate". So instead of Africa and her people being seen only as objects of study, they become key drivers of the decolonial knowledge project, as they reclaim agency as co-creators of global knowledges. Descartes' motto 'I think therefore I am' is now turned on its head to, recast as 'I am, therefore I think'. Experience and positionality in the real world thus renders all of us knowers, from different vantage points, armed with the ability to reject lies from anywhere, peddled as truth to deny some people, their humanity. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, the work to be done here must focus "on teasing out epistemological issues, politics of knowledge generation as well as questions of who generates which knowledge, and for what purpose" (p. 11).

To the three forms of coloniality and decoloniality as advanced by our Latin-American colleagues, the UCT CCWG has added a fourth - the coloniality of doing. Coloniality of doing finds expression through mimicry, where the colonial subject responds to the civilizing mission by emulating the oppressor, even when this means denying the self ontological density. Homi Bhabha's chapter "Of Mimicry and Man: the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" in his book *The Location of Culture*, comes close to what CCWG is trying to articulate here. More specifically local contribution on theorising about human occupation, the central domain of practice for occupational therapy as a profession, and an object of study in occupational science as a discipline, becomes useful here. This theorising centres on occupational consciousness, a concept which is grounded on liberation philosophy, particularly works by Steve Biko<sup>7</sup>, Frantz Fanon<sup>8</sup> and Enrique Dussel<sup>9</sup>, and is defined as the ongoing awareness of the dynamics of hegemony, and recognition that dominant practices are sustained through what people do every day, with implications for personal and collective health (Ramugondo, 2015). Occupational consciousness highlights the need to adopt transgressive acts in what is done every day, in order to disrupt the cycle of oppression (Ibid). The concept recognizes the current reality of western modernity as a result of the legacy of coloniality, seen through the way that the oppressed mimics the oppressor, in order to be recognized. This mimicry

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<sup>7</sup> Biko, S. (1978). *I write what I like: A selection of his writings*. London: The Bowerdean Press.

<sup>8</sup> Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth* (R. Philcox Trans.). New York, NY: Grove Press.

(Original work published 1961) & Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, white masks* (R. Philcox Trans.). New York, NY: Grove Press. (Original work published 1952)

<sup>9</sup> Dussel, E. (2011). From critical theory to the philosophy of liberation: Some themes for dialogue. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1(2), 16–43.

of the oppressor, also happens within the academy. Occupational consciousness or consciousness in doing, and Freire's 'pedagogy of the oppressed', bear strong links as conceptual frames through which to challenge the coloniality of doing, in as far as this is expressed in the Westernized University, and the contemporary classroom as a seemingly progressive educational project.

Decoloniality as a broad concept, also allows for an honest take on racism. Grosfoguel (2016), borrowing from Fanon and Gordon, describes this as a form of structural dispossession and domination, such that within the Zone of Being, hyper humanization creates life even when it is mediocre, while within the Zone of non-Being there can only be premature death. In other words, where whiteness often mitigates oppression in the Zone of Being, blackness aggravates all forms of oppression in the Zone of Non-Being.

Decoloniality as a term is also useful, where it exposes disciplinary decadence within the academy, particularly within the Westernized universities that we have inherited in South Africa, and in many parts of the world. Reflecting on disciplinary decadence, Gordon writes the following:

"This is the phenomenon of turning away from living thought, which engages reality and recognises its own limitations, to a deontologised or absolute conception of disciplinary life. The discipline becomes, in solipsistic fashion, the world. And in that world, the main concern is the proper administering of its rules, regulations, or, as Fanon argued, (self-devouring) methods. Becoming 'right' is simply a matter of applying, as fetish, the method correctly." (p. 86)

Absurdity in the academy is allowed and perpetuated through this disciplinary decadence, posing as academic or even scholarly rigour. This is not to suggest that methodology, and methods, do not have a place in the academy. However for these to overshadow the inquirer and the vantage point from which the marginalized seek to theorize their own reality, is only to re-inscribe the colonial tropes of power, being, knowledge and doing.

In line with the cautionary note regarding terminology at the beginning of this section, we find it necessary to identify myths about decoloniality, which we believe are created in order to sow confusion, and to undermine the decolonial project. These are:

- Decolonisation is in vogue or fashionable
- Curriculum decolonisation is separate from research or practice
- Decolonisation happens through abstraction alone, and only in academic spaces
- Decolonisation has an end-point
- Decolonisation means doing away with white people or everything Europe or America ever genuinely produced

In our work as the CCWG across the university, and sometimes with other external stakeholders, like the Western Cape branch of the South African Association of Health Sciences Educators, we sought to first dispel these myths about decolonisation, before meaningful engagement could follow. We found that this was always very well received by participants.

## **A Theory of Change: Towards a Decolonised Curriculum**

Any social change process needs to be guided by an understanding of how change occurs but especially so when the process is decolonial in nature, located in an academic university and driven from the bottom up by students who see the goal of change as leading to social inclusion and justice. Linked to the theoretical and conceptual frames explored in the previous sections, the CCWG needed to conceptualise a theory of change, linked to decoloniality, which would enable an understanding of the possibilities and challenges of the broader academic and social processes of change across UCT, as well as at specific sites. While some of the intellectual resources and theorists we draw on in this change process are not decolonial per se, we have generated concepts and practices to guide our work by looking at what these theorists have to offer our decolonial thinking and practice.

A theory of change is a rigorous yet participatory frame where groups and stakeholders in a planning process articulate their goals and identify the conditions they believe have to unfold for those goals to be met (Taplin & Clark, 2012). These conditions form the causal framework of change, describing the types of interventions (a single program or coordinated initiative) to bring about the desired goal. A theory of change also enables one to elucidate the following:

- identify a problem or a need that a project seeks to address,
- describe the existing situation with respect to the issue,
- highlight what the desired situation is,
- describe the steps that will be taken to get to the desired situation and
- critically reflect on what is surfaced and what has been achieved.

The literature shows that a decolonial theory of change is more than a methodology for planning and participation; it is a form of critical theory that ensures a transparent distribution of power and is inclusive of many perspectives and participants in achieving new insights and solutions. Each intervention is tied to a phase in the causal framework, revealing the complexities involved to keep the processes transparent so that everyone knows what is happening and why. It explains the process of change by outlining causal linkages and forms of interventions in an initiative to show the relationship between different aspects of the project.

The concept of the third space (Bhabha, 1990) was useful when the CCWG began thinking about curriculum change as part of a decolonial process. Bhabha's third space theory explores the cultural processes involved when migrants move from a 1st place (a traditional starting point) to a 2nd place (an idealised, imagined, perceived or real destination). Between 1st and 2nd place, there is a liminal, hybrid or in-between space known as the 'third space' where new ideas emerge, anything is possible and where new social and cultural practices are born. But third spaces involve a rupture or disruption of the norm in order to carve out possibilities that transcend the limitations and exclusionary practices of that which went before. Drawing on Bhabha (1990), the theory of change that guided our work over 18 months, as well as in the analysis of the data for this framework, is as follows:

The traditional curriculum represents the 1<sup>st</sup> place. In the student protests of 2015, the traditional curriculum with its dominant colonial epistemic logic was interrupted and interrogated for its power to alienate, marginalise and exclude people and black bodies in particular. In the South African context, traditional ways of reviewing or reforming curricula placed a heavy focus on content, programmes, levels, years of study, selection and sequencing, as well as graduate attributes. The student protests were the first rupture with this tradition and focused on competing perspectives of knowledge and how different knowledges are valued. Curricula have strong links with social practices by underscoring what is valued and legitimated as credible knowledge by society. It is not surprising that in the student protests of 2015 and 2016, the traditional curriculum came into the spotlight, with an explicit focus on knowledge and how knowledge serves to include and exclude. Questions that were raised by students and became the focus of the CCWG engagements across UCT were: What knowledge? Whose knowledge? What gets privileged? Whose interests dominate?

In the 2nd place, through students' critique of the curriculum and the university's cultural practices, there was an idealised, imagined and perceived destination for a re-imagined curriculum that is inclusive and socially just. Students spoke about many scenarios in the future that held the promise of a better dispensation for all.

Through the issues raised by students, we saw glimpses of a *third space* of emergent curriculum development that encompasses the possibilities for UCT to envision and imagine a curriculum that can be relevant, responsive and reflexive. During the actual shutdown on campus as part of student protests in 2016, the CCWG started engaging at sites such as FKA (Formerly Known As) Hiddingh and the Faculty of Health Sciences where we identified many generative and emergent cultural processes, enunciated in *third spaces* across UCT. In these hybrid spaces, essentialist and reductionist positions of the curriculum were surfaced to interrogate the coloniality of power, being, knowledge and doing (discussed above) as they manifested in disciplinary curricula.

In the *third space* of curriculum change at UCT over 18 months, we identified a liminal or hybrid curriculum space at UCT where new ideas started to emerge and where new social and cultural practices were being born. As explicated earlier, *third spaces* involve a

rupture or disruption of the norm in order to carve out possibilities that transcend the limitations and exclusionary practices of that which went before. So with the *third space* forming the undergirding framing for curriculum change at UCT, and leaning on decolonial literature, we identified five phases involved in a decolonising or change process within the academy. We were interested to see how these phases unfolded at UCT, given its particular structural and cultural context. While each phase appeared to be distinct, we found that in some contexts at UCT, curriculum change stages and phases are iterative, overlapping in many cases and often embedded in each other, depending on the site and the agents involved. The five stages in our theory of change are depicted in Figure 1.

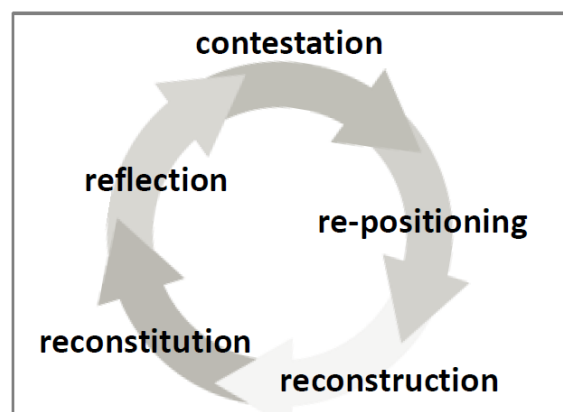


Figure 1: Theory of Change: generative and emergent (Adapted from Bhabha, 1994 & Shahjahan, 2011)

### Phase 1: The Contestation Phase

In the contestation phase, the canon in all its shapes and forms is contested. This involves acting in recognition, response and resistance to the dominant colonial epistemic logic. What is important is interrogating what stands outside the canon and what this does to the knowledge project. Many departments and units at UCT still find themselves in the contestation stage, where varying forms of contestation over dominance and power unfold. In this phase, the curriculum is scrutinized for its role and power to marginalize the voiceless and the least powerful. If and how these contestations are resolved, what gets privileged and whose interests dominate, is at the heart of the CCWG work in this framework document.

Drawing on Mignolo's (2000) 'de-linking' as a performative gesture in decoloniality, the contestation phase is a place of 'doing' - a place of contesting the traditional content which was delivered from a deficit perspective and which highlighted social and economic disadvantage. It also focuses on the 'how' of curriculum - the pedagogy, the way in which curriculum is enacted. Contestation becomes a mode of articulation in a

productive space that 'interrupts, interrogates and enunciates' (Bhabha, 1994), blurring the limitations of existing boundaries. This is when marginalised people take a central place inside the naturalised dynamics of existing power relations in universities and engage in research and teaching through their own epistemologies. The knowledge they bring to the centre also brings into sharper focus what has remained unacknowledged and taken-for-granted when the only way the world was seen, is through colonial eyes.

As we worked across many sites at the university, we noticed that contestation manifested in different ways. For example, contestation was seen as *disruption* when the academic project was disrupted in 2015 and 2016 to reveal sharp contrasts through deep questions around whether the knowledge we produce is relevant to the societies in which we live; whether it serves those who are most marginalised in society or whether it serves to further marginalise and oppress. In disrupting the norm, students severely contested the transformation discourse of 1994 for its additive nature where superficial changes such as changing demographics failed to eradicate structural and systemic oppression.

At some sites, contestation occurred as *resistance*, where the traditional culture was resisted by students and some academics to expose the cultural assumptions and binary thought underlying the colonial narrative in certain faculties, departments, units and centres. Through resistance, contestation provided an alternative reading of traditional authority through key concepts and discourses by focusing on the following:

- Colonizing paradigms and how they teach about the Other
- Legitimation of knowledge and power
- Colonial violence that determine who remains visible and who, silent
- The ethics of representation

For many people, contestation as resistance indicated a deep-seated fear of loss of the traditional ways of being and knowing. When traditions are resisted, those fearful of the loss are not convinced that the alternative is any good or that it will serve their needs.

Contestation also provided opportunities for people to *be curious* and to wrap their heads around the concept of decolonisation. At the risk of exercising 'cognitive imperialism' (Battiste, Bell & Findlay 2002, p. 83), these academics started learning about decolonising the curriculum as a mainly cognitive and academic inquiry to test different versions of definitions and to access pathways to decolonisation. This did not always mean that they invested their labour in or moved past their curiosity to real action. The danger here is that decolonisation becomes fetishised as another exotic academic term to master and conquer.

At some sites, contestation provided the impetus for *real change* because there was a recognition that we are all intimately implicated in the narratives we produce as both the privileged and the oppressed within the colonialist framework - a mutual



interdependence between Self and Other. Here there was an affirmation of human connection to foster change in material and discursive structures to produce an alternative discourse. Some of these positions manifested in the curriculum development proposals to the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) with an explicit focus on decolonising the curriculum. There was also a university-wide call for proposals on decoloniality research on questions of particular relevance to Africa.

Overall, we have seen that contestation has been *generative*, leading to an expansion of the cultural register/ discourse/ lexicon of change. Nearly every conference in 2017 has the word decolonisation in its title or theme. The vocabulary to talk about decolonisation has been extended, marking a distinct shift in the discourse from transformation to decolonisation. This opens up immense possibilities for new narratives, stories and auto-biographies to be heard and for a new collective agency to be foregrounded. Knowledge of people located on the margins of society such as young people, women, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, disabled people, the economically and politically disenfranchised, and those who have suffered displacement and other forms of oppression, are now increasingly part of the new discourse.

## **Phase 2: The Re-Positioning Phase**

This phase is an important development from contestation. Here agents actively re-position themselves, their ideological standpoints and knowledge from notions of 'disadvantage' or 'equity' towards genuinely embedding marginalised knowledge at the core of the curriculum. This involves encouraging students to revisit their social and cultural identities and histories to illuminate previously invisible understandings, to un-learn what they know, and then re-position themselves in relation to their knowledge of history. It requires recognizing the memories of the past, and changing the discourse to offer a narrative of meaning, not for the past, but for the present and the future. It is an alternative discourse to set up a new set of relationships within which people make sense of their experiences and the material structures prescribed by traditional narratives.

Re-positioning reflects a morphogenesis (Archer, 2003) in culture based on collective agency of students and staff in particular sites. Where we have witnessed a re-positioning, agents have or are starting to re-contextualise their practices such as assessment practices/ deferred exams to show a greater understanding of the need to be more inclusive and socially just. Here again the new UCDG grant proposals indicate that this re-positioning is starting to happen. We have also seen instances of re-positioning where intentions have been explicitly stated to decolonise the curriculum (such as in the Faculty of Health Sciences) and where curricula have merged to incorporate a new embodied way of working with knowledge and pedagogy (such as

Drama and Dance Schools); and where new courses have been introduced reflecting a different positioning to the old (such as in the Humanities).

### **Phase 3. The Reconstruction Phase**

This stage in the cycle of change implies a level of transformation which can only occur when the “subject distance[s] itself from its own socially constructed discourse ... and giv[es] up those old patterns [through] a dis-identification and a withdrawal from ideas which we have a great deal of investment in” (Harris, 2003, p. 672). Reconstruction usually occurs through a ‘cultural interface’ which Martin Nakata (2002) defines as the place of tension, negotiation, rejection, resistance, ambivalence, accommodation, and agency. In this space, marginalised knowledge is in constant negotiation, competes for validity and the right to be located in educational systems. Teaching and learning within the cultural interface becomes the basis of the reconstruction process i.e. how to do things differently with different purposes and objectives in mind. In this phase, the social position of the knower and knowledge generated through intense struggle becomes foregrounded to ascertain what valuable knowledge to society is and what is worthy to be taught. According to Nakata (2002), reconstruction involves multi-dimensional, multi-directional processes of learning outside of the colonizing framework. It involves encouraging students to revisit their social and cultural identities and histories, in order to illuminate previously invisible understandings. The justified ‘un-learning’ of particular ways of reading and interpreting this knowledge is crucial to a successful reconstruction of the curriculum, which in turn, creates ongoing dialogue that continues outside of the initial interface (ibid).

### **Phase 4. The Reconstitution Phase**

In the reconstitution phase, there is a danger that unchallenged normative assumptions can be passed onto the next generation of students, reproducing the status quo. One way to conceptualise the reconstitution of higher education through curriculum change is to consider the notion of a relational ontology and epistemology. It is through ontology that we develop an awareness and sense of self, of belonging and for coming to know our responsibilities and ways to relate to self and others (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). A relational (e)piSTEMology, which is supported by a relational ontology, helps us focus our attention on our interrelatedness, and our interdependence with each other and our greater surroundings (Thayer-Bacon, 2005). When curricula are reconstituted, different components are recognised and respected for their place in the overall system. Whilst they are differentiated, these relations are not oppositional, nor binary, but are inclusive and accepting of diversity. These relations serve to define and unite,

not to oppose or alienate where people make sense of their experiences and the material structures prescribed by these narratives (Ibid.).

## **Phase 5. The Reflective Phase**

This phase of the change methodology draws attention to the need for critical reflection and evaluation of processes that have worked well and those that need further tweaking. Three main foci guide this phase namely reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action and reflection-for-action (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). These critical points support the process of remaining committed to the objectives identified as key but also accommodates the unexpected, in terms of what is generated by the process itself that was not anticipated. Such is the nature of working in a participatory process that is not predetermined. The reflective phase, although placed at the end of the cycle of the big project, is an integral part of each of the phases, as reflection is an ongoing, iterative and a continuous process of looking at what has worked and what can be learnt. Consciousness in doing or the decoloniality of doing, as articulated in the previous section of the framework, becomes an important aspect of this iterative and continuous process of curriculum change, in order to avoid a re-inscription of colonial epistemic logics.

## **Engaging the University Community**

In each of the phases, the Critical Realist (CR) (Bhaskar, 1982; 1994) concept of emergence guided our methodological and analytical work. Emergence refers to something new that comes about as a result of the interaction of two or more things. Elder-Vass (2004) adopts a compositional definition of 'emergence' where higher-level entities always emerge from collections of lower-level entities but the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Roy Bhaskar himself defines emergence as "the relationship between two terms such that one diachronically, or perhaps synchronically, arises out of the other, but is capable of re-acting back on the first and is in any event causally and taxonomically irreducible to it, as society is to nature or mind to matter" (Bhaskar 1994, p. 73). As Margaret Archer avers, "emergent properties are relational: they are not contained in the elements themselves, but could not exist apart from them" (Archer 1982, p. 475). She goes further, saying that "Emergence is about interdependence: just as water remains constituted by the hydrogen and oxygen atoms from which it emerges, it has properties different from its constitutive elements" (Archer 2000, p.314).

Archer (2000) argues that the emergence of human properties and powers is what makes us social beings and contributes to the relational characteristics of being human to the way the world is, how the world is constituted, and the necessity of mutual

interaction. In our work at two key sites at UCT, we used CR (Bhaskar, 1982; 1994; 1998) as a methodological frame to guide our methods in creating conditions to open up possibilities for new things to emerge, but also to inform our analysis as we drilled down to different levels of reality to identify underlying structures and mechanisms that caused or influenced curriculum, pedagogy and assessment to emerge in particular ways at UCT.

## Faculty Representative Workshops

The process of institution-wide engagement started through a set of initial dialogues with faculty representatives, nominated or (self) identified by their departments and faculties to be part of the engagement process. The core team identified a set of key issues and drivers to guide the workshops and deliberations around curriculum change. In addition, a set of questions to guide critical engagement around assumptions underpinning decisions about the construction of the curriculum, and the nature of changes in the curriculum and pedagogy needed to equip students to grapple with the challenges of 'post-apartheid' South Africa, were developed for each workshop. The core team also worked with interested students and staff to grapple with the appetite for the desired changes, in their respective spaces of learning and influence. The questions we asked and continue to ask ourselves were:

- What have been moments or instances of a decolonial nature in my discipline/profession/department/research unit?
- What historicity explains my discipline/profession/department/ research unit?
- What may explain the demographics we currently have in my discipline/profession/department/ research unit?
- What may be the factors determining the kinds of audiences/patients/clients/service users with access to my discipline/profession?
- Who is regarded to be at the center of the academic project?
- Whose data is driving the academic agenda, to serve what interests?
- Who can legitimately claim data ownership, and in what ways do the mechanisms in place re-inscribe colonial tropes?
- What gives a scholar and scholarship legitimacy?
- In performing (doing) the academy, whose ways of being and whose knowledge is legitimized, while others are made obsolete?

## The Knowledge Café

Using a participatory and generative methodology, the core team engaged with faculty representatives to unpack and grapple with tensions regarding how curriculum is embodied and enacted in different faculties at UCT. Here disciplinary influences shaped much of the discussions and many representatives used these sessions to raise concerns about how different disciplines and their epistemic logics and methodological traditions are uncritical of their power to alienate and marginalise students who do not fit into the traditional mould. Coloniality of power, being, knowledge and doing was brought to the surface during these discussions.

The Knowledge Cafe<sup>10</sup> provides access through dialogue for people with common concerns, passions, and interests to come together to engage in deep dialogue, and take action. This methodology is a means of bringing a group of people together to have an open, creative conversation on a topic of mutual interest to share ideas and to gain a deeper collective understanding of the subject and the issues involved. Dialogue and Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 2006) were key features of this participatory method to enable people to focus on not just what they talk about (the content) but how they talk (the process). Using dialogue in a facilitated, structured circle and on a meaningful topic, question or shared experience, requires mutually agreed upon guidelines such as respect, deep listening, open mindedness, suspension of judgments and honesty. The process recognizes the equal value of all participants; it provides safety to question our own assumptions and those of others; it supports exploration of new insights; and it allows for uninterrupted speaking and reflective silence. Critical dialogue is also an invitation to share what is meaningful, discover new insights, deepen understanding of ourselves and one another, express our higher nature of love and compassion, stimulate creative thinking, activate the imagination, evoke collective wisdom, build community, and inspire cooperative social action.

A Knowledge Café is not merely a 'talking-shop' but a space shaped by a set of principles to ensure that participants leave enriched by a deeper level of understanding of the subject in question. These principles include exploring questions that matter, encouraging everyone's contribution, connecting diverse perspectives, listening together for patterns and insights, and sharing collective discoveries for example. The CCWG provided a 'safe-enough' space for differing views and perspectives to be shared.

## Study Circles

The study circles within the context of curriculum change sit within a varied range of curriculum change work activities that are intended to facilitate dialogue and generate

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://theworldcafe.com>; <http://www.conversationcafe.org>

knowledge around the relationship between curriculum change and decoloniality. The study circles are informed by Paulo Freire's culture circles and the adaptation of this methodology in worker and trade union education. Study circles are intended to allow for the dialogic generation of transformative knowledge, and the development of a collective (community) consciousness around issues of social/community transformation, within a decolonial framework. This methodology in its first instance, speaks to decolonial ways of doing knowledge which place knowledge, power and being at the centre of its praxis, consciously. Decoloniality of doing, in this way, shifts decolonisation from just being about discourse, but also performing the academy with reflexivity, to avoid the re-inscription of unequal power relations across people. Study circles, as methodology, can allow for a flat (non-hierarchical) mode of knowledge-making that values the inputs and inherent experiences of previously marginalised voices, towards deepening our understanding of issues relating to curriculum (and its inherent hegemonic discourses and practices) and how it is experienced. Our experience has shown that this methodology can foster dialogic understanding and generation of knowledge that is not only transformative but further allows for participants to begin to imagine themselves as part of developing a collective (community) consciousness that instils agency at both individual and collective levels.

Study circles were set up as a method for the CCWG to engage curriculum change involving the extended university community. An open invitation, via Vula, was extended to anyone who was interested. With fellow readers as community, we sought to familiarise ourselves with literature and debates on various aspects of contestation pertaining to curricula in general and more specifically on curriculum decolonisation and decoloniality. The areas of contestation we looked at were: assessment; what is the purpose of the public African university; travelling disciplines; time, place and making of a curriculum; and doing science.

### **Students: Reflecting on change**

The academic project of 'the university' has not traditionally considered students as co-creators of knowledge, but simply as recipients of already existing knowledges. But what happens when students within 'the university' go against this model of learning that simply universalises and normalises one way of knowing or worldview over others? Having engaged with a number of student representatives from different faculties such as Law, Health Sciences, Engineering and the Humanities, all students to some degree expressed a level of discontent or complete opposition towards the current structure of the university. Key concerns raised were with regards to the following:

- Architectural structure and experience of the academy - e.g. the distance of the satellite campuses from the main campus, the Humanities and Sciences as

separate faculties. Some students felt alienated in the classroom as the content taught did not speak to their lived realities or experiences

- The 'whiteness' of UCT - alluding to the lack of black academic lectures, and the lack of engagement with African languages on campus.

A major challenge encountered in the course of our engagements was in arranging engagements with student representatives from faculties and departments. Common obstacles included securing 'permission from the top' and competing demands for academic work. The CCWG however used any opportunity available to engage in informal sites of engagement seeking to interrogate the academic project in relation to the question of decolonisation and what that meant for students. Thando Mcunu, a student volunteer who did her undergraduate studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, and came to UCT as a master's student in Anthropology, played a key role in maximising on the opportunity for CCWG to learn from these spaces. It was in these spaces, outside of the formal curriculum, that students were meaningfully engaged in some of the relevant concerns and questions around what decolonising is. One talk CCWG members attended, controversially entitled "Do black people possess the imagination to decolonise?" took place on May 31st 2017 at UCT's upper campus. One of the speakers was decolonial scholar, Dr Lwazi Lushaba from the Political Science Department. The talk attempted to address some of the ontological and metaphysical challenges of black identities and black subjectivities imagining themselves outside of a western paradigm. Dr Lushaba suggested that blacks needed to de-familiarise themselves with what they have been accustomed to see as time or reality. He suggested that blacks needed spaces to be able to articulate a model for a decolonial society both at the level of philosophical contemplation and social praxis, and argued that as long as the black person is thought of as the other or of a foreign worldview, they remain trapped in the social praxis that colonialism and the subsequent apartheid government put in place.

Another compelling conversation that CCWG members attended took place on 20th August 2017 and was hosted by Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education. The theme of the talk was '*Constitutionalism and decolonising legal studies*' with students from the legal field giving their perspectives. Challenges raised centred on countless contradictions within the South African Constitution. Concerns students raised included: How they are not taught the history about where law as we understand it comes from, i.e. a European construction, derived from Dutch Roman Law (From 1600s) and how this has come to be imposed as universal; how legal engagements and sensibilities essentially derive from Dutch customary law; the need for a law and a constitution that is from an African sensibility and philosophy of Ubuntu; questions around gender and intersectionalities and violence against queer and trans people; how students are not taught to be critical of the Constitution; 'Human Rights'- how there is little interrogation about how humanity and rights intersect; inherited 'Missionary Universities'- where one is trained, decomposed then recomposed; the problem with how colonialism is read as linear;



past, present and future - while marginalized blacks still feel colonised; how Law Schools teach students to be in the corporate world as 'Elitist lawyers' and to function in most vicious spaces and destructive entities to the environment and to social relations; the illusion of 'Legal disenchantment' which robs one of work for justice and revolutionary thought; law and the Constitution as subverting tools to prevent people from freeing themselves of oppressive structures; black students in a constant state of warfare and internalised struggles, engaging in protest to express outrage against oppressive university structures, that are otherwise legitimised; how protesting against the unethical commodification of knowledge and outrageous fees of the university, the high levels of financial and academic exclusions and the demand for decolonised curricula are not isolated events.

## **Engaging the Sites**

### **Faculty of Health Sciences**

The Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) is a premier training site for health professionals in the country, ranking in the top 60 health science faculties in the world (depending on the ranking system), attracting close to 50% of the total research funding generated by UCT, and also contributing close to 50% of the research output generated by the university. This view of the FHS rests uneasily alongside the observation that the Rhodes Must Fall movement of early 2015 and the associated protest action found significant support in the FHS, both among students and staff members. The disjuncture between excellence in terms of global rankings and research productivity and revenue, and appetite for protest calling for an inclusive and socially just academy, brings into sharp focus the key questions the CCWG framed as central to its university-wide engagements (What knowledge? Whose knowledge? What/ who gets privileged? Whose interests dominate?). The Faculty assembly held in 2015 highlighted feelings of alienation, disempowerment, and the reality of training and working in a space that seemingly valued many of the trappings associated with our colonial past, with little recognition or acknowledgement of the full diversity within this university and the country.

During the 2016 student-led Fees Must Fall protests, the FHS undergraduate students drafted a list of 34 demands, and postgraduate students submitted 26 demands (although these were submitted at a later date during the protest action). These demands spanned a wide spectrum of issues including: healthcare provision for students, transport problems, safety concerns, the right to protest, complaints of victimisation, dissatisfaction with teaching approaches and assessments methods, and the high cost of tuition. There was an arrangement between the Dean's Office and students that the demands would be addressed within a certain timeframe, and because students were unhappy with progress made with addressing the demands, a



significant number of students occupied the Dean’s Suite under the #Occupy FHS banner. It was at this point that the CCWG made contact with the students who were occupying the Dean’s Suite – with a view of listening to the students and to engage with their concerns. During this period, CCWG members engaging with the student demands at the FHS site, articulated that the observations and experiences that students complained about, often reflected deeper underlying structures, values, beliefs and attitudes embedded in our educational framework (Behari-Leak, Ramugondo & Kathard, 2016). The Critical Realist (CR) analytical framework (Bhaskar, 1998), given its powerful analogy of the iceberg, was useful in supporting the CCWG’s approach towards understanding the students’ demands (See figure 2). Many of the submerged structures, values, beliefs and attitudes embedded in the curriculum reflect remnants of a colonial heritage, suggesting the imperative to engage with the concept of decolonising the curriculum.

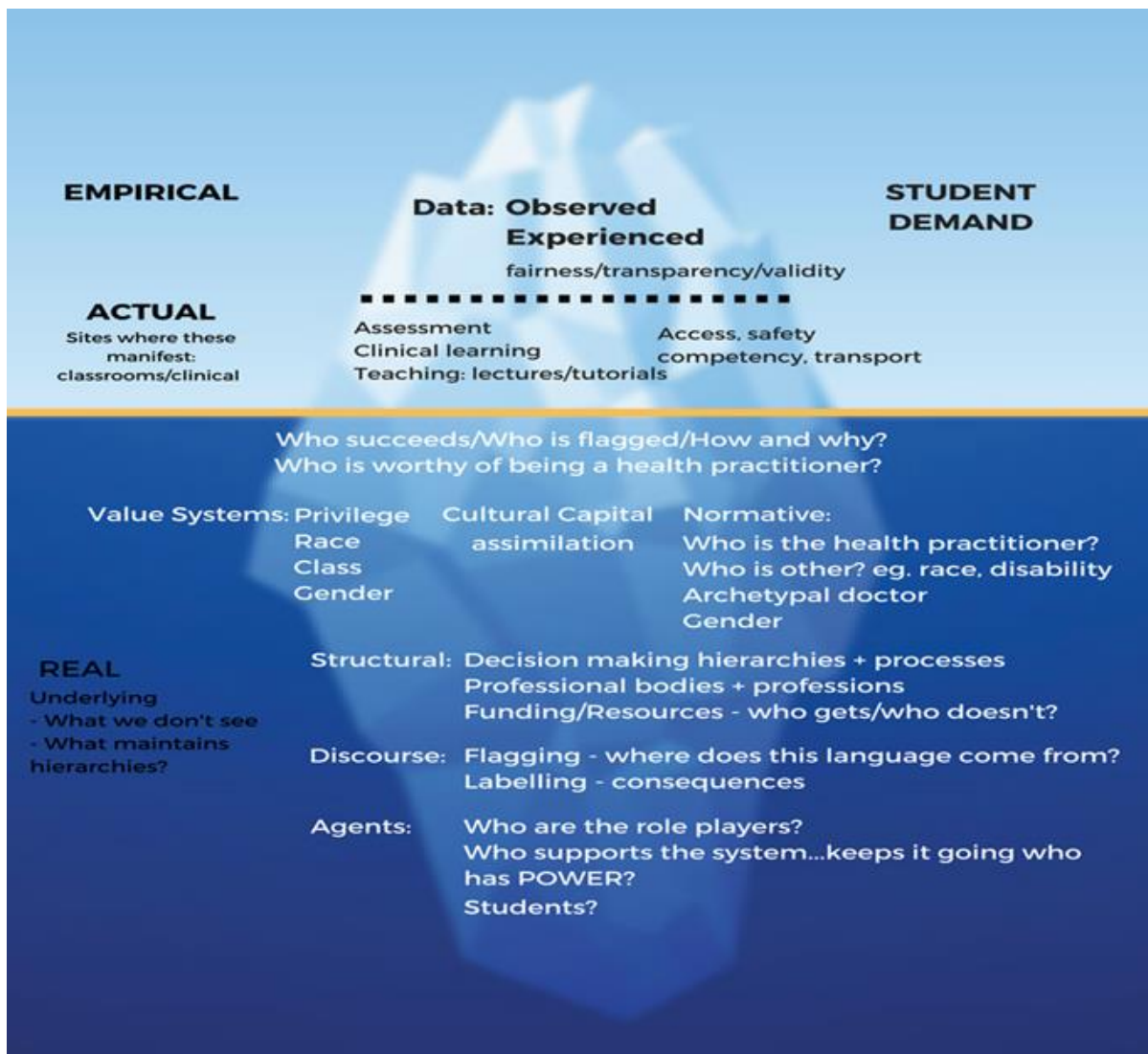


Figure 2: An iceberg analogy for the Bhaskar’s CR framework adapted from Fletcher, 2017

The ensuing discussions allowed the framing of important questions like: Why is the standard of success in the Bachelors of Medicine and Surgery (MBChB) programme often measured as the ability to function in the best medical institutions in the USA (or the UK)? Are students, as measured against this 'standard', able to function equally effectively at a rural clinic in South Africa? Why is there an apparent privileging of students from the MBChB programme, and students from the Health and Rehabilitation Sciences often feel like second rate citizens in the faculty, despite talk that managing patients ideally involves multi-disciplinary teams? Why is English privileged, and why are the indigenous languages not valued, especially considering that approximately 70% of the population access health care in the public sector, and that most of these patients are not mother-tongue English speakers?

CCWG members engaged members of OccupyFHS, the Dean and the Deputy Deans in the faculty. In October 2016, the Dean team acknowledged the importance of considering the student demands in the context of the underlying colonial ontological and epistemic logics that undergird its curricula, and agreed that the FHS should engage with decolonising the curriculum. This was endorsed by the Dean's Advisory Committee (DAC), and subsequently by the Faculty Board. Following this, the CCWG was approached to assist the Dean team in establishing the FHS-CCWG team. While engaging in this process, members of the broader UCT CCWG team who are based in HSF stressed the importance of the three principles that helped to safeguard the legitimacy of its work; that the team is black-led, with members that have had a good track record of striving for inclusive and socially just curricula; institutional support; and that the team's work should be seen as intimately intertwined with student mobilisation around curriculum issues. The FHS-CCWG team was constituted towards the end of 2017, and has since started doing its work.

Recounting the main features of the events that unfolded during the period of protest action in this detached manner (above), obscures the often extremely antagonistic and conflictual nature of the interactions between students (those who wanted to protest, and those who wanted to continue with classes), students and staff (those students who wanted to protest and those staff members who wanted to continue giving classes), between staff (those who supported the protest action, and those who did not), senior management (Deans) and staff (who felt unsupported). The engagements discussed above, transpired against this highly conflictual background, with many parties sustaining relational damage in the process. Because of the widespread fear of victimisation, students specifically requested that no notes be taken in some discussion spaces. This was prompted by concerns raised by some students that certain lecturers had commented on statements made by specific students in open assembly meetings. Despite these difficulties, a rich repository of information was gathered during engagements with staff and students, and based on these, a number of key themes emerged, listed below in no specific order:

1. Wellness

2. Safety
3. Victimisation
4. High cost of learning
5. Language
6. Representation
7. Pedagogy
8. Assessment
9. What knowledge, whose knowledge and why that knowledge
10. Transparency
11. Accountability

## FKA Hiddingh

The CCWG was approached by students in the #Umhlangano Collective at Hiddingh campus to facilitate a workshop between staff and students in October 2016. At this time, the university, including this campus were in shutdown. Prior to this, staff and students had reached an impasse on a range of issues including personal, professional, pedagogical and political ways of being and knowing in this space. The CCWG was approached to mediate between staff and students and to unpack areas of tension and struggle. The CCWG agreed to facilitate workshops but clarified from the outset that mediation between specific staff and students would fall out of its remit, mandate and terms of reference. At this point, Qondiswa James, a final year student in Theatre and Performance, joined the CCWG team as a student volunteer based at FKA Hiddingh. She played a critical role as an interlocutor about what decolonised curricula in the Arts might look like. Qondiswa is also a member of the CCWG faculty representative structure who was arrested in 2017 while staging a naked protest.

The list of student demands presented by the #Umhlangano Collective during 2016 not only reflected the key discourses embedded in the student movements at the time but highlighted students' concerns on how knowledge, being, power and doing intersect on this campus. These intersections seemed to position students and staff on different sides of the decolonisation spectrum, as one student's reflective narrative illuminates:

*"I arrived at the Drama Department on Hiddingh Campus in 2012 and even then, the divides were clearly marked. Between the staff and the students; between the black students and the white students; between the wealthy students and the poor students"* (Drama student, 2016).

Through discussions and debates emanating from CCWG's first engagement at Hiddingh and given that campus was in shutdown mode, it was clear that this site was in the *contestation phase*, with students placing significant emphasis on the curriculum and its power to dominate and marginalize the voiceless and the powerless. The contestation phase at Hiddingh was marked by intense 'disruption', which involved

disrupting how Arts students 'come to know' and how the marginalised artist or performer relates to colonial paradigms in the Arts. In highlighting specific issues of contestation, such as the intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical demands on students and staff alike, students brought attention to contested concepts, discourses and questions in the Hiddingh context and at UCT. These questions include the following:

- What do curricula in Drama and Fine Arts do?
- How do they teach about the Other?
- Whose knowledge and power are legitimated and by whom?
- Who is visible?
- Who is silent?
- What are the ethics of representation?
- How are students and staff both implicated in the narratives that are re-produced about the privileged and the oppressed within the colonialist framework of Drama and Fine Arts?

In conceptualising ways to engage at Hiddingh, the CCWG chose to use the demands listed by the #Umhlangano Collective as an entry point, as was done at FHS. This decision and vantage point meant that we had to engage with a contextual historicity and temporality across a range of issues that had already made the existing relationships on the campus quite complex and which had led to the shutdown in the first place. Given the politics of space and identity at this site, we decided to use a Knowledge Café methodology (see Engaging the University Community section) which is generative, focuses on issues and not necessarily people and personalities and is designed to bring marginal voices into the fold. Many lecturers had been identified and named in the list of student demands but as CCWG we chose to focus on the underlying structures and cultural register that influenced why people acted in the ways they did. It was important for us to keep our eye on the bigger project, without over-simplifying or making invisible the actions and agents responsible. We needed to maintain our focus on understanding the tensions and contestation as evidence of something much deeper at play in the colonial project without reducing interactions to a 'he-said-she-said' deliberation, which would be counter-productive to the spirit in which we chose to work. Keen to drill down to the level of underlying issues across the two professional and disciplinary groups, namely, theatre and fine arts, we found that the CR analytical framework (Bhaskar, 1998), was appropriate to the task of engaging students and staff more substantively and deeply on the demands listed. As part of the knowledge café activity, we focussed on hierarchies of power at FKA Hiddingh which revealed that the different departments enjoyed differently perceived power and value on the campus, as well as a range of discourses arising from implicit biases that had been historically instantiated.

During the CCWG engagement at FKA Hiddingh, the big group (of about a 90 people) was broken up into smaller groups of 10 each, made up of both staff and students. Each

group had to work with specific sections of the demands, which we had asked members of #Umhlangano to truncate and rank in order of priority. Plotted against an image of an ice-berg, associated with a CR ontological position, we asked groups to locate their demands at the top of the 'iceberg' which is at the level of what is observed and experienced, known as the *empirical level*. To illustrate with an example here, one group identified racism as belonging to the top level of the iceberg and how racism manifests in observations and experiences across different spaces at FKA Hiddingh and at UCT. At the second level of reality, called the *actual*, students and staff identified the events in which racism occurred or through which racism was organised, such as through production practices from casting through to professional practice in Drama and artistic installations and exhibitions in Fine Arts. At the level of the Real, which is the invisible and unseen level, underlying structuring mechanisms which account for practices at the level of the Empirical and Actual, were engaged with to make them visible, through an interrogation of the mechanisms that mask embedded values, beliefs and attitudes. The facilitators then led groups to drill down to the underlying mechanisms that gave rise to students' observations and experiences in the first place.

What the groups surfaced was that the underlying mechanisms influencing the racialized experiences of students of colour are linked to and relate to class and gender norms and implicit biases that continue unchecked in this space and which are propped up by hierarchical and traditional structures already established and which have become naturalised as the norm. These structures are in turn driven by societal norms regarding professional practice in the Arts which are reinforced by uncritical practices and beliefs about success. Here the historical prejudices that reproduce privilege and marginalisation in ways that continue to maintain institutional power and institutional rules, located in a colonial history and remembrances, were surfaced. In similar ways, groups worked with five other demands namely, accessibility, funding, wellness, academic work and power dynamics.

In terms of accessibility, students highlighted the need for physical, epistemological, social and cultural access on their campus. To support and promote a culture of understanding and working with difference, such as 'ableism', meaningful interventions such lifts, ramps, signage and more information and material on disabilities was needed. Materials and resources also needed to be made accessible and disseminated within the departments without too many unnecessary bureaucratic procedures. In terms of student wellness, students felt that a central residence, preferably in town was an imperative for students on FKA Hiddingh campus who are involved in studio and rehearsals times which often extend into late hours of the evening. Attached to this, the issue of safety also needed to be considered. If students could not attend or sign up for these practical aspects of their learning, based on access to transport, accommodation and other needs, they would be excluded on the basis of historical economic disadvantage. In this context, this meant that mainly black students had to either sacrifice a lot or compromise the range of their learning experience based on exclusion. Students felt that a well-balanced student life included assurances that safe conditions

for learning would be provided, such as accessible accommodation. This would ensure good quality of life and mental and emotional wellbeing, so that they could compete almost equally with their privileged peers when opting to audition for roles or when they had to work on their art and that they could function well in their lectures the next day. To make well-being a meaningful and supported practice at FKA Hiddingh, students suggested that spiritual healers and psychological experts needed to be on FKA Hiddingh to help students deal with the pressure of student life in a highly competitive and complex learning context.

In terms of funding, it was highlighted that undergraduate funding is inadequate and a more transparent procedure of needs-based funding opposed to only merit-based funding needed to be considered. Students felt that they could not continue to go through dehumanizing processes such as 'performing' their poverty. Over and above funding for tuition, resources and materials needed to be made available. Also, provisions needed to be made for students whose contracts stipulated that they cannot work outside of UCT. Such contracts needed to be reviewed.

With regard to academic work, students called for transparency in assessment where the power dynamics surfaced by students were implicated in the gender dynamics of marking and awarding of works. Students highlighted that a curriculum based on Eurocentric ideals of the performing and visual and fine arts needed to be revisited. Linked to this, students felt that while white academics had expertise in specific areas, they could not claim authority on blackness, black pain, African ideology, course material and productions, or as overseers of curriculum. It was also felt that academics should not prioritise their personal work or that of their peers when selecting productions. Lecturers were also influential in supporting some students in determining a successful career outside UCT and favouritism was flagged as a further factor in building careers for select students.

During 2017, students at FKA Hiddingh were able to use their personal, professional and political power and collective agency to move themselves from a place of contestation into a place of repositioning. The Wednesday Forum was established as a collegial space during curriculum time for continued engagement between students and staff on general and curriculum related issues on campus. The space is understood as a committed response by FKA Hiddingh staff to attend to and respond to student demands of 2016. More than it being a response by staff, the Wednesday Forum is to be read as a site of securing meaningful gains from protests by the general student movement on campus and the #Umhlangano Collective, allowing for continued debate and discussions that are student-led.

The dominant debates at Wednesday Forum have centred on curriculum change and have in fact sought to mirror CCWG discussion topics. The question around 'What is the Purpose of the Public University in Africa?' has allowed students to engage further questions around who teaches, who is taught and what is taught. Many of the key points from these discussions have gone on to shape or reiterate the way the CCWG

and in particular its research team conceives of curriculum change; from a preoccupation with contents (theory) toward a desire to *Do* consciously and differently, in ways that aim to disrupt hegemonic practices (praxis) towards a socially just and inclusive campus and university.

In addition to the Wednesday Forum, departmental support on the part of the Institute for Creative Arts (ICA) has allowed the #Umhlangano Collective to continue its work around student mobilisation and engagement. One such engagement was the Naming and Re-Naming Symposium which sought to consider the question of space and names within the broader conception of curriculum. The Wednesday Forum together with the Naming and Re-Naming Symposium served as sites of Doing (praxis) that speak to a desire to Reposition themselves, in the constitution of bodies and sites that allow for student voices to be heard and their desires to be implemented. Furthermore, it should be noted that these sites are comprised of not only marginalised students but of bodies across the campus seeking to speak and act in solidarity.

That said, while students have gone to great lengths to hold the Wednesday Forum and other subsequent activities supported by staff, collaboration between students and staff is of some concern. Despite these student-driven and populated spaces holding student engagements and activities on curriculum and curriculum change, staff have continued to see their work as being separate to students. This raises further questions about knowledge, being, power and doing in the decolonial moment at FKA Hiddingh. In other words, what does this mean for how power (personal, professional and political) is differentially realised by staff and student positionality toward meaningful repositioning strategies? What does repositioning mean when students and staff are not working together?

While a closer analysis of student activities would suggest that students were able to use their personal, professional and political agency to move themselves from a place of contestation toward a desire to reposition, meaningful repositioning cannot be fully realised without meaningful, truthful collaboration. Added to this, there is also the need to consider ways in which meaningful contestation can be held in all stages of the change methodology. For instance, one would want to suggest that moments of disruption (contestation on race) at the Naming and Re-Naming symposium should not be allowed to serve as cause for derailment but to inform the discourses of intent and desire to reposition. This process is both emergent and iterative. This observation applies not only to student activities but staff activities as well, where one surmises that the reason why little collaboration exists in 'legitimate' curriculum change processes by staff, is the fear of contestation. This could be a severe stumbling block to the gains made at this site. Re-positioning and contestation in this instant should be seen and experienced as parallel processes, both necessary to undo the legacy of internalised oppression and privilege experienced across the racial and class divide. This interplay is critical for working in authentic ways towards realising change, whether in curriculum or otherwise. How such a parallel process is supported so that it is responsible and

accountable for all agents involved, is critical to the movement towards a re-imagined dispensation at FKA Hiddingh, UCT and the country as a whole.

## The South African College of Music

CCWG was first approached in October 2016 by a member of staff from the South African College of Music (SACM), who had attended our faculty representative workshops. He requested us to assist in engaging SACM staff and students with respect to decolonising the curriculum there. The CCWG was able to respond to this request at the start of the 2017 academic year. Our first meeting with the SACM was attended by both staff and students representatives from the Music Students Council. This meeting sought to introduce the CCWG and to also get a sense of the discourse at the SACM with respect to curriculum and the decolonial project. While some ready themes emerged, we thought it best to call a second meeting with broader representation from the SACM, and would include key stakeholders and decision makers, which would allow us to chart a way forward. This second meeting was well attended. The outcome of this meeting was that the CCWG would facilitate an open dialogue session which would serve to introduce the notion of decoloniality to the SACM community. The objective here was to allow both staff and students access to the decolonial discourse, which could surface key issues of contestation. Curiosity as part of contestation around curriculum and decolonisation at SACM was an important observation for the CCWG.

Contestation at SACM so far had led to strained relations between staff and students. This was heightened during campus shutdown in 2016, which saw the founding of Inkqubela, a group of mostly black students who raised critical issues about curricula, how non-teaching staff were treated, and the need for decolonisation at the college. To get their voices heard, Inkqubela occupied C Sharp Cottage, which was formerly a stable but currently houses African Music, for almost three months. Given strained relationships, the first four open dialogues on decoloniality were held with staff and students in separate spaces. We held two open dialogues with each group. The workshops were generally well received, allowing for robust engagement, without personalising issues. It proved helpful to start the open dialogues by dispelling myths about decolonisation as described under the earlier section, 'Adopting a Decolonial Lens in Curriculum Change'. We then invited participants and allowed ourselves as CCWG facilitators, to recall the lies we'd been told when growing up, what those lies made us believe about ourselves and also some of the ways in which we might have resisted those lies. This introductory section of our session sought to frame decoloniality as resistance to colonial practices (traditions) evidenced in our professions/disciplines and the lies which these practices (traditions) perpetuate when they go unquestioned and un-resisted.



We then presented our working definitions on decoloniality as presented under the section, 'Adopting a Decolonial Lens in Curriculum Change'. This was followed by presenting four questions which served to frame our main discussion: What have been moments or instances of a decolonial nature in my discipline/profession? What historicity explains my discipline/profession? What may explain the demographics we currently have in my discipline/profession? What may be the factors determining the kinds of the audience with access to my discipline/profession? To facilitate discussion, we followed the Knowledge Café model, allowing for participants to generate points towards desired change at the SACM, or further questions towards possible re-positioning.

Students generated further questions:

- What decolonial lessons can be taken from informal training?
- Can one train in South African music given that South African music is produced in informal sites?
- What does it mean to teach South African music in the formal curriculum context?
- Is decoloniality compatible with the western academy?
- How does pedagogy allow for spiritual expression as music practice?
- Does a shift in demographics (e.g. Opera, where increasingly more black students are signing up) account for a decolonial turn?
- Why do we study music?
- What is it that we hope to do with our music?

Through this dialogue, issues of decoloniality in relation to curriculum brought to the surface sites of resistance and possibilities for re-positioning. Key areas of contestation for staff could be summed up as follows:

- The peripheral positioning and othering of African music as opposed to Classical music and Jazz
- The privileging of Classical Music
- Funding models of the concert programme and other programmes which privilege Classical music
- The offering of more progressive contents as electives and how this may signal to students what is valued
- The desire to move away from the European model of the music school as a Conservatoire

This spaces for open dialogue at SACM proved generative, and led to a joint dialogue space with staff and students, a month later. Like FHS, participants at SACM planned to establish their own CCWG team.

A significant way in which power, knowledge, doing and being become manifest at the SACM is through the symbolism of the conservatoire, which was pervasive throughout our engagements. The SACM came into existence in 1910, this, corresponding with the founding of the white settler Union in South Africa. After inception, the SACM soon joined the University of Cape Town and functioned as a Faculty unto its own for a very long time (Thorsén, 1997). From that time on, music within the college of music drew exclusively from the western tradition. That is, how music was and has been conceived (with respect to the music itself but also, the discipline) is influenced by what can be understood as the western paradigm and epistemological framework.

This history comes to inform the institutional culture at the college and has remained largely uninterrupted. It would seem then that how the different departments and their inherent disciplines imagine themselves as, some of their gains and limitations, are then bounded by this institutional culture and conceptual paradigm of the conservatoire. For the department of African Music and Jazz the question then is, where do they fit in?

The Department of African Music was founded in 1982, preceded by the introduction of ethnomusicology. The introduction of ethnomusicology itself was motivated by the desire to preserve the Kurby Collection of Southern African ethnomusicological recordings (Thorsén, 1997). It then follows that the introduction of ethnomusicology and subsequently the Department of African Music had no relationship to the discourse of social justice but a reflection of yet another imperial project. The Department of African Music has since been afforded orphan status within the college with a peripheral positioning to western classical and other western musical forms.

The introduction of Jazz on the other hand seems to indicate a desire for the SACM to have more global reach; where Jazz is seen as falling within a global paradigm. This, in contrast with African music that is seen mainly as local. Thus, while African music and Jazz are both actually peripheral to Western Classical music, Jazz is awarded a higher status. While students on the margins might fall into either African music or Jazz, it is the Jazz students who are awarded higher social status. Furthermore, the manner in which Jazz is taught and subdivided into different modules mirrors the logic of Western classical organising principles.

Another key area of contestation within the metaphor of the conservatoire speaks to the issue of academic readiness and instrument preparedness. The discourse of student preparedness amongst staff seemed to focus more on what students lack rather than on what they bring.

## Insights from Engaging the University Community

### 1. **Disciplinary: Knowledge and Power**

Three key questions kept resurfacing across sites during university-wide CCWG engagements; what is knowledge? Who owns knowledge? And how is it produced? Engagements with these three questions revealed disciplinaryity as the main site of contestation; where knowledge and power intersect. Access to the discipline is access to power, with the curriculum serving as the mechanism through which to claim and perform power. Knowledge in this way, becomes implicitly tied to the discipline, outside of which there can be no other form of expertise. Curriculum change, particularly when called for by students, is therefore essentially about contesting power. This contestation of power and the resistance it invokes from gate-keepers, was seen mostly in relation to Science. Doing knowledge in Science, particularly with regards to content, rather than pedagogy, is to be reserved for those who are properly inducted into university legitimated disciplines. Curriculum design is seen as solely the terrain of academic staff, as legitimated bodies. The Study Circle discussions, which were initiated by student members of the CCWG, is a site where doing knowledge emerged essentially, as doing power.

A strong sense of disciplinaryity was evident across all CCWG engagement sites, in how academic programs are generally approached and structured within the university. Extreme cases of disciplinary boundedness illustrated some form of disciplinary decadence (Gordon, 2014). This is where the discipline exists first and foremost for itself, with no regard for how it relates with current realities, particularly at the local level, and custodians of the disciplines are solely pre-occupied with whether its rules, regulations and methods are applied correctly or not. Here resistance to interdisciplinarity is felt strongly, with proponents for decolonisation left wondering whether there can ever be room for collaboration with other disciplines. Within Study Circle discussions, research ethics committees and the university Senate were viewed as institutional structures that play a critical role in nurturing these disciplinary boundaries, which are also seen to influence assessment. A discourse of disciplinaryity appears to be so structurally embedded within the university such that even academic units that do not regard themselves as disciplines, are reduced to fit with this description. An example is the 'construction' of disciplines in the Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, where most academic programmes otherwise see themselves as professional programs. Notably, some of these professional programs have very strong inter-disciplinary or transdisciplinary foundations.

Professions however, have their own discourses and practices that also influence assessment. In engagements across the sites, students pointed out that the coloniality of knowledge, being, power and doing is maintained at the university through assessment practices which are experienced as gate-keeping mechanisms. But

assessment practices cannot be separated from their link to the role and purpose of a university, especially if the university is for the public good. The misalignment between what the university professes to be (i.e. its alignment with society) and what it actually is, surfaces through assessment traditions that are guarded safely and tied to discourses of excellence, efficiency and success within a neo-liberal discourse. Given the predominantly Western approach to knowledge, assessment activities of the university preclude an inclusive or pluriversal approach to knowledge and ways of assessing. This means that assessment does not only have intricate links with knowledge and whose interests it serves, but to power as well.

Students cited the 'admissions policy' as an example of an assessment of their worth before they even start university, which exerts considerable power over who is accepted for study. This is in turn linked to the high cost of learning which leads to financial exclusion based on race and class; issues taken up by the debates and protest action of the Fees Must Fall movement. Power is exerted through disciplinary assessment practices in oral examinations, access to examination scripts and the fear of marking bias which raised strong concerns about the lack of transparency in many of these processes. This spoke to how power is perceived to operate in the context of disciplinary assessments, but also as a gatekeeper to progression. Students felt that authorship and discourse by Black South Africans need to be included in assignments and examinations. The relationship between assessment and power points to the need to consider assessment within the context of disciplinary boundaries, the UCT strategic plan, the desire for measurable outcomes and the need to realise student agency (and student teacher collaboration) within assessment.

For professions in Health Sciences and the Arts, emphasis was found to lay strongly on practice, and performing as expected within disciplinary boundaries or professional ethos. This emphasis sparked further key questions; what counts as 'professional' in South Africa or Africa in general? And what does it mean to be a 'professional teacher' within a Decolonial space?

## **2. Colonial Authority**

Acknowledging that disciplines as they have been 'constructed' in Westernized universities (Grosfoguel, 2013) travelled from the North, CCWG discussions across sites often engaged with what would be alternative constructions of these disciplines within the current Decolonial moment. This brought to the fore key concerns about disciplinarity that Messer-Davidow, Shumway & Sylvan (1993) also noted; possibility conditions for disciplines, recognition of proponents for disciplines and what they do, and what counts as disciplinary knowledge and what does not. CCWG engagements found that travelling disciplines carry along with them both a colonial narrative about the origin of knowledges, as well as a colonial authority about how they should be

constructed, and who should be their custodians. Although much of this colonial narrative and authority is articulated most explicitly within science (mathematics and physics in particular), it is nonetheless also present across humanities, social sciences and health sciences. Pedigree in scholarship gains prestige with demonstration of mentorship from the North, mostly by white men, but sometimes white women, from Ivy League Westernized universities. **Coloniality of knowledge** finds expression in this manner, with curricula conceived in ways that perpetuate global systems of power. What it means then, to be a 'professional' and a 'professional teacher' in the Decolonial space necessarily needs to disrupt the notion of excellence that only recognises colonial authority, to the exclusion of other custodians of knowledges, which at times pre-date Westernized universities.

CCWG engagements across sites revealed notable exclusions and absences in epistemological traditions within disciplines in terms of what knowledge gets privileged and legitimated. Working class black students in particular felt that their knowledges and experiences were not valued. In the Arts curriculum, relations to knowledge were highly contested in that African genres and art forms occupied a fringe status in the curriculum while the global North was reflected powerfully in how texts, scripts and bodies of knowledge were selected and enacted. Students expressed the need to transcend Eurocentric theorising and locate themselves in a national and regional context that centres African knowledge and practices that strengthen human relationships and growth.

Within the performing arts, students highlighted the effect of the Cartesian philosophy inherited from Westernized universities, which results in the Cartesian division: knowledge only from the mind, and the body only for action and movement. This schism perpetuates a limiting hierarchy that serves to exclude and marginalise and the curriculum serves as a mechanism to keep the hegemony intact and untroubled. Within this division, theory and performance had to adhere to Western Classics. Opera and voice were described by one student, for instance, as an art form still stuck in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, filled with nostalgia about the exceptional grandeur of the Roman Empire. For that reason, added another student, Princess Magogo<sup>11</sup> will always be regarded to be 'out of place' and can never be seen as a worthy canon of classical music. Instead of disciplines incorporating epistemological traditions beyond Western canons, there are persistent essentialist narratives about African experiences and their ways of being. At Hiddingh Campus it was reported that black students are often type cast as cleaners and maids, with coloured students guided to play 'white' in stereotypical ways. Like in medical sciences, where graduates who are not white can only follow certain specialties; in the arts, black (in the Biko sense) students can only do certain works. **Coloniality of knowledge** in this way begins to translate into **coloniality of being** in that subjugation

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<sup>11</sup> Princess Magogo was a Zulu musical composer, singer, folklorist and poet. She was particularly gifted in playing the ugubhu, (See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=e\\_4MTre-rUI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_4MTre-rUI) to watch the instrument being played. For contemporary interpretation of Zulu classical music watch 'Opera Africa Princess Magogo Scenes from the opera' (See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DM82QjgAuE&list=PLaS--X-GxYPRajFEJ\\_uvyqbdgQEnGP0mC](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DM82QjgAuE&list=PLaS--X-GxYPRajFEJ_uvyqbdgQEnGP0mC) )

pertains to both African knowledges and blackness, and stature or authority to Western canons and whiteness.

### 3. Hierarchies, Agency and the Positioning of and within Disciplines

Colonial authority within the academy is sustained through hierarchies which position human bodies and disciplines in unequal relations of power. Epistemic and social relations of power that afford stature to Western canons and subjugation to African knowledges is embedded in the disciplines. The relationship between vertical and horizontal discourses (Bernstein, 1999) and vertical and horizontal knowledge structures play out within disciplines around whose knowledge is privileged, and whose is not. This relationship is also demonstrated in which bodies serve always as subjects and which can only serve as objects of scientific enquiry.

Across sites, students also argued that language played a significant role in maintaining hierarchies of power and privilege. While English is the standard and norm of the academy, it is not the first language of the majority of students. Language and its power therefore reinstates traditional and systemic hierarchies of power and privilege that are reproduced through assessment practices which were seen to gate keep, exclude and discriminate. How English is used as a language of the privileged was seen by students to be conflated with a measure of intelligence and ability to communicate. Through the intersection of language, race and power, language is a mechanism by which race and class divisions accentuate the deficit experienced by many black students whose own cultural capital is not valued as 'currency' to acquire the 'goods' of the university. Knowledge, through the medium of instruction and interaction, is seen to be a commodity to be traded by the culturally advantaged and not only demarcates who cannot 'be' in the space, but also who cannot occupy the space with authority.

Without favourable conditions, possibility for local concerns to influence disciplines, adequate recognition for local proponents for disciplines, and authority to decide what counts as a discipline from Southern perspectives, the agenda for knowledge production will always be determined by the North, and through the gaze of whiteness. In this way, **coloniality of power** finds expression in a manner that is in sync with historical Imperial and Non-Imperial lines. During CCWG engagements, students noted that white academics enjoyed more autonomy in the university than anybody else. There was also a general sense that students in the university are neither seen nor heard, and that their agency is often prohibited, across disciplines. Relational dynamics in doing knowledge as doing power is felt at the point of first encounter, between student as learner and teacher as knower, and where contestation about the curriculum accounts for both epistemological and social relations of power. Canon-driven disciplines in particular, construct and position students as perpetual learners, with very little power afforded them to influence knowledge. A student body that is

demographically transformed to reflect South Africa's diverse society, pitched against a majority white teaching staff, will struggle to influence disciplines in any substantive way.

Certain disciplines and their repertoires were found to enjoy more prestige than others. Western classics and Jazz (With a particular privileging of American genres) enjoyed more prestige than African music at the South African College of Music. The Conservatoire metaphor is easily sustained through opera and voice that adhere to Western Classics than through African traditional music and African-based jazz which thrive on improvisation, reading the moment, and allowing the spirit to find expression, thus defying 'professionalism'. In the Health Science Faculty, 'disciplines' within the Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences were found to be marginalised, as opposed to those that produce medical doctors. The white coat and the stethoscope symbolised power, and was experienced accordingly through ways people relate and engage with each other. **Coloniality of power** in this manner, also finds expression through hierarchy across disciplines. Positioning of self also often mirrored positioning of the discipline one found oneself in. This is where **coloniality of being** and **coloniality of power** intersect in ways that impact how people experience the academy every day. Hierarchies in the health sciences interestingly, mirror what is often seen in the military, and are also often gendered. Funding in the Arts and health sciences was also seen to mirror hierarchies across disciplines or professions. Western classical repertoires found easy favour with funders, as did disciplines that produce doctors and related specialties.

Across all faculties, the physical location of the disciplines mirrors the positioning of the disciplines along clear hierarchies of perceived power and access to funding. With regards to the health sciences and the arts, matrices of power oscillate along public - private, rural - urban, informal - formal, traditional - western lines, with the scales always tipping towards the right, than the left. In this manner, health and the arts become understood through the eyes of those who can pay and through western canons of knowledge. Access to the arts, as with health, for learning, practice, making a living or to simply enjoy, is also limited to those with deep pockets.

#### 4. Recognition for Some

As we have seen above, hierarchies, agency and the positioning of and within disciplines have consequences for all in society, within and outside the academy. A general sense was that in effect the academy, through its disciplines and matrices of power that operate, has the power to determine not only who exists, but also who is allowed to exist. A discourse of assimilation into the Westernised University in ways that seek to realise aspirational attitudes and behaviour that are in concert with whiteness was highlighted as pervasive. What it means to be a student is racialized and gendered. As



language and class play out in different classroom and assessment practices, those who cannot compete are hyper-visible by their differently resourced capital. Students pointed out that sensitivity to racial undertones needs to be recognised and addressed by choosing contexts, cases and examples that are specific to a South African or African context and that could mitigate racialized stereotypes. It was thought that an interest in a plurality of cultural forms could be nurtured to extend beyond the dominant Eurocentric genres and repertoires. Through an expression of an embodied resistance, student discussions highlighted a resistance to traditional authority of texts and genres to enable a change in understanding what the professional artist might look like.

Graduates are seen to mimic that which resembles Empire rather than that which they already are. Assessment was found to play an important role in this, with particular English accents deemed not professional enough in oral examinations in health sciences (particularly in the MBChB program) and the absence of more local music repertoires in student recitals for examination at the South African College of Music pre-determining who is likely to pass or fail. Inclusion of what matters in examinations mirrored the concert program in the South African College of Music. In contesting the power relations here, students exposed the cultural assumptions and binary thought underlying the colonial narrative in the assessment of the performing and visual arts as well as the health sciences.

Lecturers play an important role in how students feel recognised for who they are, with proximity to influential lecturers playing a critical role in who has a successful career or not within the academy and beyond. There is a general sense in health sciences and the performing arts about who among students is seen to be eligible to earn success. Being a great musician or a great doctor is tantamount to being a colonial subject who aspires to white supremacist patriarchal and western (classical) ways of being rather than a reflection of local influences and ways of being. Accompanying this is lack of adequate social, intellectual, and emotional support for those bodies that do not fit nicely within this coloniality of being. Physical accessibility of buildings and learning spaces for students with disabilities was a major concern across sites. The black body, the female body, the queer body, the disabled body and the body of the worker, which all share common features under a colonial gaze, echoes the intersectionality and 'inter-coloniality' between racism, capitalism, patriarchy, homophobia and ableism. Students called for a diversity of lecturers in their departments which could work with the diversity of race, gender, disability, age and queer- bodies in the student body in authentic ways. They called for a South African multi-lingual staff, representative of the reality of the country whose demographic is largely black. Students also noted that where demographic transformation had taken place, it was mainly at junior levels of academic staff while departments are still mainly white at senior and managerial levels.

## **5. Resisting Coloniality: Understanding and Doing Knowledge**



Central in resisting coloniality is defying colonial authority in what constitutes knowledge and how it is produced. Following tradition within Westernised universities is often tantamount to sustaining coloniality across all its aspects (**coloniality of knowledge, power, being and doing**). For proponents of decoloniality, this is often enacted through pushing back on professional identity. CCWG engagements in this regard involved staff and students in the Arts asking key questions; what might a professional artist look like and how would industry engage with evolving and reclaimed positioning of all human beings (where none is relegated to a state of subjugation on the basis of identity) in the Decolonial space? Wellness and being fully human were seen as intricately linked by students at Hiddingh Campus and the South African College of Music. It is interesting that wellness and subjectivities of full humanness feature so strongly in the Arts, and that this is accompanied by pushing back on professional identity. At the South African College of Music, this reclaiming of full humanness called for a need to consider other sites of musical expression and education and what is done there differently.

The concept of full humanness in relation to wellness seem to bring arts and health closer than is otherwise possible or allowed within the Westernized University, with its strict disciplinary boundaries. One wonders then about what would change if art and health as concepts, would be scrutinized outside of these disciplinary boundaries. It may very well be that if this were to happen, understanding and doing health or art would render all bodies as both knowledge bearers and enactors of social practice. Knowledge would thus become a central area of struggle that is mediated by doing in the real world, not only in the Westernised University as a construction, to sustain coloniality. It may also be that doing knowledge this way, mediated with consideration of the canon, will no longer simply be about doing power.

## Conclusion

This curriculum change framework, rather than being viewed as a bureaucratic tool for fostering change in the academy, needs to be seen instead as a result of deep political and intellectual work; a thinking tool through which to make sense of what the student-led protests during 2015-2017 in the South African Higher Education Sector were about, and to respond meaningfully. It is for this reason that the framework takes as its point of departure, the context within which these student-led protests, under the banners of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall campaigns, emerged. Contexts that are not socially just and inclusive provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for students to exercise resistance, protest and contestation. These conditions that are experienced at both material and ideological levels deny full actualisation for individuals and are detrimental to the social project of mobility and upliftment.

In recognising context, both the local and global historical trajectories of what we have inherited as the academy or the university, are outlined and analysed. The impetus for curriculum change, and in particular the call for decolonisation or decoloniality within the academy as well as a renewed engagement with what it means to decolonise society, can therefore not be seen in isolation from the student-led protests of 2015-2017. There needs to be continuous recognition that without these protests, the current appetite and renewed sense of urgency to grapple with the notion of decolonisation as part of deepening transformation in South Africa, and within the academy globally, would not have come about. In acknowledging context, the framework also engages with the history of curriculum change within the University of Cape Town, and in education broadly. It is here that it becomes very clear that curriculum reform, curriculum review and curriculum change in the context of decolonisation cannot all mean the same thing.

A theory of curriculum change was therefore essential for re-conceptualising new ways of understanding the curriculum as a mechanism for inclusion and exclusion and what this means for access and success of students. In adopting a change methodology that is cognisant of traditional hierarchies of power in the academy, and how these serve as gatekeepers and guardians of 'expert' knowledge, the CCWG adopted a grounded approach, working from the bottom-up, to create new engagements and interactions between participants and the curriculum. Critical to this methodology was an understanding of the temporal and spatial frames that govern curriculum discussions traditionally, where values and beliefs that are not canvassed widely are accepted as the norm. This regulative process does not auger well for a process that needs to be representative of the demographics and socio-graphics of the very people the curriculum change is intended for. Relational participation, rather than individual and exclusive encounters, was paramount for the CCWG's interactions with the wider university community. The theory of change that the CCWG adopted was therefore necessarily generative and inclusive. Reproduction of old mores and values had to be

replaced with robust and critical dialogue. The workshops, indabas and study circles enabled such engagements but were also mindful of the need to take people on a journey, relative to their own understanding of decoloniality and transformation, so that new ideas, beliefs and values could not only be born but instated. The concept of 'emergence' was an underpinning principle in the CCWG work, to allow interactions to occur in ways that emerged authentically and naturally from the conditions that prevailed. Responses to context emerged as a significant outcome of the generative methodology where participants were able to reflect on themselves and their students' sense of being, doing, belonging, and becoming through the curriculum. Guided by five main phases namely, contestation, re-positioning, re-constitution, re-construction and reflection, each engagement surfaced different emphases depending on the topic for discussion and who was in the room. As stated earlier, each of the stages is porous without solid boundaries in-between. It was evident that a major part of the CCWG work with faculties was tempered by contestation, whether in favour of change or in favour of maintaining the status quo. It became clear that more time and effort are needed in the near future if we are to take this work forward, past contestation and into phases of re-positioning and re-constructing a decolonial curriculum.

In order for the framework to offer substantive grounding in terms of what curriculum change may mean in the decolonial moment, CCWG members also engaged deeply with texts from a wide range of decolonial scholars and activists, covering local, continental and global interlocutors of decolonial concepts and praxes. Critical in informing how one goes about facilitating change in a complex institution such as the University of Cape Town, but in ways that not only impact the institution but society at large, the framework offers a theory of change, and demonstrates how this can inform both engagement with stakeholders and analysis of this process of engagement. Invitation for engagement with the CCWG came in various ways, signalling very clearly how different units and groups within the university were differently positioned in their response to a call for meaningful curriculum change, which at times was deeply disruptive at individual, constituency and institutional levels. While at one extreme there were academic units at departmental and faculty levels that sought to 'decolonise curricula' without involving the CCWG, some spaces invited engagement as a result of rapturous contestations led by students. There were also units, groups and individuals that engaged with the CCWG not only out of curiosity, but an apparent willingness to influence change in their respective spaces. The Faculty of Health Science opted to make itself a site for piloting how a faculty-based CCWG could facilitate meaningful curriculum change at that level. The South African College of Music also sought to establish its own CCWG structure. Engagements at FKA Hiddingh unfolded in ways that generated robust dialogue between staff and students and led to weekly student led-fora focused on issues of curriculum change. The Study Circle, which was student-led, allowed for deep engagement with decolonial texts, beyond the CCWG formal membership.

Insights from CCWG engagements across sites in the university revealed five themes, namely 'disciplinarity: knowledge and power'; 'colonial authority'; 'hierarchies, agency and the positioning of and within disciplines'; 'recognition for some'; and 'resisting coloniality: understanding and doing knowledge'. Disciplinarity emerged as the main site of contestation; where knowledge and power intersect. Curriculum change, particularly when called for by students, must therefore be seen as essentially about contesting power. This contestation of power and the resistance it invokes from gate-keepers, applied mostly to Science. Disciplinarity also emerged as the central backbone around which knowledge is structured within the academy and for how students are 'disciplined' into particular worldviews and tropes. Resistance to decolonisation often came in the form of disciplinary boundedness, policed through formal structures within and beyond the institution. Curriculum content, and not so much pedagogy, as well as assessment practices were found to be strictly tied to disciplinarity, and as gate-keeping mechanisms that sustain coloniality of knowledge, being, power and doing. What counts as 'professional' in South Africa or anywhere in the world by implication, is tied to disciplinarity. It is in this manner in which disciplines can travel the globe, and yet maintain a colonial narrative about what counts as knowledge, and who can be legitimated as custodians. Although much of this colonial narrative and authority was articulated most explicitly within science (mathematics in particular) during CCWG engagements, it was apparent across humanities, the social sciences and the health sciences. Working class black students in particular felt that their knowledges and experiences were often not valued, except in essentialist ways. Colonial authority within the academy is sustained through hierarchies which position human bodies and disciplines in unequal relations of power. Language played a significant role in maintaining hierarchies of power and privilege, with English proficiency, delivered through accents that signify class privilege, often passing as intelligence. Through the intersection of race and class, language becomes a mechanism by which deficit is accentuated for many black students whose own cultural capital is not valued as 'currency' to acquire the 'goods' of the university.

Decolonising the curriculum, and by extension the academy, therefore must focus mainly on epistemology and underlying ontologies; the fundamentals of knowledge production. This also has implications for methodologies and axiology in different disciplines, which have thus far been bounded by narrow research tools and methods that often serve the colonial project. At the foundation of this work must be the recognition that colonial epistemology thrives on generating and sustaining lies as a mechanism for the colonization of the mind. Colonial authority is sustained by a belief that some people are superior or inferior to others, and that some knowledges are superior or inferior to others. Central in resisting coloniality is defying colonial authority in what constitutes knowledge, how it is produced, and who is allowed to claim custodianship. Here there is a disruption of the false divide between different subjectivities and knowledge such that it is no longer possible to claim absolute objectivity and universalism. Instead concepts like health and the arts for instance, are

engaged with from different subjectivities, informed by everyday experiences. Ontologies of students and staff in the academy cannot be glossed over or masked; it is important to recognise that one's view of reality is embedded in one's being in the world. For some this is a privileged existence; for others it is a constant fight for survival and an encounter with death (both physically and emotionally) daily. Ontological depth is therefore critical for how knowledge is legitimated and valued in different disciplines. In this manner it is no longer possible to sell the false illusions of freedom and equality for all as a given, when in reality health and the arts as sites of knowledge production and experiencing full humanness for example, are limited to those who embody whiteness and those with deep pockets to pay. Decoloniality of power, knowledge, being and doing also allows for the disruption of the strict disciplinary boundaries between disciplines, as was seen between health and the arts in this framework.

# Recommendations

Given that serious engagement with curriculum change at UCT emerged as a result of protest and a direct call for decolonisation, with robust agitation from students, it is important that these recommendations are not treated as a guarantee to stop student protests once and for all. Recommendations listed here are a reflection of what CCWG members came to understand as critical in engaging the university around meaningful curriculum change.

## 1. Authentic Engagement

As we embarked on our work, continued throughout 2017 and now draw to a conclusion with this framework, two observations remain pertinent:

- Meaningful working relationships with student activists remained consistent throughout
- During 2017, student protests at UCT no longer called for decolonisation of the curriculum

From these observations, our summation is that we were effective in ensuring that student activists were confident that the CCWG would engage with the question of decolonising curriculum and the academy with authenticity. It was important that in identifying and inviting decolonial scholars and activists to engage the university community, we chose those who enjoyed credibility in marginalized communities, both locally and abroad. We stayed alert to the possibility of co-option of the decolonisation discourse by dominant interests that would rather maintain the status quo rather than disrupt it. In our engagements with student activists we understood the value of dissenting voices, and the importance of broadening the breadth of stake-holders beyond academics and students, but all workers. Authentic engagement takes time and involves ongoing conversations with different stake-holders. This process cannot be rushed as a way of meeting strictly fixed deadlines, if meaningful change must be felt at different levels within the institution.

## 2. Leadership with Integrity

In constituting the CCWG for university-wide engagements as well as within the Health Science Faculty, care was taken to ensure that members had a good track-record of engaging with meaningful curriculum change in the university, with particular attention to demonstrable evidence for addressing inequity of access for marginalised bodies in

terms of race, gender, sexuality and disability in the university. It was also important that the CCWG was black-led, given that issues of marginalisation at the University of Cape Town had been articulated in terms of the alienation felt by black students and academic staff. It would have been odd to constitute the CCWG in ways that ignores the reality that often those who are privileged are often blind to their own privilege. Meaningful curriculum change requires leadership that has been tested over time, and that is sensitive to what it means and feels like to be marginalised within the academy.

### **3. Blending the Formal with the Informal**

With every disruption in any organisation, it is often tempting to shift back to 'business as usual' in order to bring back relative stability while maintaining the status quo. Often, structures that traditionally deal with institutional processes are tasked with dealing with change. However, these structures are often implicated in what brought about the disruption in the first place. In order not to discard what works and push an institution into implosion, it is important to blend the formal structures with the new emergent structures. Parallel work must be allowed, while planning for convergence where appropriate. Hierarchies are often contested and resisted as part of driving meaningful change. In response, it is important to recognise that transparency in decision-making processes is often what people find useful, rather than fixating on positions and expertise, and closing down communication. The work of curriculum change is often deemed the terrain of those endowed with expertise. This makes it an exclusive enterprise that serves to exclude; not only those for whom the curriculum purports to be in service of i.e. students, but those whom coloniality has relegated to the margins and the communities from which they come. A decolonial approach to curriculum seeks to be necessarily inclusive. It introduces the question, who is the curriculum for? And further seeks to engage all stakeholders in the work of curriculum change and knowledge making. Thus, engagement with curriculum change ought not to rest on the question of expertise as a qualifier; but be deliberate in including (and enabling authentic engagement) all students, academics, service and administrative staff, ordinary members of our society, communities we call home, and communities of practice in curriculum change.

Institutional and disciplinary knowledge is often tacit, therefore it is important to address gate-keeping mechanisms that keep some stake-holders in the dark. In identifying points for convergence between formal and informal structures, it is important to stay focussed on the fact that those who agitated for change are the main stake-holders. Ownership of the outcome of any process of meaningful change must therefore be handled with caution. Ideally, the process and outcome of change must enjoy a sense of ownership by everyone in the institution, but particularly those who agitated for change and those who participated directly in the process for change.

#### **4. Reading with Conscious Intent**

Meaningful change within the university requires engagement with tools of the academy, and reading is one of them. Reading, however must be approached with conscious intent. When the intent is to decolonize the mind, there are implications for the choice of reading material, and how these are engaged with within and outside the academy. Choice of reading material must engage with historical exclusions and what this means in perpetuating coloniality of power, knowledge, being and doing. It often takes conscious effort for instance, to acknowledge and remedy the usual exclusion of black feminist scholarship. This exclusion, functions along matrices of power that operate within modes of disciplinarity, determining not only who exists, but also who is allowed to exist with authority within the academy. Bringing in text that otherwise would be excluded, begins to disrupt these matrices of power, especially when such texts become core-reading material, rather than only appear as part of elective courses, or serve only as illustrative material.

#### **5. Addressing Institutional Racism, Ableism, Sexism and Heteronormativity**

Institutional racism, ableism, sexism and heteronormativity need to be addressed with honesty and courage. Racism as a central cultural dimension of colonialism introduced concepts of superiority and inferiority in relation to human beings, with this translating into other forms of difference. When addressing ableism, sexism and heteronormativity, the intersectional dimension through which blackness aggravates all forms of discrimination needs to be borne in mind. It is important to acknowledge that decoloniality or decolonisation is intersectional and cannot be isolated from discourses on gender or feminism. In constituting the CCWG, despite some initial attempts to be inclusive of all marginalised voices, the final core-team was not explicitly reflective of this; and this has had a bearing on the lenses used to develop this framework. The framework is thus incomplete in its current form, and it is important that thinking around curricula is taken further to be inclusive of the discourses afforded to us by perspectives on gender and feminism (in particular black radical feminism and related perspectives).

When structures tasked with making decisions on curricula are not truly inclusive, there will always be gaps. Representivity however, should not just be a tick box exercise, but must entail engaging meaningfully and respectfully with all marginalised communities that are a part of the university. Mentorship for a career-path within and beyond the academy should not be reserved for a chosen few. Effort should be made to ensure a



diversity of tutors reflecting racial, class, gender and sexual identities, as well as different forms of disability.

Research, as the primary tool to inform curricula, must always be regarded as potentially a site for both epistemic and epistemological violence<sup>12</sup>. To mitigate against this, individuals and groups from marginalized communities must not only serve as objects for research, but must increasingly drive research, as members of the academy.

## **6. Addressing Knowledge Fragmentation: Encouraging Transdisciplinarity**

The academy has been constructed around the notion that what it means to be educated and being knowledgeable are synonymous. In approaching concepts that form the basis to knowledge or addressing research questions from a decolonial perspective, there must be recognition of multiple sources of knowledge that allow for different subjectivities to engage with what is otherwise taken for granted universalised knowledge. It must be acknowledged that the modern university emerged from disciplines in service of the state, in the global North, with Africa and her needs deemed irrelevant. Much of this universalised knowledge, is also fragmented, with disciplines often driving theoretical and methodological fundamentalism. To disrupt this fundamentalism, knowledge must be understood as both situational and relational. Questions about both what the world *is* as we understand it and what it could be, should drive our quest for knowledge, drawing from relevant disciplines, without being locked-in. Knowledge develops in dialogue, with people, different texts, the material world, and within context.

The decolonial epistemic which refers to epistemic plurality and using multiple lenses should be deployed to re-center what it means to be African and to remember what it means to be human. Following students' critique of knowledge as a mechanism to keep the mind enslaved, the university is tasked to not only provide epistemological access to knowledge in its different forms but to question the epistemological assumptions that the selection of knowledges, canonized in disciplines, is premised on and whose interests this serves. The university is encouraged to explore the different disciplines and ensure that knowledges reflect the cultural, social, linguistic capital that students bring to the classroom and that these are engaged with in critical ways that enable students to be active learners in creating understanding in context. This approach to knowledge has implications for corresponding pedagogical interventions, assessment

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<sup>12</sup> To read further on epistemic violence, we recommend work by Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? In Nelson, C. & Grossberg, L. (Eds.), *Marxism and Interpretations of Culture* (271-313). Basingstoke: Macmillan Education. On epistemological violence, we recommend work by Teo, Thomas (2010). What is Epistemological Violence in the Empirical Social Sciences? *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 4/5 (2010): 295-303, 10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00265.x

methods and the engagement space so that students do not only access the academy but achieve success in holistic ways.

Knowledges located on the margins of mainstream sensitivities should be brought to the centre in ways that foreground the subjectivities that embody and enact this knowledge from a lived and authentic positionality and with a healthy relation to it. Faculties and departments are encouraged to engage with the origins, historicity, temporality and spatiality of their disciplines and fields to interrogate what changes need to be made to enable interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, in order to provide a more legitimate engagement with knowledge through pedagogy, research, assessment and other forms of knowledge production. A set of questions, provided earlier in the document under the section '*Faculty Representative Workshops*', is suggested as a starting point for faculties to embark on this process. Such questions would look at the reflexivity of the discipline, the ontological dispositions, dominant worldviews and the epistemic tensions that prevail that need to be engaged with.

There must also be recognition that there exist concepts that have been kept out of Westernized disciplinary canons, that carry with them part of our forgotten global knowledge heritage. Translanguaging in whatever form inside and outside the academy must be encouraged. Learning through languages however, must not be reduced only to decoding English concepts, but must also mean dedicated effort to develop African languages as part of knowledge production.

Research is a strong tool to disrupt knowledge fragmentation and fostering transdisciplinarity. The following questions may help frame new approaches to research:

1. What are the dominant paradigms that influence research methodologies and development?
2. What are the gaps and absences that prevail and what do these signify?
3. Do our research endeavors respond to challenges in the Southern or African context?
4. Rather than merely serving as units of analyses, in what ways do African challenges provide rich sites for theoretical production and solutions to local issues as well as global challenges?
5. How might we build community through research?
6. How might we problematize notions of objectivity and validity in research that sever (head/body, researcher/researched, generalizability/experience, universal/local) rather than promote community informed practices of enquiry and healthy relations?
7. How might we problematize research ethics approval processes and probe discourses to go beyond notions of consent and legality toward collaboration,

community building and strong communal bonds between society and the academy?

## 7. Attending to decolonial pedagogy

How knowledge is mediated as part of the curriculum is dependent on pedagogical engagements in the classroom, between teacher and student, supervisor and student, student and students, and students and community and the myriad relational encounters that people can have through knowledge and with each other. Traditional teacher-student relationships which re-inforce hierarchies of power and privilege do not serve the academic project well. Adopting a decolonial attitude and disposition which calls on new constellations of thinking, being and doing, will enable the transformative potential of the classroom. Faculties and departments and their teachers are encouraged to use a decolonial approach to pedagogy to further develop the potential of critical pedagogy and transgressive pedagogy to enact the envisaged changes. Where traditional pedagogies have focused largely on knowledge dissemination and delivery, we recommend that more work is done to embrace a pedagogy of being and doing, so that pedagogic relationships are imbued with a consciousness that is inclusive, socially just and constructive. Alternative methods of engagements must be used to broaden possibilities and inspire students to contribute and insert themselves in ways that are cognizant of who they are, where they come from and where they are going; as individuals, and together with a myriad of intersecting communities.

Pedagogical choices in the classroom, such as participatory action and learning methods, should be critically considered, as they can serve to engage deeply with changing social consciousness of the student and the teacher within the classroom (Behari-Leak, 2017), rather than endorsing and reproducing the status quo that excludes and has kept us entrapped.

## 8. Assessment for Learning

Traditional assessment practices, which show a tendency to focus on the assessment **of** learning, accentuating assessment as epistemic practice, need to be re-conceptualised to focus on practices that encourage assessment **for** learning. This will bring into view the challenges of assessment as a social practice. Where assessors' value judgements are openly biased, and where students are excluded from entry into subsequent years of study, fairness and equity in assessment needs to be foregrounded. Equity in assessment practice for instance can be enhanced when students are provided with different modes of assessment to maximise opportunities for different strengths. Generative approaches to assessment methods and instruments need to be adopted to

promote learning for all students, particularly black students, and especially in the current university climate that places a high premium on assessment as a dominant mode for measuring success and achievement. We need to remain critical of the purpose of assessment and who is being served by it.

Assessment cannot be used uncritically as a tool for control, increased scrutiny and surveillance or to commodify knowledge for economic development. If we are committed to higher education's contribution to the public good, assessment practices must foreground educational purposes and accrue benefits for all rather than exceptional individuals who can survive the system. In this regard, there are a few examples within the university with a good track-record of excellent through-put rates for a diverse student body. These examples should be made more visible, and analysed as good-practice case studies using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

## **9. Disrupting Colonial Lies**

The historicity or genealogy of disciplines and professions needs to be undertaken as serious scholarship, in order to expose embedded lies and to help explain the character of the academy, demographics and those whose interests continue to be served at the expense of marginalised populations.

## **10. #StudentsMustRise**

Students must continue to play a critical role in informing meaningful curriculum change. The conceptual framing of students as important stake-holders within the academy must allow for a healthy tension between 'knower' and 'learner'. Resonance allows for students to feel a part of the academic project without needing to strip off who they are and disconnecting from their communities. New knowledge that must disrupt should strive for plausibility, or otherwise remain open for honest and robust critique.

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