ENHANCING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

A PORTFOLIO REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

BY

ASTRIDAH NJALA SAMUPWA

200123092

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MENTOR: DR. LUKAS MATATI JOSUA

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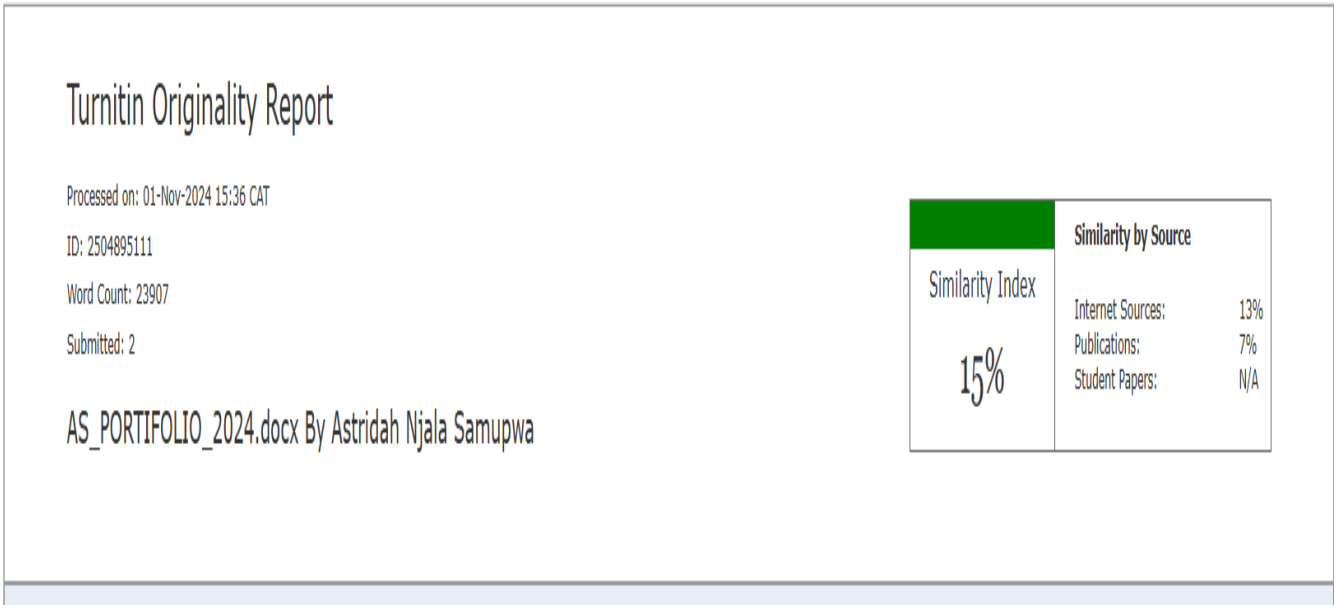

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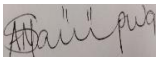
Student Name: Astridah Njala Samupwa **Signature:**  **Date**: November 2024

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Abstract

This reflective portfolio captures my personal journey through the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE) program. It narrates my personal and professional growth, bring out to light key experiences and understandings acquired throughout the course. Through a series of reflective entries, I explore the development of my teaching philosophy, the development of my pedagogical skills, and the impact of critical incidents on my practice. Each section of the portfolio is designed to demonstrate my commitment to continuous improvement and lifelong learning. By engaging in reflective inquiry, I have been able to critically analyze my teaching methods, adapt to diverse learning environments, and enhance student engagement. This portfolio not only serves as a testament to my achievements but also as a roadmap for future professional development.

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List of Abbreviations or Acronyms

CA – Continuous Assessment

CD – Curriculum Development

CEQUAM – Centre for Quality Assurance and Management

CILT – Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching

CMS - content management systems

EQA - External Quality Assurance

HOD – Head of Department

IUM - International University of Management

IQA - Internal Quality Assurance

LMS - Learning Management System

NCHE – National Council of Higher Education

NOLNET - Namibian Open Learning Network Trust

NQA – Namibia Qualification Authority

NQF – National Qualification Framework

NSTIP - National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy

NUST - Namibia University of Science and Technology

PGDHE – Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education

ODeL - Open Distance and eLearning policy

PVC – Pro-Vice Chancellor

QA – Quality Assurance

TPACK - Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge

UNAM – University of Namibia

ZPD - Zone of Proximal Development

Acknowledgment

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Almighty. As it is written in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” This journey would not have been possible without his guidance and blessings.

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Appendixes

Appendices 1: Survey questions and responses

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Personal Learning and Teaching Philosophy

As an educator, the foundation of effective teaching lies in fostering an environment where student engagement and reflective practice are at the forefront. My teaching philosophy is rooted in the conviction that every student has the potential to succeed when they are actively engaged in their learning process and encouraged to reflect on their experiences.

As a Librarian with a background in digital curation and scholarly communication, my teaching philosophy is grounded in the principles of constructivism and social constructivism. I believe that:

- Active Learning: Students learn best when actively engaged in the learning process. I strive to create an interactive and participatory learning environment where students can explore, question, and apply new knowledge.
- Collective Learning: Knowledge is constructed through social interactions. I encourage group work and peer-to-peer learning to foster a collaborative learning community.
- Critical Thinking: Education should empower students to think critically about information and its sources. I integrate critical theory into my teaching to help students develop the skills to analyze and challenge existing knowledge structures.
- Digital Literacy: In the digital age, students need to be proficient in navigating and evaluating digital information. I incorporate digital literacy skills into my teaching to prepare students for the demands of the modern information landscape.

Contents

PORTFOLIO INTRODUCTION

This portfolio is a comprehensive reflection of my journey through the PGDHE program, showcasing my growth, learning, and application of key concepts in higher education. The portfolio is structured to provide a coherent narrative that aligns with the core topics covered in the program: teaching and learning in higher education, curriculum development, assessment of and for students in higher education, evaluation and quality assurance in higher education, technologies in higher education, and student supervision in research. The six chapters of this portfolio are outlined as follows:

Chapter one (1) discusses teaching and learning in higher education, this section delves into my understanding and application of effective teaching and learning strategies in higher education. It includes my personal teaching philosophy, lesson plans, and reflective journals that highlight my approach to fostering student engagement and promoting reflective practice. I will discuss various pedagogical theories and how they inform my teaching methods, aiming to create an inclusive and dynamic learning environment.

In chapter two (2) I explore the principles and processes involved in developing a robust curriculum that meets the needs of different learners. I will present examples of curriculum design projects, including course outlines and syllabi, and discuss how I incorporate feedback from students and colleagues to continuously improve the curriculum. The focus will be on creating a knowledge-rich curriculum that aligns with institutional goals and industry standards.

Chapter three (3) discusses the assessment of and for students in higher education is a critical component of the educational process. This section covers my approach to both formative and summative assessments, emphasizing the importance of using assessments to enhance learning and provide meaningful feedback. I will include examples of assessment tools and strategies I have developed, along with reflections on their effectiveness and areas for improvement.

Chapter four (4) deliberates on evaluation and quality assurance in higher education. Ensuring the quality and effectiveness of educational programs is essential for maintaining high standards in higher education. This section discusses the various evaluation methods and quality assurance processes I have engaged with, including program reviews, accreditation processes, and stakeholder feedback. I will reflect on the challenges and successes in implementing these processes and their impact on teaching and learning outcomes.

Chapter five (5) discusses technologies in higher education, it is believed that the integration of technology in education has transformed the way we teach and learn. In this section, I will explore the use of various educational technologies, such as learning management systems, online collaboration tools, and multimedia resources. I will provide examples of how I have incorporated technology into my teaching practice to enhance student engagement and support diverse learning needs.

Chapter six (6) delves into student supervision in research, supervising students in research is a vital aspect of higher education. This section covers my experiences and strategies in guiding students through the research process, from developing research proposals to conducting studies and presenting findings. I will discuss the challenges and rewards of research supervision and provide examples of successful student projects I have supervised.

The portfolio concludes with a summary of my reflections on the PGDHE program and its impact on my professional development. I will outline my future goals as an educator and how I plan to continue applying the knowledge and skills gained from this program to enhance my teaching practice and contribute to the field of higher education.

CHAPTER 1: TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

In present knowledge-based economies impelled by globalization, the new challenges and opportunities created by the increase of globalization have transformed both institutional and individual responses to this phenomenon. Higher education institutions now require advanced skills, knowledge, and expertise from those in the higher education sector almost everywhere in the world. One important feature of globalization is the convergence of governance models of higher education systems. Regardless of whether this convergence is well thought out, it is a development that the higher education sector needs to consider (Perkin, 2007). Academic institutions are transforming traditional models of schooling, which have been effective at distinguishing those who are more academically talented from those who are less so, into customized learning systems that identify and develop the talents of all students. This transformation requires the creation of a knowledge-rich curriculum (Richard et al., 2018). This chapter analyzes and discusses the social realist theory's domains of Structure, Culture, and Agency to establish the constraints and enabling mechanisms for quality and effective teaching and learning under the circumstances of educational transformation.

Theories of teaching and learning, understanding, social frameworks

Theories of teaching and learning conceptual frameworks describe how people obtain, process, and hold on to knowledge. These theories help educators understand the methods of learning and develop effective teaching strategies (Watson, 1913). Theories of teaching and learning provide frameworks for understanding how students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes. (Watson, 1913). Here are some important theories and their social frameworks:

Firstly, is behaviourism, theorist is often considered the father of behaviourism. He believed that all behaviours are learned (Watson, 1913). Another key theorist Skinner (1975) states that, learning is a change in behaviour due to experience. For example, colleges and universities provide learning opportunities to adults after the phase of primary and secondary school basic education, this type of learning is referred to as adult learning more commonly referred to as

andragogy by American educator Malcolm Knowles (1970). He described andragogy as the art and science of adult learning and applied five principles to adult learning as follows:

1. Need to know – Adults need to know why they must learn; hence they find motivation from these reasons and focus on learning.

2. Experience – Adult learners have experience; this experience provides the centre for much of the learning activities.

3. Self-concept – Adults need to be responsible for their learning decisions; they thrive on self-direction.

4. Readiness – Adults learn best when the training can help them solve an immediate, real-life problem; motivation increases when there is an immediate reason to learn.

5. Problem Orientation – Adults learn best when content is problem-oriented, they want to learn specific knowledge, skills, and abilities that solve a problem rather than generic content (Knowles, 1970).

Secondly is cognitivism learning, focusing on the inner mental activities, it emphasizes understanding how people process and store information (Bruner (1980). In his work, Bruner (1980) look at the concept of cognitive learning, emphasizing the importance of active engagement and discovery in the learning process. He introduces the idea of the "spiral curriculum," where learners revisit basic concepts at increasing levels of intricacy and abstraction. Bruner argues that any subject can be taught to any child at any stage of development if it is presented appropriately (Bruner (1980). He also highlights the role of scaffolding—structured support provided by teachers to help students build on their existing knowledge and skills. Bruner's theories underscore the significance of culture and language in cognitive development, advocating for an educational approach that fosters autonomous learners capable of critical thinking and problem-solving (Bruner, 1980, as cited in Simply Psychology, n.d.; Britannica, n.d.).

Thirdly, is constructivism, Vygotsky's social constructivism theory highlights the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition. He introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which describes the difference between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance. Vygotsky believed that learning is a socially mediated process, and that language plays a crucial role in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Lastly, is the social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and mimicking behaviours, attitudes, and emotions of others (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) many times underscores that most effective learning takes place within a social context through the reaction of others using peer learning in the classroom (Bandura, 1977).

Considered the prop of academic institutions by Perkin (2007). Academic teachers are effective communicators responsible for knowledge sharing, lesson facilitation beyond just delivering content, teachers facilitate learning by encouraging critical thinking, problem-solving, and active participation, they create an environment where students feel comfortable exploring ideas and asking questions, often serve as mentors, providing guidance and support to students both academically and personally helping students set goals, overcome challenges, they evaluate student performance through various assessments, providing feedback that helps students improve using assessment data to inform their teaching strategies and address individual learning needs, they contribute to curriculum development by designing lesson plans, selecting appropriate materials, and ensuring that the curriculum meets educational standards and the needs of the students, it is believed that, teachers continually seek to improve their own knowledge and skills. They engage in professional development, stay updated with educational research, and adapt to new teaching methods and technologies, and help build a sense of community within the classroom and the school. They foster relationships among students, encourage collaboration, and create a positive and inclusive learning environment (Richard et al., 2018)

What is more, Richard et al. (2018) notes that without teachers, there would be no schools in general highlighting the key roles teachers play in the educational system each contributing to the development and success of their students.

The discussions about higher education often include information about the roles people occupy within them (Richard et al., 2018). Knowles (1970) indicates that until recently, there was only one model of norms about learning and the characteristics of learners on which educators could base their curricula and teaching practices. This was the model of pedagogy, literally, the art and science of teaching children, adopted and reinforced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Knowles (1970) observed that pedagogy was based on a notion of the purpose of education—namely, the transmittal of knowledge and skills. The twentieth century brought significant cultural changes (e.g., new knowledge, technological innovation, population mobility, changes in political and economic systems) that extended over several

generations. Under these new changes, Knowles (1970) said that “knowledge gained at any point of time is largely obsolete within a matter of years, and skills gained become obsolete later on.” Moreover, what made people productive in their early years becomes outdated over time. Hence, he thought it was pointless to define education as a process of passing on what is known but rather as a lifelong process of ongoing inquiry. Thus, he believed the most important learning for both children and adults is learning how to learn, the skills of self-directed inquiry (Knowles, 1970).

Inclusivity, teaching, and learning strategies

Students in adult learning classes must follow a single standard curriculum regardless of their differences. Despite the differences in abilities the education system must be inclusive to all. According to the United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 1989), inclusive education often means the inclusion of persons with physical and mental impairments, such as sensory or mobility limitations, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, language disorders, behaviour disorders, and autism spectrum disorders. (UNGA, 1989). In his foreword address, Prof David Namwandi (2024) former Minister of Education, Arts, and Culture and the founding chancellor of the International University of Management (IUM) advised the public, stating, “It is important for everyone to recognize the fact that God created each person differently and gave him or her different talents.” He indicated that some people are considered able while others have challenges of disability to conquer (Namwandi, 2024).

For UNAM inclusivity is a very important aspect in learning and have committed to promoting an inclusive educational environment. This commitment is shown in a few policies and initiatives aimed at making certain that all students, regardless of their background or abilities to have equal access to education. UNAM abide to both national and international frameworks, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which advocate for inclusive education (UNGA, 1989).Therefore, one of the key policies is the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (Republic of Namibia, 2013) urging educators to work hard and unleash the potential within each human being by embracing, celebrating, and valuing diversity, and humanely attending to the needs of the individual. The Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (Ministry of Education 2013) directs the education sector to adopt flexible and all-inclusive approaches to budgeting, program planning, and

development, and to monitor and evaluate purposefully, to create an inclusive education system. Additionally, UNAM has a Centre for Disability Services that provides support and resources to students with disabilities, ensuring they have the required services to succeed academically. However, the implementation of this policy may not materialize if stakeholders do not embrace it. The Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (Ministry of Education, 2013) in Namibia focuses primarily on the adaptation and support required of all sectors of education and training services, such as tertiary institutions, regional education offices, education support services, curriculum and assessment services, and schools, parents, and communities (Ministry of Education, 2013).

To understand inclusivity in UNAM context I carried out a survey to gather insights and feedback from students regarding their experiences and challenges related to library usage at the University of Namibia (UNAM). Below is the survey questions and responses gathered:

Table 1: Survey responses from marginalized

NO.	Questions	Number of Responses
	Question	**Responses**
1	**Do you agree to participate in the study?**	
	- Yes	4
	- No	0
2	**In which study year are you?**	
	- 1st year	3
	- 2nd year	0
	- 3rd year	0
	- 4th year	0
3	**What gender do you identify yourself with?**	
	- Male	1
	- Female	3
	- Prefer not to say	0
	- Other	0

4	**Did you get induction at the beginning of your studies?**	
	- Yes	2
	- No	2
	- To some extent	0
5	**Was the induction/orientation you received helpful in navigating the library?**	
	- Yes	2
	- No	2
	- To some extent	0
6	**Do you use the library?**	
	- Yes	4
	- No	0
7	**If you use the library, tick all services you use:**	
	- Circulation/borrowing and returning	4
	- Room/study carrel and book reservation	3
	- Computer service	2
	- Internet services	2
	- E-resources	2
	- Other	0
8	**Is the entry to the library accessible?**	
	- Yes	3
	- No	0
	If you answered no, elaborate:	
9	**Are there assistive technologies in the library?**	
	- Yes	3
	- No	0
	- If no, elaborate:	
10	**What challenges do you face in terms of library usage?**	

	- Responses	4
	- Latest Responses	"Sometimes the Library Disability Study room is closed during weekends and…"
		"Navigation on databases, no sign language assistant"
		"Use of computers"
11	**What support do you receive from the library staff regarding the challenges you mentioned above?**	
	- Responses	4
	- Latest Responses	"They help me print from ground floor or at base. Whenever the Disability St…"
		"They answer the questions and help me search on computers"
		"None"
12	**How might the library have made it more helpful for you?**	
	- Responses	4
	- Latest Responses	"There should be a printer at floor 2 especially the Disability unit room. Ope…"
		"Print instructions on some helpful tips to use in terms of services for databases…"
		"They can have the librarian designated for students with special needs"
13	**What challenges do you face in terms of access to the library resources and services?**	
	- Responses	4
	- Latest Responses	"I find it difficult to view books that are on upper shelves so most of the time…"
		"Staff or patrons may not be adequately trained to interact with individuals…"
		"Reaching the circulation desk, having access to the printers"

14	**Any suggestions for improvements?**	
	- Responses	4
	- Latest Responses	"The library staff should invent short shelves for a person living with short st…"
		"Print out more posters for instruction or handbook readily available because i…"
		"A call for improvement"
15	**Would you recommend the use of UNAM library to a friend?**	
	- Yes	4
	- No	0
	- If no, elaborate:	0

The survey responses revealed that, among other inclusivity initiatives, the UNAM library has implemented the provision of modern technology and digital tools. These include computers, Wi-Fi, e-books, and online databases, all aimed at supporting research and learning. As such the responses from the survey highlight areas where the library is performing well and areas that need improvement to better support all students, particularly those from educationally marginalized groups. Therefore, the university can make informed decisions to improve library services, enhance student engagement, and ensure that all students have the resources they need to succeed academically.

Profiling Students- in academic learning

One important key activity described by Tzimas and Demetriadis, (2021) is that it is a must to do in teaching and learning in higher education is understanding students background to better serve them. Profiling students involving collecting and analyzing data to understand their academic performance, behaviours, and needs. While this can be beneficial for identifying students who may need additional support, it also raises ethical concerns. It's crucial to ensure that profiling is done in a way that respects students' privacy and avoids reinforcing stereotypes or biases. Effective profiling should be used to tailor educational experiences to individual needs, helping all students achieve their full potential without discrimination or prejudice. To better understand my students, I developed a criterion to profile them academically, ensuring

the use of objective language, and taking into consideration the ethical issues. Data collected was only the data that is necessary for the profiling process. The criteria were on the first day of class students were asked to introduce themselves and, in their introduction, they were to include the following information, but they were told to leave out a question they felt uncomfortable to share in class. As they did, I noted down students' names, their learning difficulties as well as the number of how many times they mentioned their preferred learning methods. Below are the questions asked:

1. Their full names and the name they are mostly identified with
2. Academic achievements
3. Preference of learning e.g. through lectures, hands-on activities, group work, or independent study
4. Any learning difficulties that should be considered
5. Expectations of the course and from the lecturer

The responses from student's introduction yielded valuable insights into each student's unique needs and preferences, enabling the customization of teaching approach to improve their academic success. The data indicated a predominant preference for collaborative learning among the students, leading to the integration of group projects and discussions. Additionally, practical tasks were incorporated to benefit students who excel through hands-on experiences. A diverse array of assessment formats, including written exams, oral presentations, and practical demonstrations, was employed to accommodate various learning styles.

Social Realism Theory

To understand the social world where the education systems operate, one needs to understand the three key domains of Social Realism (SR). These include the concepts of 'culture', structure, and agency. One of the early and most influential thinkers to have introduced new ideas into the debate is Margaret Archer. Archer (1995) defines these domains as follows: (Structures, are defined as the social patterns through which a society is organized and can be a horizontal or vertical determinant of the actions of individuals, culture as "the ideas, beliefs, theories, values, ideologies and concepts which are manifest through, and agents, as individuals engaging with the social structure (Archer, 1995).

Archer (1995) believed that, while each of these concepts can be analytically separable, it is the interplay between agency and culture and/or agency and structure that can activate meaningful analysis of social configuration within a cultural domain (Archer, 1995). Another important aspect raised by Archer (1995) is the idea that human beings have the power to exercise agency in any social context. She identified the three kinds of conflation, namely, the upwards, downwards, and the central, differentiating between the parts that are structure and culture and the people which are the agents. She then, sees that the structure and culture are dominant to the people as a downwards.

Furthermore, Archer (1995) argues that in any social set up, the society is made up of parts and "people". She refers to the parts as prevailing social structures or cultural systems that exists (Archer, 1995). She further in a higher education system, for example, institutional discourses of "transformation (including access, equity and redress), quality assurance and teaching and learning" are identified as being present in varying degrees in all higher education institutions. On the other hand, "structure" refers to (physical and human) material interests (Archer 1996). Quinn (2012, p.36) states that relations are often legitimated and maintained by ideas from the cultural system, and in some cases, changes in the structures can contribute to changes in the culture of an institution". According to Archer (1995), the "parts" precede the actions of the "people" because structures and cultures always pre-exist the situations into which people enter. The "people", also referred to as "agents", are those who operate within a particular structural or cultural system. In the interplay between structure, culture, and agency, emergent properties come about, and emergent powers are exercised as agents interact with structure or culture. Archer argues that structure and culture parallel one another and that there is a link between them. In other words, there are internal and necessary relationships between emergent properties (Archer, 1995, p. 168). Using the same conceptual, theoretical, and analytical framework.

Investigating structure and culture allows for a comparison of the effects of each on social life, and to explore the interplay between each of them with agency. People and structures in society are also not different aspects of the same thing but, rather, radically different in kind, according to Motshoane and McKenna (2014) structure and culture are both central to social life, yet they are relatively autonomous from each other. It is in the interactions between structure and agency or culture and agency that social reproduction or change can be discerned.

Domain of Culture

Cultural domains are categories of human interaction, belief, and meaning that every culture shares. Montell (2015) considers globalization to be leading countries with cultural and economic differences to conform to international democratic, economic, educational, and social standards. This is true because we have seen how the education environment shifted from face-to-face to online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Masehela (2015), gives an example of how at a global level the analysis of structure, would involve analysing the role played by higher education in globalization. Whereas, at a national level the analysis would involve looking at the way higher education has been discursively (Masehela, 2015). An institutional-level analysis would involve examining the way conditioning has played out at a more. Local level – how, for example, have changes in the composition of the student body affected the institution? Equally, it would involve asking how dominant discourses constructing (and critiquing) a role for higher education in South Africa have been taken up at the institutional level.

Domain of Structure

Berger and Luckmann (1996) believe that reality is socially constructed. One example is that which Masehela (2015) applied to the morphogenetic framework in research (which looks at the implementation of quality assurance policies and processes) involves examining structural and cultural conditioning in place at global, national, institutional, and departmental levels at the start of a period identified for research.

The major components of social structure are statuses, roles, social networks, groups and organizations, social institutions, and society. The status will be the position that someone occupies in society. For example (job title, student, and so forth). It should be noted that higher education institutions are required to design programmes and courses according to the purposes defined in the vision and mission statements (Masehela, 2015). Moreover, these programmes should meet the learning needs of the students. On a practical level, this means that policies and procedures related to the assurance of quality in teaching and learning are developed at a level not accessed by academics accordingly. Academics are then required to implement these policies and procedures. The practice at UNAM library is that, after the draft of a policy, members of staff within the library are invited to make suggestions and inputs to the draft policy documents before it goes to library management and then to the senate for approval.

Domain of Agency (People)

Bandura (2007) indicates that people are not only agents of action. They are self-examiners of what they could offer. Nickerson is one of the theorists who argues that peoples' social construction of reality suggests that humans create their understanding of reality (Nickerson, 2023). Adding that, through their relations and communications with others. This consists of the way we see, understand, and interact with the world around us, as well as how we interact with others.

Nickerson (2023) writing about social constructionism (SC) assets that, SC holds that the meaning of acts, behaviours, and events is not an objective quality of those phenomena but is assigned to them through social interactions. In this interpretation, Nickerson (2023) meant people are socially defined and organized and thus subject to social change in their environment.

Going back to self-awareness, it is through practical self-awareness that agents (people) can reflect on their activities, people can think about the future act on the present, construct, evaluate, modify alternative courses of action, and override environmental influences (Bandura, 2007). The agency may be either classified as unconscious, involuntary behaviour, or purposeful, goal-directed activity (intentional action). An agent typically has some sort of immediate awareness of their physical activity and the goals that the activity is aimed at realizing. Masehela (2015) denotes transformation as the level to which individuals can be 'transformed' by their experiences, in relations to personal development. Such development can be seen to relate to the development of the individual as a person who can contribute to a highly skilled workforce, as well as a person who can participate as a member of a critical citizenry. He argues that for the enhancement of teaching and learning to have its intended positive impact, a 'close-up' look, or contextualized understanding of the way academics work with conceptions of quality and the policies and procedures that are intended to promote them is necessary (Masehela, 2015. p.144).

The principles, practices, and attitudes of people, mainly those entrusted to share knowledge are important for understanding and improving educational processes. Through these principles, practices, and attitudes, lecturers can develop strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life and to their general well-being, and they shape students' learning

environment and influence student motivation and achievement (Masehela, 2015. p.144). Additionally, they are expected to be the developers of the effects of job-related policies – such as changes in curricula for teachers and original education or professional development – on student learning. This requires that internal processes and practices should allow an institution to achieve what it defines as its purpose. About teaching and learning, this means that the processes and practices should allow the institution to produce the kinds of graduates it envisions in its mission and vision statement (Boughey, 2011).

Personal Reflection Journey as a lecturer

Archer (2007, p. 4) defines reflexivity as the process of self-examination that regularly basis, involving examining one's judgments, practices, and belief systems. Reflexive discussion is based on how people as agents can develop over time. Hence, I will talk about my own experience as a part-time time lecturer at UNAM from 2021-to date.

Joining teaching and learning back in 2021, I came up with the notion that my role as a lecturer would be to facilitate students' investigation into the topic. However, I was faced with more challenges than I anticipated. Reading Archer's (1995) theory of Social Realism, I related to so many structural and cultural challenges within the UNAM Set-up. Although I have worked for UNAM for more than five (5) years, I was positioned in administration as a library assistant; my role was to interact with students as users of the library rather than a facilitator of learning in a classroom set-up.

First, I was never given an orientation in an academic environment as a lecturer, a process that is important because it lays a foundation. I felt uncomfortable and not confident enough to deliver er full potential of knowledge sharing. I must admit, I was appointed based on having industrial knowledge with a master's degree in the field and not necessarily having formal teaching qualifications or experience, seemingly, a cultural norm adopted at UNAM. Conversely, we recently saw an article written by one of our own, Professor Kangira who wrote an opinion article citing that only PhD holders should lecture at universities (New Era, 2023). He advised the master's degree holders who are teaching in universities to make use of this time before policies supporting this are enforced. He further urged local universities to adopt the PhD policy now that is if they have not done so, to be abreast with time and the rest of the world in higher education (New Era, 2023).

Secondly, I never have to read and familiarize myself with UNAM academic policies and procedures, although they are freely available on the UNAM intranet. This was to help me establish expectations such as class attendance, student discipline, and many others. These are (culture) adopted by an organization such as UNAM (structure) and are actioned by individuals such as employees (agents). Assenting Archer (2005) noted that Social Realism domains are always working together to achieve a common goal.

Thirdly, although I enjoyed teaching, I felt overworked. When I took over the extra work of teaching, I never imagined that I would have to work beyond my capacity or strength. The feeling of accomplishment pushed me forward to achieving my set personal life goals. Having to prepare lessons, facilitating the lessons, and setting and marking assessments became too much. At this stage, I became confined to my work to meet strict deadlines, I must admit I was shaped and moulded by the social context I found myself in. This relates to what Archer (2002. P.11) when she says, "People reflect and act upon their social context along others like them to transform and make a contribution to the realization of set goals"

No motivation in terms of compensation, for most of us working at UNAM library and holding a master's degree, teaching at the department is regarded as part of the community engagement. Hence, no payments for the work done. My expectation is the department could have put in place some non-monetary compensation such as experiential rewards, and flexible working hours, although not everyone wants to work at home people attach great importance to flexible working, to mention but few of those which would motivate the volunteer staff members undertaking teaching.

The approach taken was, to introduce the topic in advance and ask students to go do their research and have a discussion in class. Although learning from home is considered convenient, it can also be a challenge, as most students would lack the interest to participate. Too often, the lecturer experienced passive participation which can be attributed to non-face-to-face interaction. However, with a few who were able to participate, the learning environment became interesting for me as a facilitator. It is through these practices I learned that students learn best by finding solutions to problems on their own. Hence, I strongly suggest going forth that; students should be allowed to think of solutions to practical problems themselves before the teacher shows them how they are solved. And seeing that it worked with me. I became more inclined to regard students as active participants in the process of acquiring knowledge to see

myself as the individual playing the main role of transmission of information and sharing of knowledge.

As I started teaching, I discovered that there were many challenges faced by students. I should mention that, back then, was the time when the world was experiencing a lockdown to COVID-19, hence classes were held online.

For most students, their previous learning experiences did not prepare them for the eLearning. This was a challenge not just experienced by UNAM students but many other universities, one example is that (Kgabo, 2021) wrote about when he undertook a study on to look at: Challenges Experienced by Lecturers in Supporting Students at an Open Distance e-Learning Institution. Findings from the study revealed that lecturers were not inducted on their core functions hence the shortcomings in delivery of student support services.

Although technology presented a powerful fix for continuing learning during lockdown times. It also came with some challenges ranging from**:**

1. Technical issues – students experienced low bandwidth internet connections, and many times they were kicked- out of the lesson. Hence, these students were required to meet the eight (80) percent class attendance to be admitted to the examinations.

2. Digital illiteracy- I lectured the first-year students, and some of them had no idea how to operate or use a computer**.** Hence, some students lacked the basic ICT skills and ended up having trouble logging onto the lesson, this was a huge problem experienced by many students I taught.

3. Financially disadvantaged – This is a sad reality for most students whose parents cannot afford to sustain them financially. Aitana (20wrote an article in the Namibian newspaper about the challenges faced by students, resulting in them being envy and carelessness leading to a traumatic or stressful experience negatively affecting their studies.

Furthermore, some students could not afford to buy data to attend classes online, while others could not afford transport money to the university to attend face-to-face classes. Many of my students dropped out because they had to take up odd jobs to pay their tuition fees. Hence, the time for classes was not adequate.

This brings me to another problem that I faced because I had no idea how to profile my students to understand their different backgrounds and how best one could deal with them.

The profiling of the students in my class is mainly done in terms of "about yourself" This includes (name, course of study, year of study, and interests). What is neglected in the profiling was the aspects of (career aspirations, work experience, memberships of society, drama group, skills emphasizing the natural talent and areas of expertise of a student, etc...).

Some of the above-mentioned profiling presented challenges in planning a good engaging lesson that would fit the module. I found it difficult to get students engaged in the lesson.

The main issue with which I am concerned in this paper is that of connecting a concept of human action with structural explanation in social analysis. In the making of such a connection, I shall argue, with the national development goals and the changing global environment. It is only fair if the university takes the responsibility to provide enabling learning and teaching environments for every student registered as alluded to in the vision and mission statement (University of Namibia Act of 1992 (Act 18 of 1992). Students are faced with so many challenges (financial constraints, technical bandwidth, and access to online resources in terms of library usage). We see the University of Namibia committing to the implementation of learning and teaching approaches that are aligned with its core functions, vision, and mission (University of Namibia Act of 1992 (Act 18 of 1992). Nevertheless, the question is, is it done? If so, why are students still complaining? Why are there so many articles written about the challenges faced by students and the higher education sector (Aitana, 2021; Ndalipo, 2017, Report New Era, 2016; Nakale, 2020)? All these newspaper articles talk about the challenges faced by University students. The policies in place advocate for a paradigm shift learning-centred-centred philosophy that foregrounds student learning with success. I see the system failing the students, policies are being formed yet the culture exercised by the agents who are tasked to excise and execute these policies does not apply them entirely. We see several articles written in the New Era of 14 June 2012 on lecturers exchanging ideas of what teaching and learning in higher education should be conducted and all the scandals that are taking place where lecturers are being accused of exchanging sex for marks. An article by Karumazondo (2011) in the New Era newspaper of 14 May 2011 also talks about the sex scandals that are taking place in the academic setting. New Era, 2012hese scandals are not only taking place at UNAM, but they are also taking place at sister universities such as the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). One example is that which Nico Smit wrote on 19 October

2011 https://allafrica.com/stories/201110200929.html). What happened to academic integrity? At what point do educators in higher education for example those at UNAM guided by assessment and award policy underpinned by the principles of effective assessment outlined in the procedures, guidelines, and regulations of this Policy is 7.5. That speaks of UNAM ensuring that all students who successfully qualify for a qualification award will have met the assessment and credit requirements about the stated programme learning outcomes"

Additionally, Universities are pressured to conform to global trends, mainly in terms of technology, often the infrastructure to execute these is failing them dismally. A study done by Ilonga et al., (2020) revealed that distance students in Namibian Universities are faced with challenges IT-related, Lecturer time-related challenges, and institution related challenges.

Again, we see these three domains of SR coming into place and working alongside each other. Questions to ponder on include 1. Who is responsible for policy development? 2. Are the people affected by these policies involved in the formation of these policies and 3. Are the people who are responsible for executing these policies happy?

The impact of social realism cannot be exclusive in any discussion. The next chapter delves into curriculum development.

Conclusion

The chapter delved into effective teaching and learning strategies, underscoring the role of Social Realism Theory in understanding the interplay between the domains of culture, structure, and agency. The domain of culture focused on shared values and beliefs within the academic community, while the domain of structure examined institutional policies and resources. The domain of agency highlighted the individual actions and choices of educators and students. Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, the discussion presented a comprehensive model for teaching and learning in higher education, It highlighted the importance of considering a holistic manner to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning practices. The discussion provided valuable insights and practical strategies for enhancing teaching and learning in higher education, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity, technological integration, and student engagement.

CHAPTER 2: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA (UNAM): A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

Education has always been packed with new ideas about learning and teaching. Teachers and administrators are tasked with the responsibility to reform and develop curricula and programmes (Yasar and Aslan, 2021). Yasar and Aslan (2021) define curriculum as the constitution of education that directs the entire education system. Curriculum Development (CD) is not only about a university, the learners, and the lecturers, it is also about the development of a society in general, improving the economy of a country by providing answers or solutions to the world's pressing conditions and problems such as environment, politics, and socioeconomics (Moll, 2004. p3). This discussion provides an overview of the Philosophical foundation paradigms; it covers the importance of CD and processes influencing curriculum development. The discussion further covers the constraints and enabling factors and a self-reflection on curriculum development focusing on UNAM.

Philosophical foundations paradigm

Alele and Malau-Aduli, (2023) define philosophical foundations paradigm as the underlying set of beliefs, assumptions, and principles that guide how researchers view the world and conduct their studies. According to Shah (2019). Philosophy is important for the development of any kind of CD, there are many aspects involved in the CD process, these aspects include:

- Objectives of learning,
- Sources of the contents/subject matter,
- Nature of pedagogical practices,
- Characteristics of the learner,
- Assessment procedures, and many others.

Professor Shah (2019) argues that, without philosophy, educators will have no direction as to what and how to organize and implement whatever they are trying to achieve within the school system.

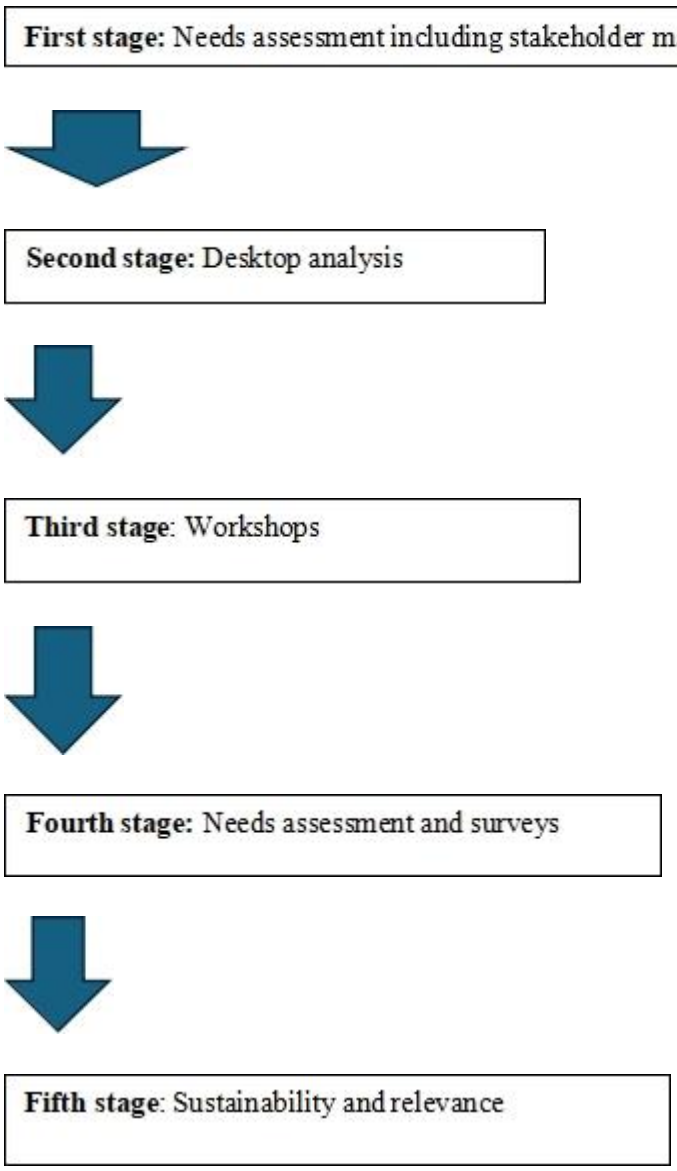
Integrating the Philosophical Paradigms in Curriculum Design

Loveless (2023) states that if those who develop the curriculum take a holistic approach, merging elements from different ideas they can create a comprehensive and more inclusive curriculum. For instance, the CD will be flexible adapting the curriculum to meet diverse student needs and learning styles and it will continue to improve, because of the regular reviewing and updating of the curriculum based on feedback and new educational research (Loveless, 2023). Understanding these paradigms can help educators design curricula that are not only academically rigorous but also responsive to the needs and contexts of their students.

Curriculum Development and Processes – Using UNAM as an example

UNAM has an Academic Programme Development Policy and Procedures, a policy that ensures all UNAM academic programmes advance the academic project by considering the multiple purposes of higher education and achieving its vision and mission (UNAM, 2023). What is more, there are plans in place for regular curriculum/program review so that programmes are responsive to changing disciplinary, educational, and social circumstances. In addition, the development and review of programmes take into consideration the national higher education policies and frameworks (UNAM, 2023).

Figure 1: The CD approval process at the UNAM basic stages:



The first stage starts with conducting a needs assessment (including stakeholder mapping and engagement, desktop analysis, workshops, needs assessment, and surveys) to determine the viability, sustainability, and relevance of all (undergraduate and postgraduate) new programmes (UNAM, 2023).

In the second stage, the department/school develops a new programme, in consultation with support units. For UNAM, the support units are the Office of the Bursar, Human Capital Directorate, Strategic and Institutional Planning, etc. These units provide essential resources and expertise, ensuring the programme aligns with institutional goals and complies with regulatory requirements. This collaborative approach helps to create a robust and sustainable

programme that meets the needs of students and the broader academic community (UNAM, 2023).

The next third stage is curriculum development or review; at this stage, all programmes are developed by the policy. This involves a full examination of the course content, learning outcomes, and assessment methods to ensure they meet academic standards and industry requirements. Faculty members work together with curriculum specialists and external stakeholders e.g. those that are in the industry, to combine the latest research, technological improvements, and pedagogical strategies. This stage is key for sustaining the importance and quality of educational contributions, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for their future careers (UNAM, 2023).

The fourth stage is academic approval of the programme, as the departmental/school level develops a programme in consultation with stakeholders and tables it to School Board. This procedure requires a specified complete evaluation of the programme's objectives, curriculum, and resources to ensure it aligns with the institution's strategic goals and academic policies. The School Board's approval is crucial as it supports the programme's quality and feasibility, making way for its execution (UNAM, 2023).

The fifth deals with National Qualification Framework (NQF) which is responsible for the registration of the programme. This stage makes sure that the programme meets national educational standards and qualifications criteria. The department/school submits the programme to the NQF for evaluation, where it undergoes a rigorous review process. This includes verifying that the programme's learning outcomes, assessment methods, and qualification levels are in line with national benchmarks. Successful registration with the NQF is essential for the programme's recognition and credibility, allowing graduates to receive qualifications that are respected and valued both locally and internationally. The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) is a legal body responsible for overseeing and regulating higher education in Namibia with a primary role of ensuring quality (UNAM, 2023).

The NCHE Accreditation - All Senate-approved programmes (new and revised) are required to be registered or reregistered on the NQF and accredited or re-accredited by NCHE before implementation. The sixth stage is programme implementation, upon approval of a new or revised programme by the Senate, there shall be at least one (1) year lead-time before implementation to allow for NQF registration, NCHE accreditation, programme marketing,

and resource allocation. In the seventh stage, the programme is monitored and evaluated by faculties/schools/departments as per the quality assurance and management policy of UNAM. In the last stage, the curriculum is reviewed on a five (5) year cycle as determined by the senate and in line with NQF regulations (UNAM, 2023). The problems that may arise from these developmental processes for teachers can include: the CD will be more teacher-centred, and the teacher control of the selection, sequencing, pacing, and evaluation aspects. Students become passive recipients and risk the possibility of having minimal to no student intervention in curriculum development (UNAM, 2023).

The influence of Curriculum Development within UNAM context

UNAM is Namibia's oldest state-owned university that was established under the Parliament Act 18 of 1992 and began operating in 1992 (UNAM, 2015:03). Four (4) Faculties hold academic programmes at UNAM, as follows (UNAM, 2015:03): Faculty of Agriculture, Engineering and Natural Science, Faculty Commerce Management and Law, Faculty of Education and Human Sciences and Faculty of Health Sciences and Veterinary Medicine.

Over the years, the influence of political, technological, and social settings has encouraged the development of curricula based on learners'-based experiences, for purposes of relevance. At UNAM, CD is mainly influenced by the national mandate that demands service delivery from UNAM to train and produce graduates that can carry out and advance the nation (UNAM, 2023). Though considered traditional, but still useful and greatly influenced and guided the way for a successful CD for several years (UNAM, 2023). UNAM's vision, mission, and core values are strongly articulated through the UNAM Academic Programme Development Policy and Procedures of 2022 (UNAM, 2022). Highlighting the need to shape and contribute to the assurance and enhancement of the quality of all academic programmes offered at UNAM, ensuring that academic programmes are responsive to the needs of students, the discipline, the economy, and the sociocultural context within which they operate. Additionally, the core values define the code of conduct, behaviour, and ethics guidelines. Interactions and decision-making provide a common framework that is robust, but flexible and responsive to emerging industry and societal opportunities and innovations. These values include professionalism, integrity, accountability, and equity which refer to fair and impartial treatment of colleagues, customers, and stakeholders, regardless of differences.

Unlocking Success: The Benefits of Each Step in CD

- Firstly, looking at the processes of CD at UNAM it has produced many programmes that have been transformed and evolved over the years.
- Secondly, different agents are developing the curriculum programmes at all levels who are carefully selected and considered because of knowledge and skill, allowing collaboration and accountability because all the social structures are involved in the CD.
- Thirdly, programmes at all levels are developed to produce graduates who can contribute to the social and economic advancement of Namibia, Africa, and beyond.
- Lastly, through diversity and collaboration with external stakeholders, CD is developed at higher standards enough to help in discovering and closing gaps.

Navigating Challenges: The Constraints of CD

- There has been a notable long process that the CD undergoes. For instance, each stage involves thorough planning, collaboration, and evaluation to ensure the programme's quality and relevance.
- The process of CD undergoes through so many stages.
- From initial concept and stakeholder consultation to detailed curriculum design, academic approval, and alignment with national standards, every step is crucial, although this comprehensive process is done to ensure that the final programme not only meets educational standards but also addresses the needs of students, industry demands, and societal expectations. However,

Roles of Various Agencies in Curriculum Development at UNAM

Every role has key responsibilities, it is important to boost operational effectiveness to improve the processes of CD. Let us look at some roles of various agencies playing a role in the CD at UNAM**.** The Pro Vice Chancellor (PVC): Academic Affairs is accountable for overall overseeing the implementation of the policy, the Centre for Quality Assurance and Management (CEQUAM) a the centre responsible for developing and enhancing the university's capabilities in quality assurance, ensuring that both academic and managerial activities meet high standards, therefore, director of CEQUAM takes responsibilities for the implementation, monitoring, and review

The Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) is a centre is devoted to supporting the university community in their learning, teaching, and assessment activities across all modes of study, the. director of CILT is responsible for the provision of a technology-enhanced environment for the implementation of new and revised programmes, thereby ensuring that the quality of programme implementation is not compromised (UNAM, 2023). The office of the Registrar is responsible for maintaining the updated record of new and revised programmes and awards as approved by Senate (UNAM, 20230. The office of the University Librarian is responsible for the provision of adequate library resources to support new and revised programmes, thereby ensuring that the quality of programme implementation is not compromised. Executive Deans are responsible for providing academic leadership; coordinating programme development, approval, monitoring, and periodic review at the faculty level, and ensuring that all new and revised programmes adhere to quality standards and approved guidelines and procedures. Associate Deans are responsible for providing academic leadership; coordinating programme development, approval, monitoring, and periodic review at the school level, and ensuring that all new and revised programmes adhere to quality standards and approved guidelines and procedures. Heads of Departments (HODs) are responsible for programme development approval, monitoring and periodic review at the departmental level, and ensuring that all new and revised programmes adhere to quality standards and approved guidelines and procedures. Professional Service Directors are responsible for the provision of adequate and appropriate infrastructure, facilities, and equipment required to effectively implement the new and revised programmes, thereby ensuring that the quality of programme implementation is not compromised (UNAM, 2023).

UNAM uses the bottom-up approach when developing the Curriculum, this approach generally focuses on specific characteristics and micro attributes of an individual. In this approach, every sector is given a concentration seeking to identify opportunities through the distinctiveness of an institution dimension and its assessment about the societal environment in which it operates. Therefore, CD at UNAM is aligned at the macro (i.e. institutional and national imperatives) and micro i.e. within the curriculum levels (Yasar and Aslan, 2021).

In the bottom-up approach, the CD documentation processes, every aspect is carefully examined and given concentration making the whole process long and tiring. However, in developing a curriculum, curriculum theory plays a vital role in examining what kind of learning environment to have. Curriculum theory is classified as; academic, technological,

humanist, and social re-constructionist curriculum theories (Yasar and Aslan, 2021). According to humanist curriculum theory, giving students basic but useful experiences is important. Social re-constructors focus on improving social values and developing critical thinking processes with the help of the curriculum (Yasar and Aslan, 2021). Yasar and Aslan (2021), closely relate Curriculum theory to personal views on what is true and important about us and our world, which extends to individual, social, and cultural depths. There is a need for decolonising some programmes in terms where the course is in demand to fill the local industrial gaps but fails to equip students with relevant skills to work on global standards.

Personal Insights: Reflecting on the Curriculum Development

As a part-time lecturer with no prior experience in curriculum development, my journey through this process has been both enlightening and challenging. Initially, I felt somewhat disconnected from the core activities of curriculum design, as the department did not involve me in the early stages. My involvement came later, primarily as a stakeholder providing feedback on the proposed curriculum.

This experience highlighted the importance of inclusivity and communication in curriculum development. Being brought in at a later stage meant that I had to quickly familiarize myself with the proposed content and structure. While this was a steep learning curve, it also provided a unique perspective. I was able to offer fresh insights and identify potential gaps or areas for improvement that might have been overlooked by those deeply immersed in the process from the beginning.

One of the key challenges I faced was understanding the intricacies of curriculum design without having been part of the initial discussions and planning. This made it difficult to fully grasp the rationale behind certain decisions. However, it also underscored the value of diverse perspectives in creating a well-rounded curriculum. My feedback, based on my teaching experience and interactions with students, contributed to refining the programme to better meet their needs.

Despite the challenges, this experience was incredibly rewarding. It allowed me to see the broader picture of how educational programmes are developed and the various factors that need to be considered. I gained a deeper appreciation for the meticulous planning and collaboration

required to create a curriculum that is both academically rigorous and relevant to students' future careers.

Being involved as a stakeholder also taught me the importance of continuous professional development. To provide meaningful feedback, I had to stay updated on current trends in education and industry requirements. This not only enhanced my contributions to the curriculum development process but also improved my teaching practices.

Reflecting on this experience, I realize the significance of involving all educators, including part-time lecturers, in the curriculum development process from the outset. Their practical insights and direct interactions with students can provide valuable input that enhances the overall quality of the programme. Moving forward, I hope to be more actively involved in future curriculum development projects, leveraging my experience to contribute more effectively.

In conclusion, my journey through curriculum development as a part-time lecturer has been a learning experience filled with both challenges and rewards. It has broadened my understanding of the educational landscape and underscored the importance of inclusivity and continuous learning. By reflecting on this process, I am better equipped to contribute to the development of high-quality educational programmes that truly benefit our students.

Conclusion

Curriculum development in higher education has many different processes that require careful planning, collaboration, and continuous evaluation. This chapter has explored the various stages involved, from initial concept and stakeholder consultation to detailed curriculum design, academic approval, and alignment with national standards.

One of the main insights from this discussion is the importance of inclusivity and communication. Involving a diverse range of stakeholders, including part-time lecturers and industry partners, ensures that the curriculum is comprehensive and addresses the needs of all parties involved. This collaborative approach not only enhances the quality of the educational programme but also fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among all contributors.

The challenges faced during curriculum development, such as balancing diverse perspectives and adhering to regulatory requirements, highlight the need for a structured yet flexible

approach. Each stage of the process builds upon the previous one, creating a cohesive and robust programme that meets academic standards and prepares students for their future careers.

Reflecting on personal experiences, particularly from the perspective of a part-time lecturer, draws attention to the value of continuous professional development and the importance of being actively involved in the curriculum development process. The insights gained from teaching and interacting with students provide valuable feedback that can significantly enhance the curriculum.

In conclusion, curriculum development is a dynamic and ongoing process that requires dedication, collaboration, and a commitment to excellence. By embracing these principles, higher education institutions can create programmes that are not only academically rigorous but also relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of students and society. This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the curriculum development process, highlighted both the challenges and rewards, and offered valuable lessons for future projects.

CHAPTER 3: ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENTS

Introduction

Many scholars (Fisher 2023; Centre for Education Research and Innovation International Conference 2008; McEwan, 2021; Biggs 2003), have stressed the importance of student assessment in the processes of teaching and learning. They say assessment is very important to the education process. However, McEwan (2021) argues that the main purpose of assessing students should be to provide interpretative information to teachers and school leaders about their impact on students so that these educators have the best information possible to adapt. So often assessments in schools are carried out to inform students of their progress and attainment (McEwan, 2021, p. 2).

In this chapter, I provide insightful discussion on the importance of assessment to the learning process that each educator is believed to have engaged with as part of the formal courses. Furthermore, in the discussion, I will critically reflect on who I was before this course including the assessment practices. Finally, I will use what I have learned in this course to reconceptualize assessment methods and approaches.

Institutional and National Policies

According to Biggs (2003, p. 1), Teaching and learning take place in a system such as a classroom, departmental, or institutional. A good system sets up an aligned system by specifying the desired outcome. Biggs (2003. p.2) attains that, in setting up an aligned system desired learning exit is specified in terms of topics to be covered. By doing this, a deeper level of understanding is guaranteed to be achieved (Biggs, 2003). The UNAM has in place the Assessment and Award policy (UNAM, 2013). Assessment is defined as the process of collecting feedback on students' learning in terms of what, how much, and how well they are learning" That can thus be used to make judgments on student learning regarding promotion. Alternatively, the feedback can be used to refocus the learning and teaching activities to help students make their learning more efficient and effective. However, people make commitments and take responsibility when there are guiding principles, statements, and policies in place. Therefore, without good policies, it will be difficult to guide learning, teaching, and assessments. Policies must be developed and implemented to achieve the desired result.

There are several policies and strategies governing assessments at UNAM), the Assessment and Award policy was revised and approved by Senate in September 2021. The Senate is the university's highest academic body with the core function of regulating and overseeing the teaching and discipline of the university and promoting research. The development of the assessment and award policy is guided by related legislation, policies, and regulations including:

1. The University of Namibia Act (Act No. 18 of 1992) provides for the administration and control of affairs, for the regulation of its activities, and matters incidental thereto (University of Namibia Act (Act No. 18 of 1992).
2. The Higher Education Act regulates higher education, providing the establishment, objectives, functions, and composition of the National Council for Higher Education.
3. The Namibia Qualifications Authority Act, which sets up and administers a national qualifications framework.

At UNAM, different parts play a role in the development and implementation of the Assessment and Award Policy as follows: (a) The Pro-Vice-Chancellor: Academic Affairs is responsible for the implementation of the policy in line with UNAM's vision and mission. (b) The Registrar is responsible for the implementation of the policy about the administration of examinations, invigilation, and graduation matters. (c) Executive Deans are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy at the faculty level. (d) Associate Deans and Heads of Departments are responsible for operationalizing the policy in their respective schools/departments, including maintaining quality assurance procedures related to both face-to-face and online assessment, as well as the processing of continuous assessment marks (CA). (e) Lecturers are responsible for the implementation of the policy as an integral part of learning and teaching, including compliance with the assessment principles, procedures, and guidelines outlined in the policy, as well as acquainting their students with the expectations of the policy at the course level. (f) Students are expected to be familiar with the content and terms of the policy at the institutional, programme, and course level, and the specific rules and regulations about assessment for their respective programmes, modules, or courses, and shall always exercise integrity about assessment. (g) The Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) & Centre for Quality Assurance and Management (CEQUAM) are responsible for giving academic support such as quality assurance of assessment (UNAM, 2021).

The dominant culture is that of hierarchical governing structures as stipulated in the University of Namibia Act (Act No. 18 of 1992). Institutional leaders are those that occupy the highest offices such as the Council and Senate with the responsibility to oversee the successful development and implementation of policies as stated in the (UNAM, 2021). With guidance from national policies or acts such as The Higher Education Act regulates higher education by providing the establishment of the institution.

Professional course developers are those responsible for developing curriculum/course and must take into consideration the concept of constructive alignment. Biggs (2016) states that there is a need for coherence between all elements of the curriculum, including course purpose, outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment methods should all be aligned to ensure that the desired learning is achieved. For many lecturers, they are responsible for indorse and exercising the policy, even though not all of them form part of the policy development.

Principles, Practices, and Procedures of Assessment at UNAM

Assessment plays a key role in higher education, serving to evaluate student learning, inform instructional practices, and uphold academic standards. This chapter explores the two-fold functions of assessment—both as a tool for measuring student achievement (assessment of learning) and to enhance the learning process (assessment for learning). By employing the lens of social realism, we delve into the complex interplay between educational assessments and the broader social structures within which they operate.

The (3) three Reasons for Conducting Classroom Assessments

1. Assessment OF learning is grade-based to help identify if students are meeting grade-level standards (McEwan, 2021, P.4). One example of this type of assessment is summative assessment. Assessments done through Summative are mainly used to measure what students have learned at the end of the unit, help in promoting students, and ensuring they have met the required standards to be able to get a certificate for completion.

2. Assessment FOR learning is ongoing and actionable through the provision of feedback to improve learning (McEwan, 2021, p.5). Effective or constructive feedback should be given to students well on time, the feedback should be meaningful, and it should be linked to the assessment criteria (Biggs, 2003).

3. Assessment as learning, this approach encourages students to take an active role in their learning by engaging in self-assessment and reflection. It helps students develop critical thinking and self-regulation skills. Techniques include reflective journals, self-evaluation checklists, and learning portfolios (McEwan, 2021). The goal is to empower students to understand their learning processes and to take responsibility for their educational progress.

At UNAM, the main principles of effective assessment are done face-to-face and online. Here are the procedures and regulations for conducting assessments. (a) Assessments are conducted through formative assessments done through repeated interactive assessments of student progress and understanding (Dixson and Worrell, 2016). The main reason for formative assessment is to improve learning for students. (b). Assessments are aligned with the course outcome and the curriculum/programme outcomes.

Additionally, assessment must be fair to the students; lecturers must assess students on what they have taught them (Dixson and Worrell, 2016). Lecturers must use different methods and assessment types to address all students' needs and abilities. The Assessment and Award Policy at UNAM is also very vocal on equity. This means everyone should be tested in a favourable way of their abilities in doing so, the results will be fair (Biggs, 2003). As such, teachers at UNAM are guided and encouraged by the policy to use multiple assessment types for students being assessed, the teacher must give students reasonable deadlines, students should be given options/choices to demonstrate their learning abilities, and the teacher should make sure the students understand and have access to materials (Dixson and Worrell, 2016).

Social Realism in Educational Assessment

The structures show that the highest level possesses powers that govern the latter, Archer and Morgan (2020, p. 192), argue that the latter must be treated as an important aspect because it poses a failure threat if the agents (people) appear to be no more or less than defined by and reducible roles or positions they occupy or engage in.

To understand what happens in multifaceted social systems that are characterized by different strata, where structures such as policies, guidelines, and strategies are in place one needs to carefully examine the role each of these societal systems plays. However, the system may continue to display evidence of a dysfunctional culture when social structure works in isolation. Just as the study done by Josua et al., (2022) found that there are structural, cultural, and

agential constraints that hinder the successful management and implementation of the revised curriculum. This can also be attributed to the success of the assessment of students in higher learning.

UNAM Assessment and Award Policy shows that the dominant discourse is still the assessment OF learning (University of Namibia, 2021). Assessment is still predominantly related to issues of measurement, certification, quality assurance, and so on. It is about certifying existing knowledge and giving students feedback on current learning (University of Namibia, 2021, p.3).

Social Dynamics Shaping and Shaped by Assessment Practices

Assessment practices are influenced by and influence the social context of the classroom. Factors such as cultural norms, socio-economic backgrounds, and institutional policies play a significant role. For example:

a) Cultural norms: Different cultures may have unpredictable approaches regarding assessment, affecting how students take in and respond to different methods. b). Socio-economic backgrounds: Students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds may have different levels of access to resources, impacting their performance and engagement with assessments, and c**).** Institutional policies: Policies on assessment can shape the educational environment, influencing how assessments are designed and implemented. It is believed that, by understanding these dynamics, educators can create more equitable and effective assessment practices that support all students learning (Archer, 1995).

Personal Reflection on Assessment of and for Students

Many lecturers face the challenge of distinguishing between assessment **OF** and **FOR** students. At UNAM, the prevailing culture of student assessment focuses on grading. Reflecting on my own experience when I began teaching in 2021, I realized that my approach to assessment was influenced by my experiences as a student. Consequently, I replicated the methods I had encountered, without understanding whether my assessments were formative intended primarily to educate and improve student performance rather than merely audit it (Dixon & Worrell, 2016, p. 154). Summative assessments, as defined by Dixon and Worrell (2016, p. 156), are cumulative evaluations designed to capture what a student has learned, assess the quality of that learning, and judge performance against established standards.

I came to understand that assessments should not only be quantified but also measured in terms of quality and completion. I also learned that constructive alignment is one key aspect that helps students construct meaning through relevant learning. Biggs (2016), states that students are supposed to learn preferred outcomes in a reasonable and in effect manner. For that reason, the teacher's major task is to get students involved in learning activities that are likely to result in their achieving those outcomes (Biggs, 2003). Additionally, I learned that constructive feedback though underrated, provides actionable feedback, and the teacher can help students understand where they have gone wrong and where they need to improve (Clarence et al., 2015, p. 4). I also learned that Moodle's learning platform could be used to assess students through peer reviews, online quizzes, and discussions. Some tools can be used to assess students one of them being Moodle which has been made available to every teacher at UNAM. What I will do, I will begin by aligning the module assessment to the exit learning or outcome. Choosing assessment methods aligned with the outcome with the hope that students will be, have a valuable learning experience. Henceforth, the assessment tasks in my context as a librarian, aim at graduating information professionals. Assessments will be designed to teach students how to apply the principles of Information management.

Therefore, I have changed from guiding statements to students, to a valuable learning experience, the main tasks that I will give to students are group presentations and individual written assessment tasks. Students will be given time to work on these tasks during classes as well as in their own time outside of class. Closely related to what Hans-Peter Bakker, a management lecturer used to assess his students (Clarence et al., 2015, p. 6).

Finally, I plan to make assessments fun and engaging through the introduction of gamification. Not only will this be fun and engaging I envisage it to aid the transformation from guiding statements to students to a valuable learning experience.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the diverse assessment methods used in higher education, highlighting their implications for student learning and the social dynamics they influence and are influenced by. Through formative, summative, self-, and peer assessments, educators can test student progress, provide meaningful feedback, and foster a supportive learning environment.

In conclusion, assessment in higher education is complex and involves many process that requires careful consideration of both educational and social factors. By employing a variety of assessment methods and being mindful of the social context, educators can enhance the learning experience and promote a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

CHAPTER 4: EVALUATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

This chapter aims to delve into the multifaceted realm of quality assurance in higher education, examining its various dimensions and exploring the impact it has on academic excellence. Investigating the key principles, challenges, and best practices, we seek to unravel the complex wall hanging that defines quality assurance and its role in shaping the future of higher education.

Quality assurance in higher education refers to the systematic processes and procedures implemented to maintain and enhance the quality of academic programs, teaching, and research within tertiary institutions (Kis, 2005). As the global landscape of education evolves, the role of quality assurance becomes increasingly vital in ensuring that institutions meet and exceed established standards (Kis, 2005). In an era where education serves as the cornerstone of societal progress, the importance of quality assurance cannot be overstated. Beyond ensuring academic excellence, a robust quality assurance framework contributes to the reputation of institutions, student satisfaction, and the overall advancement of knowledge and skills crucial for a rapidly changing world (Kis, 2005).

This chapter will unfold in various main sections. First, we will explore the foundational principles of quality assurance in higher education. Secondly, we will take a funnel approach to analyse the quality assurance in the context of starting from the National, institutional, Departmental, and individual levels using Luckett's (2013) four (4) quadrants as the analytical tool. Next, we will delve into the challenges faced by institutions in implementing effective quality assurance measures. Finally, we will discuss best practices and innovations that contribute to the continual improvement of higher education quality standards (Luckett, 2013).

Fundamental Principles of Quality Assurance

The foundational principles of quality assurance in higher education involve several key concepts that support effective educational practices and processes. These principles serve as guiding frameworks to ensure that institutions maintain and enhance the quality of their educational offerings (Luckett, 2013). Some of the foundational principles include:

Continuous improvement emphasizes the ongoing improvement of educational programs, processes, and outcomes through systematic review, assessment, and feedback mechanisms, the other standard is stakeholder engagement which recognizes the importance of involving various stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, administrators, employers, and community members, in quality assurance processes to ensure their perspectives are considered and valued (Luckett, 2013).

The institution should be accountable which requires institutions to take responsibility for the quality of their educational programs and services, as well as to demonstrate adherence to established standards and expectations set by accrediting bodies, regulatory agencies, and other stakeholders ((Luckett, 2013). In addition, professional development highlights the significance of providing faculty, staff, and administrators with opportunities for ongoing professional development and training to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies in quality assurance practices (Luckett, 2013).

These principles collectively contribute to the establishment of a culture of quality within higher education institutions, fostering a commitment to excellence, innovation, and student success ((Luckett, 2013). By adhering to these foundational principles, institutions can effectively navigate the complexities of quality assurance and continuously strive to improve the quality of their educational offerings.

Context Analysis

In the context of analyzing quality assurance in an academic environment, the conceptual framework using the quadrants provided by the Luckett (2013) analytical tool is used. The analysis will be done at the National, Institutional, Departmental, and Individual levels by (Graham, Angolo, and Combrinck, 2023). However, the placement of quality assurance in the quadrants would depend on the specific characteristics of the educational institution or system in question as stated by Graham, Angolo, and Combrinck, (2023, p.508). Therefore, a balanced approach incorporating elements from all four quadrants would likely be ideal. Collegial and facilitative rationality could be emphasised to encourage collaboration, innovation, and responsiveness, while managerial and bureaucratic rationality may play a role in ensuring compliance, efficiency, and goal achievement (Luckett, 2007).

Context Analysis - National-level (Namibia)

Namibia has a comprehensive quality assurance system in place for higher education, overseen by the Namibian Qualifications Authority (NQA). The NQA is responsible for ensuring the quality of education and training provided by institutions in Namibia. The Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) is a State-Owned Enterprise established through the Namibia Qualifications Authority Act no. 29 of 1996. The NQA's highest decision-making body is the Council which is appointed by the line minister (National Qualification Authority [NQA], n.d.).

Here are some key aspects of the national-level quality assurance in higher education in Namibia stipulated in the NQA brochure: Firstly, the NQA is the main regulatory body responsible for overseeing and coordinating the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in Namibia. The NQF provides a basis for quality assurance by establishing standards and criteria for the development and recognition of qualifications (National Qualification Authority (NQA, n.d.). Secondly, accreditation, the NQA is involved in the accreditation process of higher education institutions and programs, therefore, accreditation processes ensure that institutions and programs meet specific quality standards set by the NQA (NQA, n.d.). Thirdly is the Quality Assurance Procedures, the NQA uses some quality assurance procedures to assess and monitor the quality of higher education institutions and programs, this includes evaluating curriculum content, teaching methods, infrastructure, and other relevant aspects (NQA, n.d.). Fourthly is the use of External Quality Assurance Agencies, in some cases, external quality assurance agencies may be involved in the evaluation process, these agencies contribute additional perspectives and expertise to ensure a thorough assessment of quality, Fifthly is the Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation, where the NQA engages in continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure that institutions maintain the required quality standards, this involves periodic reviews and assessments, finally, Stakeholder Involvement is often encouraged in the quality assurance process; this includes input from students, faculty, employers, and other relevant parties to gather diverse perspectives on the quality of education provided (National Qualification Authority (NQA), n.d.).

To make it clear, these are decision-makers, such as the national education policymakers, academic experts, and stakeholders that are aligned with Collegial Rationality. The criteria for quality are inputs from academia, research, and consensus among various stakeholders. Whereas Managerial Rationality- Decision-makers such as Government bodies, and regulatory agencies. For example, the National Council for Higher Education in Namibia built in the last

decade is responsible for enhancing quality assurance, and building internal quality assurance (QA) capacity, however, it is said to have been challenging (Kadhila, 2013). The criteria for quality have been compliance with these established standards and the achievement of goals Facilitative Rationality- Collaborative efforts involving academia, industry, and policymakers. Criteria for quality: Open dialogue, flexibility in adapting to changing needs, and responsiveness to societal demands. Bureaucratic Rationality Decision-makers: Administrative bodies within the national education system. Criteria for quality: Adherence to established procedures, documentation, and adherence to policies.

Context – Institutional-level (UNAM)

The UNAM was established by Acts of Law. Specifically, the University of Namibia Act, Act 18 of 1992, established it. This legislation provides the legal framework for the establishment, structure, and operation of the University of Namibia. Qualifications offered at UNAM are recognized by the NQA, are submitted to the NQA for quality assurance and registration on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and are deemed authentic. The University of Namibia (UNAM) employs various mechanisms to ensure quality assurance in its academic programs and overall operations (UNAM, 2018).

Here are some common practices and approaches that universities, including UNAM, often use to maintain and enhance quality:

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) UNAM likely has established internal processes for quality assurance, this is an ongoing self-assessment and monitoring conducted by the university itself. IQA mechanisms may include regular program reviews, faculty evaluations, and assessments of teaching and learning practices (Kadhila, 2013). In addition, the External Quality Assurance (EQA) external bodies or agencies that provide an independent assessment of the university's quality typically conduct reviews and evaluations, these external bodies may include national quality assurance agencies or professional accreditation organizations (UNAM, 2021, p.12.). Furthermore, is accreditation, UNAM is subject to accreditation processes to ensure that academic programs meet certain standards of quality. Moreover, UNAM has established institutional policies and guidelines related to quality assurance, these documents provide a framework for maintaining and enhancing quality across various aspects of the university's operations, including teaching, research, and administration (UNAM, 2021). Equally important is Continuous Improvement which involves regularly reviewing and updating curricula that are

done on a five (5) year cycle, teaching methods, and administrative processes to adapt to changing educational needs and standards. Also, one important aspect is the Student Feedback and Evaluation that is gathered through surveys, evaluations, and other means, it is envisaged that student perspectives are valuable in assessing the quality of teaching, learning experiences, and support services (Kadhila, 2013). Finally, Professional Development for Faculty the University believes in and invests in professional development opportunities for faculty members to enhance their teaching skills, stay updated on advancements in their fields, and contribute to the overall academic quality. Research Output and Productivity Research is considered a key component of academic quality UNAM monitors and evaluates the research output and productivity of its faculty members and research centres.

Stakeholder engagement engaging with stakeholders, including students, alumni, employers, and the broader community, provides valuable input into the quality assurance process. This engagement helps the university understand the expectations and needs of various stakeholders.

Therefore, the analysis at the institutional level would be as follows:

- Firstly, collegial rationality, the decision markers here would be institutional leaders, academic faculty, and relevant committees, criteria for quality would be shared values, academic freedom, and peer review (UNAM, 2021). collegial rationality, decision-makers are department heads and faculty members. The criteria for quality assurance are dependent on academic autonomy, peer-reviewed research, and teaching excellence (Luckett, 2007).
- Managerial Rationality decision makers would be, institutional administrators, and quality assurance departments, While Criteria for quality would entail adherence to institutional policies, resource management. On managerial rationality Decision-makers (Luckett, 2007) indicate that department administrators and quality assurance coordinators are found at the departmental level, and the criteria for quality are course delivery efficiency, student performance metrics, and adherence to departmental policies (Luckett, 2007).
- Facilitative Rationality, decision-makers are cross-functional teams and collaborative committees, and the criteria for quality are continuous improvement, adaptability, and responsiveness to stakeholders. Facilitative Rationality Decision-makers: Collaborative teaching teams, departmental committees. Criteria for quality: Innovation in teaching methods, student engagement, and responsiveness to feedback

- Bureaucratic Rationality, administrative units managing processes, and compliance are the decision-makers in bureaucratic rationality.

Context – Departmental-level

Luckett (2007) indicate that, department administrators and quality assurance coordinators are found at the departmental level, and the criteria for quality are course delivery efficiency, student performance metrics, and adherence to departmental policies.

Context Analysis – Individual- level

In collegial rationality, individual faculty members, researchers, and educators make decisions. Criteria for quality, professional autonomy, contribution to the academic community, and scholarly achievements. For example, individuals write and publish research papers in accredited journals. Managerial Rationality is dependent on self-assessment, and alignment with institutional goals. Criteria for quality is on personal performance against set objectives and goals. Facilitative Rationality, collaboration with peers, continuous learning, willingness to adapt, participate in professional development, and be responsive to student needs. Bureaucratic Rationality Decision-makers: Compliance with administrative requirements. Criteria for quality: Adherence to documentation standards, and timely completion of administrative tasks (Luckett, 2007).

Placement on Quadrants:

Who decides what counts as quality in your context?

Quality is determined through a combination of collegial collaboration, managerial oversight, facilitative adaptation, and bureaucratic compliance at different levels of the education system.

Who decides what the criteria or measures of quality should be?'

The criteria for quality are influenced by a combination of academic expertise, regulatory standards, collaborative efforts, and administrative processes at various levels within the education system. The specific emphasis on each quadrant may vary based on institutional and national priorities.

Personal Reflection on Quality Assurance Evaluation

Engaging with quality assurance (QA) processes has been a transformative experience in my journey as an educator. Initially, my understanding of QA was limited to compliance with institutional standards and policies. However, through the PGDHE program, I have come to appreciate QA as a dynamic and integral part of enhancing educational quality.

One significant impact of QA on my teaching practice has been the adoption of evidence-based strategies. For instance, I have incorporated regular formative assessments to gauge student understanding and adjust my teaching methods accordingly. This approach has not only improved student engagement but also fostered a more inclusive learning environment.

Implementing QA measures has not been without challenges. One notable challenge was aligning my teaching methods with the diverse needs of students while maintaining high standards. To address this, I sought feedback from colleagues and participated in professional development workshops. These experiences provided me with practical solutions and innovative teaching techniques that have proven effective in my classroom.

Student feedback has played a crucial role in my QA journey. By actively seeking and reflecting on student input, I have been able to make meaningful improvements to my courses. For example, based on student suggestions, I introduced more interactive activities and real-world applications of theoretical concepts, which significantly enhanced the learning experience.

Continuous improvement is at the heart of QA, and I am committed to lifelong learning. I regularly review and update my teaching practices to ensure they meet evolving educational standards. This commitment is reflected in my participation in various QA initiatives and my pursuit of further qualifications in higher education.

Collaboration with colleagues has been another enriching aspect of QA. Working together to develop and implement QA strategies has not only strengthened our collective efforts but also fostered a supportive professional community. These collaborative experiences have underscored the importance of teamwork in achieving and maintaining high-quality education.

Overall, engaging with QA processes has profoundly influenced my professional growth. It has equipped me with the skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality education and has reinforced

my dedication to continuous improvement. As I move forward in my career, I am confident that the lessons learned from QA will continue to guide and inspire my teaching practice.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a complete exploration of quality assurance (QA) in higher education, highlighting its critical role in maintaining and enhancing academic standards. For a deeper understanding, the chapter began with defining QA as the systematic processes and procedures aimed at ensuring the quality of academic programs, teaching, and research within tertiary institutions. The chapter underlines the growing importance of QA in the changing global educational landscape, accenting its impact on institutional reputation, student satisfaction, and the advancement of knowledge and skills.

CHAPTER 5: TECHNOLOGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

In the influential landscape of education today, the integration of technology has become a key focus for educators aiming to enhance the learning experience for students. This essay probes into the interconnected factors of structure, culture, and agency within an academic setting that influence the successful implementation of technology in education. The relationship between the organizational structure of an institution, the usual culture within it, and the agency of educators and administrators plays a crucial role in shaping how technology is adopted and utilized. By examining how these elements interact and influence each other, this analysis seeks to provide insights into how educators can navigate the difficulties of integrating technology effectively to improve education outcomes. Through a deep exploration of these dynamics, we can gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that arise when technology is merged into the fabric of academic environments.

Integrating Technology in Education: The Dynamics of Structure, Culture, and Agency

In an academic setting, understanding the interplay of structure, culture, and agency is crucial for integrating technology to enhance education. Drawing on the theoretical framework of socialization in undergraduate education (Polmear et al., 2021). The emphasis is placed on the influence of structures, peers, and faculty members in shaping students' perceptions and values. it becomes evident that the educational environment plays a significant role in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of individuals. Furthermore, considering the importance of effective communication in professional practice (Ferguson et al., 2021). The quality of interactions within the academic setting can influence the development of professional identities and the overall success of educational initiatives:

Navigating the connection: How Structure, Culture, and Agency Shape Technology Integration in higher education

Structure

Speak of the institutional frameworks, policies, and resources that support technological integration, this includes the availability of digital infrastructure, such as the internet, modern hardware, and software, as well as technical support services. At the UNAM the Strategic Plan of 2019-2024 supports institutional frameworks, policies, and resources that facilitate technological integration (UNAM, 2019). This strategic plan outlines key themes such as institutional sustainability, translational research, and education and graduate employability, all of which emphasis of importance is placed on integrating technology to enhance educational outcomes. Additionally, the Scholarly Communications Policy also plays a role in supporting technological integration by promoting open access, digital repositories, and the use of innovative tools for scholarly communication (UNAM, 2019). Moreover, the Open Distance and eLearning policy (ODeL) policy is part of a broader policy framework that guides the implementation of blended learning and technology integration (UNAM, 2020). The policy ensures that all plans in place are aligned with the university's strategic goals and educational standards (University of Namibia, 2020).

The institutional framework, policies, and resources available at UNAM include among others: (the Academic Integrity Policy, Procedures, and Regulations, and the University of Namibia ICT policy). These policies encourage the integration of ICT tools and resources into the curriculum to enhance the teaching and learning experience, promote innovation in pedagogy, and support flexible learning environments (UNAM, 2024). Access to technology, infrastructure, and support systems can either facilitate or slow down the integration process. Additionally, structural factors such as curriculum requirements and assessment methods may shape how technology is combined into teaching and learning practices. For example, the UNAM Academic Integrity Policy and Regulations states that lecturers should be guided on how to organise students' work to be submitted electronically through the University Learning Management Systems (LMS) Moodle (UNAM, 2023).

At a national level, a policy of Information Communication Technology (ICT) exists; this policy explores the implementation of ICT policies within higher education in Namibia. Woyo, et al. (2020) surveyed students' perceptions of the implementation of technologies in higher

education. The study found that the perception of the implementation of the ICT policy in higher education in Namibia is affected mostly by a lack of ICT literacy and limited access to learning and training content. In addition to the ICT policy, there is currently a revised National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy (NSTIP), the goal of this policy is to promote and foster the development and application of science, technology, and innovation in all spheres of our society to advance socio-economic growth (Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation, 2021). Whereas the Ministry of Higher Education is the custodian of both the ICT and NSTIP policies, providing the role of administration, the University of Namibia is responsible for promoting and monitoring technology development and they are responsible for technology licensing agreements, and sharing of information and technology infrastructure (Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation, 2021). These policies jointly make certain that UNAM remains at the forefront of technological advancements in education, providing the necessary infrastructure, resources, and strategic direction to support effective technology integration.

Culture

Involves the shared values, beliefs, and practices within the academic community (Archer, 1995). A culture that embraces innovation and continuous improvement is crucial for the successful integration of technology, and many writers' places emphasis on fostering a positive attitude towards digital tools and encouraging experimentation and creativity in teaching and learning practices (Jacobs, 2016; Tierney and Lanford, 2018; Education Development Center, 2019). Professional development and training programs are vital to equip educators and students with the skills and confidence needed to effectively use technology (Education Development Education, 2019). Culture plays both the constraints and challenges encountered in leveraging technology to enhance teaching, learning, and institutional effectiveness. For example, Culture plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to technology integration in higher education, it further influences how technology is perceived, adopted, and utilized by various stakeholders within the academic community, including students, faculty, administrators, and support staff. Therefore, culture can either facilitate or hinder the effective implementation and integration of technology-enhanced teaching and learning practices. Although the integration of technology in education presents a myriad of opportunities, it also presents a few challenges within academic settings.

Opportunities of Technology Integration within Higher Education

- As advancements in science and technology continue to revolutionize learning environments, teachers and students now have access to the affluence of resources through ICT tools (Mbawala et al., 2024).

- Teachers show a certain level of expertise in incorporating technology into their pedagogical practices.

- Enhanced learning outcomes, technology can improve learning outcomes by providing interactive and engaging educational tools. For example, multimedia resources, simulations, and virtual labs can make complex concepts easier to understand.

- Collaboration and Communication, digital tools facilitate better communication and collaboration among students and between students and instructors. Tools like discussion forums, video conferencing, and collaborative documents enhance the learning community.

Challenges of Technology Integration within Higher Education

- Inadequate availability of devices and technical support,
- Unreliable internet connectivity, and
- Gaps in professional training programs hinder seamless implementation (Mbawala et al., 2024).
- There will be resistance to change, for instance, cultural norms and traditions within academic institutions may resist or hinder the adoption of new technologies due to fear of the unknown, scepticism, or attachment to traditional teaching methods, particularly digital immigrants who are most likely resistant to technology adoption (Mbawala et al., 2024).
- A lack of interest in embracing technology emanating from well-known cultural practices and structures makes it challenging to implement innovative technological solutions or adapt existing systems to meet evolving educational needs.
- cultural differences among students and faculty, such as differences in technological literacy, access to resources, or attitudes toward technology, can create barriers to equitable technology integration (UNAM, 2023).

However, exploring innovative financial technology solutions in Africa should be taken into consideration. The active interaction of technology integration, financial innovation, and educational development emphasizes the complex relationship between structure, culture, and agency in advancing educational practices.

Strategies for Maintaining a Positive Institutional Culture

- Leadership and institutional support, if an organization takes in cultures that value innovation, experimentation, and continuous improvement can foster leadership commitment and institutional support for technology integration initiatives (Ceausu et al., 2017).
- In addition, institutions should promote a culture of teamwork, openness to diverse perspectives, and shared decision-making that can facilitate the adoption and acceptance of new technologies across academic departments and disciplines (Ceausu et al., 2017).
- Professional development and training are another way where an institution prioritizes ongoing professional development and training opportunities for faculty and staff can empower individuals to effectively influence technology in their teaching, research, and administrative roles (Ceausu et al., 2017).
- Lastly, a student-centred approach, cultures that prioritize student success, engagement, and empowerment can drive the adoption of technology-enhanced pedagogies that promote active learning, personalized instruction, and accessibility (Ceausu et al., 2017).

Agency

Involves the actions and decisions of individuals within the academic setting (Archer, 1995). For instance, faculty members, administrators, and students all play active roles in how technology is adopted and utilized. Educators can leverage technology to enhance instructional methods, engage students, and personalize learning experiences. Students, on the other hand, can use digital tools to access information, collaborate with peers, and take greater control of their learning journey (Polmear et al., 2021).

The successful integration of technology in education requires a balanced approach that considers the interplay of these three elements. Structural support provides the necessary

foundation, cultural acceptance fosters a conducive environment, and individual agency drives innovation and practical application (Brouwer, et al., 2013). By addressing these dynamics, educational institutions can effectively harness the potential of technology to enhance learning outcomes and prepare students for the demands of the digital age (Polmear et al., 2021).

It is evident that the fundamental norms, values, and beliefs within the academic community also influence technology integration. A culture that values innovation, collaboration, and continuous learning is more likely to embrace technological advancements in education. Conversely, resistance to change, fear of technology replacing traditional teaching methods, or lack of awareness about the potential benefits can hinder adoption, such is the case within our institution (Brouwer, et al., 2013). The agency plays a central role in shaping the underlying forces of technology integration in higher education, influencing stakeholders' ability to navigate challenges and advantage opportunities, and driving meaningful change in teaching, learning, and institutional practices. This is the capacity of individuals or groups to act independently and make choices that influence their learning and development (Archer, 1995).

In the context of technology integration in higher education, the agency plays a vital role in how stakeholders such as students, faculty, administrators, and support staff engage with and apply technology. For instance, students as agencies involve their ability to navigate digital tools, platforms, and resources to support their learning goals, as well as their self-sufficiency in selecting and directing their educational pathways.

Faculty members as the agency involve their ability to design and implement technology-enhanced teaching strategies, adapt instructional materials to meet different student needs, and leverage educational technologies to enhance their pedagogical practices. Institutional agency refers to the capacity of higher education institutions to establish policies, allocate resources, and create supportive environments that facilitate effective technology integration across various academic programs and administrative functions. However, there are Constraints imposed by the Agency: Unequal access and digital divide: Differences in student and faculty members' access to technology, digital literacy skills, and socioeconomic backgrounds can constrain their agency in effectively utilizing technology for teaching, learning, and scholarly activities as stated by (Brouwer, et al., 2013). He further pointed out the resistance to change, as individual or collective resistance to adopting new technologies or innovative pedagogical approaches may limit agency and impede efforts to integrate technology into higher education (Brouwer, et al., 2013). Furthermore, power dynamics that classify structures and institutional

norms within academia may limit the agency of certain stakeholders, such as personal assistant faculty, graduate students, or staff members, in influencing decisions related to technology integration and policy development (Brouwer, et al., 2013).

On the other hand, there are several enabling factors influenced by the agency that can be achieved through:

(1) Empowerment and ownership, where the institution promotes a culture of empowerment and shared power that values stakeholders' voices and contributions can enhance the agency and foster combined efforts to drive technology integration inventiveness (Brouwer, et al., 2013). (2) Professional development and support: agencies involved in the institution must accorded opportunities for continuing training, professional development, and technical support to empower faculty, staff, and students to develop digital skills, explore innovative teaching practices, and effectively utilize educational technologies. (3) Flexibility and self-rule**:** the institution must give faculty and students autonomy and flexibility in selecting and customizing digital tools and resources that align with their learning objectives and preferences can promote agency and engagement in the learning process. (4) Collaborative partnerships: the institution must consider partnerships and networks with outside organizations, industry partners, and other sister institutions that can develop opportunities for collaborative research, knowledge sharing, and technology innovation, thereby enhancing agency and promoting effective technology integration (Brouwer, et al., 2013). As an agent of change, my role is crucial in driving the integration of technology within the academic setting. This involves advocating for the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning, providing training and support to colleagues, and fostering a culture of experimentation and reflection. It also entails recognizing and addressing barriers to adoption, whether they are technological, pedagogical, or cultural in nature (Brouwer, et al., 2013).

In exploring the impact of structure, culture, and agency on technology integration in education, it becomes evident that these elements play crucial roles in shaping the successful implementation of technology within academic settings. The dynamic interplay between organizational structure, cultural norms, and individual agency significantly influences the adoption and utilization of technology for educational enhancement. Institutional theory, as discussed in Affisco et al., (2013), underscores the importance of understanding the forces that challenge implementation and institutionalization processes, highlighting the complexities inherent in integrating technology in educational environments. Moreover, findings from the

Human Services Strategic Restructuring Pilot Project by Willen et al., (2013) shed light on collaborative efforts in examining support mechanisms for nonprofit organizations, emphasizing the need for cohesive structures and cultural alignment to facilitate technology integration effectively. Ultimately, a comprehensive analysis of the structural, cultural, and agency dimensions is essential for navigating the complexities of technology integration and fostering educational innovation in academic settings. The institutional framework, policies, and resources available play a significant role. Access to technology, infrastructure, and support systems can either facilitate or impede the integration process. Additionally, structural factors such as curriculum requirements and assessment methods may shape how technology is incorporated into teaching and learning practices (Brouwer, et al., 2013).

Strategies for Successful Integration of Technology in Academic Settings

In the realm of academia, the successful integration of technology presents a many-sided challenge that requires a strategic approach. To enhance education through technology key strategies must be employed to navigate the complex interplay of institutional structure, academic culture, and individual agency (Bowden et al., 2020). Getting insights from Dulaney et al., (2015) a model for integrating faith in online higher education settings, concentrating on the unique challenges faced by faculty in faith-based institutions. In addition, Bowden et al., (2020) emphasizing that educators in faith-based institutions must add and adapt their approaches to infuse technology with values and beliefs, fostering a seamless integration that aligns with the institution's mission. Furthermore, the research-practice integration model proposed by stakeholders in alcoholism treatment offers a blueprint for collaboration between academia and technological innovation, emphasizing the importance of stakeholder engagement and dissemination of research findings in driving real-world implementation. By leveraging these strategies, academic settings can pragmatically integrate technology to enrich educational experiences, bridging the gap between structure, culture, and agency for a more effective educational paradigm (Sterling et al., 2006).

Analyzing Educational Context Using TPACK Model and Self-Inclusion as Change Agent

Effective teaching requires educators to possess a deep understanding of not only their subject matter but also the pedagogical strategies and technological tools necessary to engage and empower students in the learning process. Learning using technology mostly referred to as online learning is referred to by The Namibian Open Learning Network Trust [NOLNET], 2016) as learning activities that are mediated through the Internet, using course delivery systems such as Learning Management and Content Management Systems (LMS/CMS). For UNAM it uses the Moodle LMS to mediate and deliver online and blended learning which can be synchronous: where students are required to attend learning sessions at specified times as they interact with the lecturer in real time through the internet, and asynchronous, where student has control over the path and pace at which they engage with content. For example, students can note down their questions, comments, and suggestions through messaging that the lecturer accesses and responds to at their convenience (UNAM, 2021). Kurt, (2019) recommends educators to employ the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model, that can enhance their instructional practices by integrating technology in a meaningful way that supports content learning and fosters student engagement. This entails the intersection of technological knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and subject matter knowledge known as the TPACK framework (Kurt, 2019).

Background of TPACK Model and Self-Inclusion

The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) knowledge domains highlight the importance of understanding teachers' competencies in various areas such as content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and technological knowledge. Some study findings reveal that while teachers rated themselves highly in certain domains, there is a need for further development, particularly in technological content knowledge and TPACK (Mishra and Koehler, 2006). This insight aligns with the broader discussion of adult learning and the contextual factors that influence professional development. By considering the interplay between internal learner forces and external influences, such as curriculum changes and frameworks like TPACK, educators can better support adult learners in their journey toward enhanced pedagogical practices. Integrating these perspectives into the discussion of the TPACK model and self-inclusion can offer a comprehensive understanding of how teachers can adapt and grow in response to evolving educational landscapes.

Understanding the TPACK Model in Educational Context

In examining the TPACK model within an educational context, it is crucial to consider the varied perceptions and understandings of teachers regarding the integration of technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge. The study by Cambodian high school science teachers reveals a spectrum of knowledge levels across different TPACK domains, highlighting the need for specialized ICT education to enhance teaching practices and student learning outcomes (Thy, et al. (2023). Similarly, the phenomenological study on millennial first-career novice teachers in the United States underscores the importance of stabilizing contextual factors and building depth in content and pedagogical knowledge before achieving transformative technology integration in the elementary classroom (Karr, 2017). These insights underscore the complexity and nuances involved in effectively applying the TPACK framework, emphasizing the interplay between technological competencies, pedagogical strategies, and subject matter expertise in shaping educational practices.

Self-Inclusion as a Change Agent in Education

With a growing emphasis on inclusive schooling, educators are exploring pedagogical approaches that foster self-inclusion within mainstream classrooms. As highlighted in Collins et al., (2004), the focus is shifting towards the quality of learning and participation in inclusive settings, emphasizing inclusive practices over mere physical placement. Moreover, with the influence of educational transformation, the concept of Self-Inclusion appears as a powerful promoter of change within the educational landscape (Collins et al., 2004).

Drawing upon the foundational principles of the TPACK model, educators equipped with a deep understanding of Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Technological Content Knowledge, and Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge are self-confident to navigate across the developing demands of modern education. As highlighted by Mishra and Koehler (2006) in their exploration of TPACK, the integration of technology into educational spaces turning point for educators embodying a nuanced form of knowledge that transcends mere technical proficiency (Mishra and Koehler, 2006). Furthermore, the study conducted with in-service mathematics teachers in an inner-city school underscores the pivotal role of teacher knowledge, specifically the mediating influence of TPACK derived from learning-by-design experiences, in shaping effective technology integration efforts. By embracing the concept of Self-Inclusion and leveraging TPACK as a framework for pedagogical innovation, educators can position

themselves as proactive change agents driving positive transformations in educational practices and outcomes (Kurt, 2019).

Self-inclusion, as a change agent within the educational context, plays an important role in promoting variety and inclusion. Taking up self-inclusion involves acknowledging and respecting individual differences and creating a sense of belonging for all students in the classroom. Taking up this initiative fosters a comprehensive environment where every student feels valued and accepted, eventually improving the overall learning experience of every student. Research has shown that self-inclusion can positively affect academic performance, social interactions, and emotional well-being among students (Pozas, Letzel, Lindner, and Schwab, 2021). By incorporating self-inclusion strategies into educational practices, educators can promote a culture of acceptance and understanding, preparing students to thrive in diverse settings beyond the classroom. As education continues to evolve, recognizing the importance of self-inclusion as a change agent can significantly contribute to creating more equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students (Kurt, 2019).

Personal Reflection on Technologies in Higher Education

As a part-time lecturer during the COVID-19 pandemic, I experienced firsthand the hasty shift to blended learning in higher education. This change was both challenging and helpful. The addition of technology teaching and learning allowed for better flexibility and ease of access, enabling students to continue their education despite the disruptions. However, it also highlighted significant challenges, such as the digital divide, where some students struggled with lacking access to reliable internet and devices. Additionally, adapting teaching methods to effectively engage students online requires a steep learning curve and continuous professional development. Despite these hurdles, the experience underscored the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Moving forward, there is a need for ongoing investment in technological infrastructure, comprehensive training for educators, and the development of robust support systems to ensure that all students can benefit from blended learning. This period of adaptation has ultimately strengthened my resolve to embrace innovative teaching practices and advocate for equitable access to educational resources.

Conclusion

The chapter, explored the multifaceted process of integrating technology in higher education, focusing on the dynamics of structure, culture, and agency. Using Margaret Archer's morphogenetic theory, we examined how these elements interact to shape technology adoption. We discussed the challenges of technology integration, such as resource disparities and resistance to change, alongside the opportunities it presents, including enhanced learning outcomes and increased accessibility. Strategies for maintaining a positive institutional culture were highlighted, emphasizing the importance of strong leadership, clear vision, and inclusivity. Effective integration strategies were also covered, with a focus on leveraging the TPACK model, which combines technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, and the role of self-inclusion as a change agent.

In conclusion, integrating technology in higher education is a complex process influenced by the interplay of structure, culture, and agency. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for successful implementation. While challenges such as resource disparities, resistance to change, and the need for continuous professional development persist, the opportunities for enhanced learning outcomes, increased accessibility, and personalized education are significant. Maintaining a positive institutional culture through strong leadership, clear vision, and inclusive practices is essential. Effective strategies for technology integration include leveraging frameworks like the TPACK model and fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. By addressing these elements holistically, institutions can create a supportive environment that empowers both educators and students, ultimately leading to a more effective and enriching educational experience.

CHAPTER 6: STUDENT SUPERVISION IN RESEARCH

Introduction

Student supervision in research is a critical component of higher education, particularly for postgraduate programs at the master's and PhD levels. Effective supervision not only enhances the academic experience but also contributes to the successful completion of research projects (Bailey, Parrott, Long, Brannan, & Burtch, 2022). This chapter aims to analyze the context of student supervision in research through the lens of Social Realism, focusing on the structural, cultural, and agential mechanisms that enable or constrain effective supervision. By reflecting on personal experiences and existing models, this chapter will explore the challenges faced by supervisors, students, and administrators, and propose strategies to address these issues. Additionally, the chapter will discuss the opportunities presented by technological advancements and how they can be leveraged to improve supervision practices, ultimately contributing to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all (Bailey, Parrott, Long, Brannan, & Burtch, 2022).

Social Realist through the lens of Margaret Archer's Morphogenetic theory

In the field of higher education, student supervision in research is an important component that forms the academic and professional paths of students. Applying a Social Realist Lens to this process gives a clear understanding of the relationship between structure, culture, and agency in the educational environment (Archer, 1995). Social realism, particularly as articulated by sociologist Margaret Archer (1995), puts emphasis on the importance of considering both the structural and cultural contexts in which students operate, as well as their agency. This perspective is important in research supervision, where the goal is not only to guide students through their academic tasks but also to foster their development as independent researchers.

Domains of Structure

In the context of student supervision in research, the domain of structure are institutional policies, resources, and infrastructure that enable and constrainsss the student research supervision. A more robust definition from the Nursing and Midwifery Council (2023) defines

the domain of structure mainly in the context of student supervision in research and refers to the organized and systematic elements that shape and influence the supervision process. These elements include institutional policies, resources, and infrastructure that collectively create the framework within which supervision occurs. For example, at the University of Namibia the Higher Degrees Policy Procedures, Rules, and Regulations is put in place to operationalize the higher degrees' studies procedures, guidelines, and regulations. Some of the key objectives of this policy are to provide essential guidelines for conducting and administering thesis and dissertation examinations, including viva voce, and ensure fairness and transparency in the treatment of higher degrees students, supervisors, and examiners, in addressing their concerns (UNAM, 2022). This policy promotes a supportive academic environment.

Domain of Culture

Culture, these are norms, values, and practices within the academic community that influence supervision in higher education, research supervision is influenced by various cultural domains, norms, values, and practices within the academic community (Archer, 1995). Here are some cultural domains that would include the varied backgrounds, for instance, supervisors may adopt supervisory styles that mirror those they experienced during their research journey. Additionally, both the supervisor and the student may have different perspectives on the topic, and this can result in miscommunication and delays (Fitzpatrick, 2023). Fitzpatrick (2023) explores how to be inclusive of diverse cultural perspectives in international higher education, understanding and respecting these differences can enhance the supervisory relationship and the research process. Fitzpatrick (2023) Further explores how to be inclusive of diverse cultural perspectives in international higher education, looking at how the academic norms establish the foundational expectations for research conduct, emphasizing the importance of integrity, rigor, and ethical considerations explores how to be inclusive of diverse cultural perspectives in international higher education. These norms serve as a guiding framework for both supervisors and students, ensuring that research is conducted with the highest standards of honesty and precision, adhering to the principles, the academic community fosters a culture of trust and accountability, which is essential for the advancement of knowledge. Supervisors play a crucial role in modelling and enforcing these standards, thereby mentoring students to uphold these values throughout their research endeavours. This commitment to maintaining high standards not only enhances the quality of individual research projects but also contributes to the overall credibility and reliability of academic scholarship (Fitzpatrick 2023). In addition to

norms are core values such as academic freedom, collaboration, and innovation which are central to the research culture. These values encourage open inquiry, the sharing of ideas, and the pursuit of new knowledge sharing practices. Effective research supervision practices include regular meetings, constructive feedback, and mentorship (Fitzpatrick 2023). These practices help in guiding students through their research journey and ensuring their academic and professional growth.

Domain of Agency

Archer (1995) defines agency as individuals expected to uphold, and practice the policies, guidelines, and regulations, their actions and decisions (both supervisors and students) impact the supervision process. Some of the examples of these policies at UNAM are the academic programme development policy and procedures which ensure that all UNAM academic programmes advance the academic project by considering the multiple purposes of higher education as well as achieving its vision and mission (University of Namibia, 2022). Another policy is the higher degree policy that commits to maintaining high standards in service provision to students enrolled for higher degrees. Through the Postgraduate Research Support Services Unit, the University seeks to create an enabling environment for higher degrees studies in collaboration with faculties and other support services divisions thereby improving the overall quality of students' research experience (University of Namibia, 2022).

The higher degree policy applies to all students enrolled in higher degree programs, including Masters and Doctoral programs, whether they are full-time or part-time, visiting or resident, and whether they are in taught or research-based programs. It also covers all academic staff and supervisors, both external and internal, whether temporary or permanent, part-time or full-time, who are actively involved in supervising these students at UNAM. Additionally, the policy extends to staff from other higher learning or research institutions and industries who provide services as supervisors and examiners for UNAM's higher degree students. Finally, it includes visiting scholars and collaborating research partners under the auspices of UNAM during their stay (University of Namibia, 2022). However, depending on the institutions, there are a few models of supervision that individuals adopt when supervising research discussed below:

Models of Supervision in Research

1. Traditional model

The traditional model of research supervision involves a one-on-one mentorship between the supervisor and the student. This personalized approach allows for personalized guidance, promoting a close and supportive relationship that can meaningfully enhance the student's academic development (Council on Higher Education, 2023). One of the main advantages of this model is the individualized attention the student receives, which can lead to a deeper understanding of the research process and more effective problem-solving. However, there are also disadvantages to this approach, for instance, the traditional model can be resource-intensive, requiring significant time and effort from the supervisor. Additionally, it may not be suitable for all students, as it can lead to dependency and limit the student's exposure to diverse perspectives. Furthermore, this model can contribute to the "lonely scholar" experience, where students may feel isolated from their peers (Council on Higher Education, 2023).

2. Team-based model

This is the style of research supervision where multiple supervisors provide diverse perspectives and expertise (Jassim et al., 2015). This model of supervision offers several advantages and disadvantages. One of the primary benefits is the richness of input from various experts, which can lead to more innovative solutions and comprehensive decision-making (Leroy et al., 2022). This diversity can enhance creativity and provide a broader range of skills and knowledge. However, the model also presents challenges, such as potential conflicts and ambiguity in authority. Employees may struggle with conflicting directives from different supervisors, leading to confusion and stress. Additionally, managing expectations and communication between multiple supervisors can be complex and time-consuming. Overall, while the team-based model can foster a dynamic and resourceful work environment, it requires careful coordination and clear communication to mitigate its drawbacks (Leroy et al., 2022).

3. Peer Supervision

Peer supervision involves students supporting each other through feedback and collaboration, fostering a collaborative learning environment. This approach encourages students to share their insights, critique each other's work constructively, and learn from diverse perspectives. By engaging in peer supervision, students develop critical thinking and communication skills,

as they articulate their thoughts and provide meaningful feedback. Additionally, this method promotes a sense of community and mutual support, helping students feel more connected and motivated. Overall, peer supervision can enhance learning outcomes by leveraging the collective knowledge and experiences of the group.

Challenges Faced by Supervisors in Research Supervision

Supervisors are faced with a lack of adequate training or professional development opportunities to enhance their supervisory skills and stay updated with the latest academic and research practices. A lack of access to necessary resources, such as research funding, laboratory facilities, or administrative support, can hinder supervisors' ability to effectively guide their students. Supervisors often juggle multiple responsibilities, including teaching, research, and administrative duties. Without proper support, this can lead to burnout and reduced effectiveness in supervising students. Discuss policies that may hinder supervision, such as bureaucratic hurdles, lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities, or insufficient support for supervisors (Zaheer and Munir, 2020).

Challenges Faced by Students in Research Supervision

Students often encounter several challenges during research supervision. Zaheer and Munir (2020) discuss the challenges of research supervision in distance learning. Here are some common ones: misunderstandings can arise due to differences in communication styles or language barriers, the other is the challenge of balancing research with other academic and personal responsibilities. Students also face the challenges of limited access to necessary resources such as research materials and funding, for example, the library who are supposed to render research support to students does very little leaving the students to fend for themselves. Sometimes students are faced with the inconsistency or limited availability of supervisors, which can lead to delays and frustrations for students. Additionally, students get frustrated or challenged when the supervisor gives them vague or overlay critical feedback, this can be demotivating for students and very unhelpful. The pressure that comes with the urge to produce high-quality research can lead the student to stress and anxiety (Zaheer and Munir, 2020).

However, these challenges can be relieved through clear communication, setting realistic goals, and seeking support from peers and academic communities.

Enabling Factors that can help with Research Supervision

Rothwell et al., (2021) discuss the enablers and barriers to effective clinical supervision in the workplace, but they are closely related to that of research supervision, and discussed below:

- Access to research funding, for example, at UNAM there is a grants office responsible for outsourcing grants and all that the supervisor must do is to look out for these and put in a good proposal (Rothwell et al., 2021).

- Availability of academic journals and databases, for example, the UNAM repository commonly knows as the UNAM Gā-aisib Repository which is open access platform serving as a central platform to preserve and showcase the university's scholarly output, and can be accessed https://repository.unam.edu.na/home and many other open access journals (Rothwell et al., 2021).

- Provision for infrastructure, such as a well-equipped library with resources in both print and digital formats, to help researchers carry out their research effectively. In addition to research commons situated in the library, and an online learning platform such as Moodle (Rothwell et al., 2021).

- Communication and collaboration video conferencing tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet that UNAM has subscribed to, allowing for face-to-face meetings regardless of geographical location, and the provision of instant messaging platforms like Slack and WhatsApp to facilitate quick and efficient communication between supervisors and students (Rothwell et al., 2021).

- What is more, is the resource accessibility made possible by digital libraries, letting access to massive apparel of academic journals, books, and research papers online (Rothwell et al., 2021).

- The provision of data analysis and research tools and software programs like SPSS, R, and MATLAB that can assist in complex data analysis in addition to technological online survey tools like SurveyMonkey and Google forms that make it easy to collect and analyze data from participants (Rothwell et al., 2021).

- The provision for supervisors to monitor student progress and provide timely feedback using tracking tools provided by technology. For instance, remote supervision, E-Portfolios where students can maintain digital portfolios of their work, which supervisors can review at any time (Rothwell et al., 2021).

- The use of online workshops and attending webinars, can provide additional training and support for both students and supervisors. Software like Adobe Acrobat and Hypothesis allows for detailed feedback on student submissions. Automated Feedback from tools like Turnitin (Rothwell et al., 2021).

- Lastly, there are policies and procedures put in place to guide both supervisors and students undertaking research

Constraints that might hinder a smooth operation of research supervision

- Administrative hurdles, such as lengthy and complicated administrative procedures can delay important decisions and actions, affecting the timely progress of students' research and academic activities. This can be picked at the University of Namibia under the Grants Management Policy and Procedures, which stipulates the procedures for applying for research grants these procedures are quite lengthy from pre-award activities, including proposal development and submission, to post-award activities, including grant financial management, reporting, and closeout (UNAM, 2024). For example, supervisors may need to dedicate substantial time to preparing the grant application, which can reduce the time available for direct student supervision (Qureshi & Vazir, 2016). Moreover, supervisors end up handling additional administrative tasks related to the grant application, limiting their time for student supervision, and that increases the pressure of completing a detailed grant application can increase the supervisor's stress and workload, potentially affecting their availability and responsiveness to the student (Qureshi & Vazir, 2016).

- Another challenge is the lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities when the policies do not clearly define the roles and responsibilities of supervisors, students, and administrative staff, it can lead to confusion and miscommunication, this I have picked up in UNAM policies**,** specifically that of Grants Management Policy and Procedures and Higher Degrees Policy Procedures, Rules and Regulations indicate. Both the policies stipulate the

roles and responsibilities of ensuring that the policy is effectively managed and adhered to across all relevant areas, but the agencies are only tasked with ensuring compliance with the policy and associated guidelines, such a policy may not allow agencies the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances or innovate beyond the set guidelines. This rigidity can hinder the ability to respond effectively to new challenges or opportunities (UNAM, 2024).

Conclusion

The chapter explored the integration of technology in higher education through various lenses and frameworks. Using Margaret Archer's morphogenetic theory, examined how the interplay of structure, culture, and agency influences the adoption and effective use of technology in academic settings. Different models of supervision were discussed, highlighting the diverse approaches supervisors take in guiding research, from directive to collaborative styles. Identified several challenges faced by supervisors, including balancing guidance with student independence and managing diverse student needs. Students also encounter obstacles such as navigating complex research methodologies and accessing adequate resources. Enabling factors like strong institutional support, effective communication, and professional development were emphasized as crucial for successful research supervision. Conversely, constraints such as limited resources, rigid institutional policies, and resistance to change can hinder smooth research supervision. By understanding these dynamics and implementing supportive strategies, institutions can enhance the research supervision experience, fostering a productive and innovative academic environment.

In conclusion, effective student research supervision is a multifaceted process that significantly impacts the academic and professional development of students. By leveraging a social realism framework, we can better understand the dynamic interplay between institutional structures, academic culture, and individual agency. Strong institutional policies and resources provide the necessary support, while a positive and collaborative academic culture fosters an environment conducive to innovation and growth. Supervisors play a crucial role in guiding students, balancing direction with independence, and encouraging them to engage deeply with their research. Addressing challenges such as the digital divide, resistance to change, and the need for continuous professional development is essential for enhancing the supervision experience. Ultimately, fostering a supportive and inclusive research environment will ensure that students are well-equipped to become confident, competent researchers, capable of contributing meaningfully to their fields.

Personal Reflective Through the Journey of PGDHE

My name is Astridah Njala Samupwa and I have been a lecturer in Library and Information Science for the past four (4) years. Despite my passion for the subject, I initially struggled with the teaching aspect, as I had no formal training in education.

Challenges I faced

When I first started teaching, I faced numerous challenges. I found it difficult to engage students effectively and often felt unprepared to handle diverse learning needs. This lack of confidence sometimes made me question my ability to be an effective educator.

Decision to Pursue Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education

The turning point came when I realized that to truly make a difference in my student's lives, I needed to improve my teaching skills. I decided to enrol in a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education, hoping it would provide me with the tools and knowledge to become a better lecturer.

Transformation Through the Postgraduate Diploma

The program was transformative. I learned about various teaching methodologies, assessment techniques, and ways to create an inclusive learning environment. One of the most impactful lessons was active learning strategies, which I immediately implemented in my classes. For example, I started using group discussions and problem-based learning, which significantly increased student engagement.

Impact on Students and Teaching Practice

The changes in my teaching approach were evident in my students' performance and feedback. They were more engaged, and participated actively in class, and their overall performance improved. Colleagues also noticed the positive changes and often sought my advice on teaching strategies.

Personal Growth and Development

This journey not only improved my teaching skills but also contributed to my personal growth. I became more confident, reflective, and proactive in seeking continuous improvement. The experience reshaped my identity as an educator, making me more passionate about teaching and learning.

Plans for the future:

Looking ahead, I plan to continue my professional development by pursuing further studies and engaging in educational research. I aim to contribute to the field of higher education by developing innovative teaching practices and sharing my experiences with other educators. My goal is to create a positive and lasting impact on my students and the educational community.

In conclusion, my journey from being an untrained lecturer to a confident and effective educator has been incredibly rewarding. The Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education was a pivotal step in this transformation, equipping me with the skills and knowledge to excel in my role. This experience has reinforced the importance of continuous learning and growth, both for myself and for my students.

ENHANCING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Portfolio Summary and Conclusion: PDHE

Throughout this portfolio, I have delved into the multifaceted aspects of higher education, focusing on teaching and learning, curriculum development, student assessment, and the integration of technologies. The discussions have highlighted the critical role of effective teaching strategies in fostering student engagement and learning outcomes. Curriculum development was examined through the lens of creating inclusive and adaptive learning environments that cater to diverse student needs. Assessment practices were explored, emphasizing both formative and summative approaches to evaluate and enhance student learning. The integration of technologies in higher education was discussed, showcasing how digital tools can transform teaching and learning experiences. Additionally, the complexities of research supervision were addressed, underscoring the importance of mentorship and guidance in the research process.

A significant theme throughout these discussions was the application of social realism as both a constraining and enabling factor. Social realism provided a framework to understand the structural and cultural influences on educational practices, highlighting the challenges and opportunities within higher education.

Reflecting on my journey through this postgraduate diploma, I have gained invaluable insights and practical skills that have profoundly shaped my approach to higher education. The experience has been transformative, equipping me with the knowledge and confidence to contribute meaningfully to the academic community. This journey has not only enhanced my professional capabilities but also deepened my commitment to fostering an inclusive and dynamic educational environment.

As I work towards, **ENHANCING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

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Appendices

Appendices: 1. Survey questions

Question
1. In which study year are you?
2. What gender do you identify yourself with?
3. Did you get induction at the beginning of your studies?
4. Was the induction/orientation you received helpful in navigating the library?
5. Do you use the library?
6. Is the entry to the library accessible?
7. Are there assistive technologies in the library?
8. What challenges do you face in terms of library usage?
9. What support do you receive from the library staff regarding the challenges you mentioned above?
10. How might the library have made it more helpful for you?
11. What challenges do you face in terms of access to the library resources and services?
12. Any suggestions for improvements?
13. Would you recommend the use of UNAM library to a friend?