Re-imagining a decolonial university? Exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education
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Declaration

I, Zamokuhle Wiseman Magubane declare that:

(i) The research work reported herein this dissertation, except where indicated, is my original research work.

(ii) This dissertation has not been submitted to any other institution for examination except at the institution where I was registered at for the purposes of this degree.

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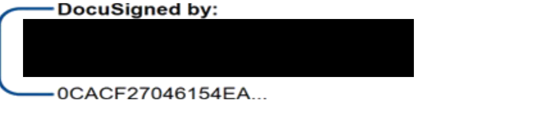

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Statement by Supervisor

This dissertation was submitted with my approval

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Supervisor: Dr Thabile Aretha Zondi

Abstract

The study reported in this dissertation was about re-imagining a decolonial university by exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. This qualitative study, located in the critical paradigm, employed a single case study research methodology. 16 Black academics were purposively recruited to share their voices around their struggles for transformation in the university. To generate data, the study made use of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The analysis of the data that emerged from this study occurred through inductive thematic analysis. The theoretical analysis of the data was informed by Nancy Frasers tripartite social justice framework which involved the economic, cultural, political and the later added on dimension, the epistemic dimension. The focus of the study was on Black academics who are seen as strange intruders, outsiders and pariahs of the academy due to a number of factors such as their race, identity, values, norms and cultural beliefs. The three Key Performance Areas (KPA's) of an academic; teaching and learning, research and community engagement were the decolonial analytical frameworks that informed the study. The study was guided by two objectives: to explore the voices of Black academics in the struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution and to understand the voices of Black academics' in the struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution. Major struggles for transformation raised by Black academics were the challenges of colonising languages of instruction, a highly Eurocentric curriculum, persistent colonial cultures of community engagement, research trajectories, publishing standards and criteria that draw from a European educational system. Similar to much of the literature, the Black academics raised that much African scholarship such as African indigenous epistemic traditions remained largely marginal, underused and undervalued in the South African higher education system. The findings of this study had broader implications for a future impactful university on the KPA's of an academic. Informed by these findings; conclusions and recommendations on teaching, research and community engagement for re-imagining a decolonial university were made through a prosed social justice framework model.

Keywords: Black academic, decolonial university, South Africa, curriculum, transformation, teaching and learning, qualitative research, community engagement.

Isifingqo

Ucwaningo olubikwe kulenhlolovo lumayelana nokucabanga kabusha kwenyuvesi ekubuyiseleni isimo esashiywa ngamakoloni (ukubuswa kwezwe ngelinye izwe) ngokuhlola amazwi ezifundiswa eziMnyama emzabalazweni wenguquko esikhungweni semfundo ephakeme saseNingizimu Afrika. Lolu cwaningo lwequalitative, olutholakala ku-critical paradigm, lusebenzise umklamo wocwaningo lwecala elilodwa. Kwaqokwa izifundiswa ezimnyama eziyi-16 ngenhloso yokuthi ziveze amazwi azo emzabalazweni wazo woshintsho enyuvesi. Ukuze kukhiqizwe idatha, ucwaningo lusebenzise izingxoxo ezingahlelekile kanye nezingxoxo zamaqembu okugxilwe kuwo. Ukuhlaziywa kwedatha evela kulolu cwaningo kwenzeke ngokuhlaziywa kwe-inductive thematic. Ukuhlaziywa kwethiyori kwasekelwa uhlaka luka-Nancy Fraser olukhuluma ngokuhlelwa komnotho, amasiko, kanye nezombusazwe. Lolu cwaningo belugxile ezifundsweni eziMnyama ngoba bathathwa njengamafika-muva kwezemfundo asebangeni eliphezulu. Lokhu kwenza bebandlululeke ngezinto eziningi ezifana nobuhlanga, ubunsika, kanye nezinkolelo zamasiko. Izindawo zokusebenza ezibalulekile ezintathu (ama-KPA's) ukufundisa, nokufunda, ucwaningo kanye nokuzibandakanya komphakathi yizinhlaka zokuhlaziya ze-decolonial ezisetshenziswe ilolucwaningo. Ucwaningo beluholwa yizinjongo ezimbili: ukuhlola amazwi ezifundiswa zabaMnyama emzabalazweni woguquko ezikhungweni semfundo ephakeme saseNingizimu Afrika kanye nokuqonda amazwi ezifundiswa eziMnyama' emzabalazweni woguquko ezikhungweni zemfundo ephakeme eNingizimu Afrika. Imizabalazo emikhulu yoguquko eyaphakanyiswa izifundiswa zabaMnyama kwakuyizinselelo zokuhlanganisa izilimi zokufundisa, ikharikhulamu egxile kakhulu e-Eurocentric, amasiko ekoloni asetshenziswa kwezokuzibandakanya komphakathi, izinqinamba ngokucwaninga, amazinga okushicilela kanye nemibandela ephuma ohlelweni lwezemfundo yaseYurophu. Ukufana kwezincwadi ezifundwayo, izifundiswa eziNsundu zaphakamisa ukuthi izifundo eziningi zase-Afrika ezifana namasiko omdabu wase-Afrika zahlala zincane kakhulu, azisetshenziswa futhi azibalulekile ohlelweni lwemfundo ephakeme yaseNingizimu Afrika. Okutholwe yilolu cwaningo kube nemithelela ebanzi enyuvesi ezoba nomthelela esikhathini esizayo kuma-KPA's wezemfundo. Ucwaningo luphethe lase luncoma ukuthi ukufunda, ukufundisa, ucwaningo noma inhlolovo kanye nokuzibandakanya komphakathi kwe-Decolonial iNyuvesi kwenziwa ngemodeli yohlaka lomthetho wobulungiswa ongahlelekile.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family. I would like to single out my mother Thandi Olie Magubane and my father Siphiwe Simeon Magubane, who both stood by me throughout my doctoral journey. My sister Senamile Joyful Magubane-Mdlalose, my brother Siphesihle Gordon Magubane, thank you for your unwavering support during my doctoral journey. Respect goes out to my brother-in-law Vusumuzi Enock Mdlalose who saw me capable, fit to the task and tirelessly supported me in this long doctoral journey.

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List of Abbreviations

PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SASCO	South African Student Congress
PASO	Pan African Student Organisation
SASO	South African Students Organisation
AZASO	Azanian Students Organisations
NUSAS	National Union of South Africa
SAAD	South African Association for Academic Development
CUP	Committee of University Principals
UDUSA	Union of Democratic University Staff Association
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
RMF	Rhodes Must Fall
FMF	Fees Must Fall
HBU	Historically Black University
HWU	Historically White University
CHE	Council on Higher Education
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
T & L	Teaching and Learning
R & I	Research and Innovation
CE	Community Engagement
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
TA	Thematic Analysis
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee
PAR	Participatory Action Research
KPA's	Key Performance Areas
PU's	Productivity Units
DHETT	Department of Higher Education Training and Transformation
SSI	Semi-Structured Interviews
FGD	Focus Group Discussions

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Chapter One

Introduction, Orientation and Background to the Study

1.1. Introduction

This dissertation presents findings from a qualitative research study conducted with Black academics on their struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution. In the current chapter one, the background to the study is presented paying critical attention to decolonial research in South African higher education. The chapter then provides the research aims, academic rationale, personal interests, significance of the study, as well as the problem statement. It also outlines the location of the study, research objectives, the research design, methodology and trustworthiness of the study. In the end of the chapter an overview of chapters are presented in terms of what happens from chapter one to the last.

1.2. Background to the Study

In South Africa, decolonisation and transformation are contemporary buzzwords for a reformed South African higher education sector. Decolonisation in this study meant research work that is anchored in histories of Africa's oppression and has specificity about recentring indigenous African intellectual thought at universities (Muraina, Toshe-Mlambo & Cingo, 2024). Transformation on the other hand was seen through an approach that seeks inclusionary measures and additive changes on curriculum, research and pedagogy through fostering an institutional culture(s) of knowledge production that are shaped through contributions made by an array number of thinkers who have diverse perspectives on what constitutes knowledge. The decision to offer conceptual clarification of these terms from the outset of the study was because they were major concepts that largely informed the study but intention was also to show how they were uniquely understood and how they suited the context of this study. A 'broader' conception of decolonisation and transformation in the conceptual clarifications chapter of this study is however also offered.

In as much as transformation and decolonial work has been explored in this context, the topic was deemed important nonetheless because the study was not intended to make a generic but a specific contribution. The study was developed with an intentions of finding out the specific

struggles for transformation experienced by Black academics on respective campuses of the one institution the study focused on. The three KPA's of an academic, that is; teaching and learning, research and community engagement served as the decolonial analytical frameworks of the study.

Struggles for a decolonial university are not unique to South Africa as universities in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, USA, UK have been taking initiatives of indigenising and decolonising their higher education (Cupples & Glynn, 2014; Nakata, 2011; Barrington, 2014). The struggles for a decolonial university taking place today in South Africa and Africa are not novel as they have a long genealogy of thought, dated to 1860's/1870's with the likes of Edward Wilmoth Blyden based in Sierra Leon, Casley Hayford in Goal Coast (Ghana) and Hotton in West Africa agitating for an African university (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016). Nkwame Nkrumah in Ghana also yearned for universities in African to take course along African traditions (Le Grange, 2014). According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021), the 1980s-1990s were years of crisis for universities in Africa as efforts to develop an African university failed due to the world bank ceasing to support them and focused on secondary education. The African university was forced to change to a corporate university which served as a market for coloniality.

Disgruntled by this coloniality, the 21st century student generation took to the street to boycott the coloniality embedded in the university through hashtag christened campaigns such as the #Fees Must Fall, #Rhodes Must Fall, #Open Stellenbosch Collective and others which are more recent campaigns (Heleta, 2016; Mamdani, 2016; Mbembe, 2016; Vorster & Quinn, 2017; Higgs, 2016; Le Grange, 2016) compared to the education campaigns of the 1860's/1870's. Even though these campaigns demanded systematic and structural changes in the higher education sector, change has been negligibly slow. It is for these reasons that this study explored the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

The increasing efforts to decolonise South African higher education is a complex project fraught with many challenges. According to Zembylas (2018, p. 1) "the decolonisation efforts in South Africa are challenged by how higher education institutions continue to reproduce an epistemological hierarchy wherein Western Knowledge is privileged over non-Western bodies of knowledge and knowledge making". Put differently South African higher education

institutions maintain the status quo by legitimising western bodies of knowledge over marginalised forms of knowledge.

Decolonisation is a complex exercise because it is faced with many challenges and the challenge of dismantling Western epistemologies as bodies of knowledge that are prioritised over other knowledge(s) in South African higher education. Auerbach et al. (2019, p. 7) argued that "one of the challenges of doing decolonisation points to the absence of theory and in particular curriculum theory for making sense of decolonisation". This meant that a theory for decolonising curriculum needs to be developed to thoroughly engage with decolonial work. Moreover, debates focused on decolonisation and decolonised curricula have risen from students and academics subjective positionalities reducing it down to interpretation based on circumstantial experiences and context. The enactment of decolonisation and decolonised curricula thus remains narrow and fragmented in terms of how it ought to be practicalised (Omodan, Mpiti, & Mtsi, 2023) outside of a substantive framework.

The recontextualization field of Bernstein (1975/2000) could offer substance here for decolonised curriculum as academics in this field are to rearrange and transform curriculum design through making decisions on sources of teaching and learning, issues worthy of coverage and how they should be articulated in modules taught at university. European knowledge, as common knowledge that is taught in South African universities, makes decolonisation a complicated process because it is not debated against other forms of knowledge(s). It therefore, means that colonial knowledge and knowledge systems used during the times of apartheid have not been questioned enough (Heleta, 2018). Thirty years into democratic South Africa after the 1994 democratic elections, transformation has not transpired in the manner that it was set out to in the higher education sector where decolonised education is yet to occur as well (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). There are harsh realities and complex processes to overcome in South Africa to achieve a truly transformed society and decolonial education, especially when there is little transformation and slow progress towards the decolonialisation of South African higher education.

As mentioned earlier, calls for the decolonisation of knowledge are not a new phenomenon, but have been in existence as early as 1860-1870. The decolonisation of knowledge should have happened in the last two decades of democratic South Africa (Nyoni, 2019). This was apparent in the words of a key decolonial scholar who argued that "widespread calls for

decolonisation of knowledge in South African universities have been long overdue" (Heleta, 2018, p. 49). This requires academics to give much attention to the challenges of decolonisation in the name of transforming South African higher education.

Although the 1994 elections meant that South Africa transitioned into a democratic society, today's curriculum in South African universities is Eurocentric (Pillay & Swanepoel, 2019). A transformed the higher education curriculum would have transformed society, renewed histories, and reaffirmed dignities of African people (Bhana, 2014). The decolonisation of curriculum could have gone beyond its intended purpose and ended up changing the many areas of African people's lives which also need social transformation. It is clear that transformation in universities lags far behind the hand of time given that the knowledge in curriculum still comes from the legacies of an oppressive past (Ramley, 2014, Kessi & Cornell, 2016). Against the backdrop of this background, this study was set henceforth to explore the voices of Black[1] academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. The study also had aims which are mentioned below.

1.3. Aims of the study

This study aimed to re-imagine a decolonial university by ascertaining the voices of Black academics on the struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution. Specifically it aimed to:

- Identify Black academics struggle for transformation in teaching and learning, research and community engagement in the one South African higher education institution the study took place in.
- Identify the extent Black academics believe the university should be re-purposed to a decolonial university.
- Determine the landscape of transformation in the South African higher education sector and the one institution the study focused on.

[1] While the study understands that race is a social construct and not a biological attribute, it uses the capitalisation of Black when referring to people of African descent as a way of recognising the importance of language that signifies the history and racial identity of Black people, which has real social and political implications for them as a marginalised group.

1.4. Academic Rationale and Personal Interests for the Study

The motivation for conducting this study was twofold as it was based on both academic interest and personal experiences. Firstly, the personal experiences of the researcher of this dissertation came when he was doing his undergraduate studies at one South African university where he shockingly witnessed and was part of the students that experienced the 2015-2016 #RMF and #FMF campaigns of protests which resulted in the national shutdown of South African universities (Le Grange, 2016; Luckett, 2016). The #FMF student protests at Historically Black Universities (HBU's) were however not widely covered in mainstream media- a source of information (Langa et al., 2017) which left him with a negligible understanding of the student campaigns and or demands of decolonised education. Even though, the #FMF and decolonisation student protests at HBU's garnered miniscule coverage in mainstream media; its nature, character and development gained critical contestation amongst academics (Booysen, 2016; Mavunga, 2019). This then prompted him to explore the dynamics of the students demands from the perspectives of Black academics in order to understand the manifestations of a decolonial university within the KPA's of an academic: teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

Before and after the 2015-2016 #FMF student campaign, several academic studies invaded the academic fraternity and sought to focus on the decolonisation of higher education and the transformation of respective institutions. These studies were philosophical, or involved position papers, systematic review of literature and formulated opinion pieces on the background of the campaign (Mzileni, 2020; Ntombana, Gwala & Sibanda, 2023; Fekisi, 2018; Langa et al., 2017; Chikoko, 2021; Luescher, Loader & Mugume, 2022). Other studies focused on fee-free higher education and the aftermath of the campaign (Jager & Bitzer, 2018; Tewe, 2022; Luescher et al., 2022; Costandius et al. 2018; Dube, 2017; Pillay 2016), whereas other studies explored the experiences and reflections of students who had been involved in the #FMF student protest actions (Greef et al., 2021; Du Preez, Simmonds & Chetty, 2017; Luescher, Webbstock & Bhengu, 2020). Since the occurrence of the protests brought up critical awareness amongst university stakeholders on the vulnerability, and sustainability of an alienating and non-inclusive higher education system, it also brought into question how academics should provide solutions to the #FMF student campaign and its demands (Postma, 2016).

Few studies could be found in literature studying the voices of Black academics around the struggles for transformation and the decolonisation of the South African higher education system. Chiliza, Adewumi and Ntshangase (2022) compiled a study that explored university staff perceptions on the impact of #FMF campaign in higher education institutions of learning. Sibiya and Ndaba (2023) illuminated how academics can be drivers of the decolonisation project as key stakeholders in the process of teaching and learning combined with knowledge production in higher education institutions. Costandius et al. (2018) studied and explicated students and lecturers' reactions on the student protests and the impact they felt the protests had on them. Academics have researched several university campuses across the breath of the South African landscape, producing individual written reports on each university. The reports largely focused on the decolonisation of higher education institutions and not mainly on academic's voices around their KPA's, teaching, research and community engagement broadly as academic roles. The above studies provided valuable insights on the experiences and reflections of crucial stakeholders in the higher education sector of South Africa. However, critical examination and scrutiny of the extant literature provides evidence that scant research has been conducted around Black academics voicing out their struggles for transformation in South African higher education with a specific focus on teaching and learning, research and community engagement as decolonial analytical frameworks. The academic interest of this study was therefore at the heart of making an empirical contribution on the voices of Black academics struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution specifically around their KPA's; teaching and learning, research and community engagement which served as decolonial analytical frameworks of the study.

1.5. Significance of the Study

One of the important considerations when doing a study is to establish its significance or respond to the question 'Why do research'? According to Mehta et al. (2017, p. 17), "research is a tool for building knowledge and efficient learning". This meant that the principle or significance of doing research is to develop new knowledge and offer up-to-date learning. The significance of a study can be its attempt to curb a problem and/ or to contribute to a body of knowledge in the field (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2017). This was confirmed by scholars such as Bryman (2016) who argued that social science research is done with multiple intentions but the reason why social scientists carry out social research is to understand or resolve a societal problem that has been happening over a long period. He continued to argue that they may

realise a gap in the previous research, inconsistencies among studies, or an unsettled problem in a collection of literature studies.

While there is literature coverage on the importance of 'academic voices', as a discursive and conceptual framework in educational focused research and the relationship between voice and agency (Mahabeer, Nzimande & Shoba, 2018; Khunou, et al., 2019; Davids, 2018; Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017) novel ideas from Black academics are however still indispensable in the transformation discourse of promoting academic citizenship and theoretical insights of social justice at the university. The significance of this study was thus at the helm of shining a spotlight on Black academics conceptions of transformation and the re-purposing of the university to a decolonial one as they have immense power, freedom and choice to influence/shape teaching, research and community engagement at the university. The understanding of "academic voices" as an analytical or theoretical tool offered relevance and significance in this study as it gave Black academics a chance to share or even argue on how to advance the transformation of higher education in their praxis of teaching, research and community engagement. This study formed part of substantial research projects that have previously focused on the different parts of transformation and decolonisation in the South African higher education sector. It however took place in troubling times where the sector is shaped and tightly entrenched in the institutionalised epistemic, socio-political, and economic neoliberal hegemonic logic.

Since the early parts of the 1970s-80s, higher education institutions have been battling systemic austerity cut measures in government subsidies and international agency financial support while at hindsight being forced to respond sustainably to the ever-increasing student enrolment and massification in the sector (Newson, 2021; Akala, 2021; Kezar, DePaola, & Scott, 2019; Shore, 2010; Whyte, 2019). Primarily driven by the neoliberal colonising conceptions of greater market appeal, logics of performance management, imposing an auditable disciplining, productivity, quality assurance and efficiency measures and the publish or perish imperative (Troiani & Dutson, 2021; Hlatshwayo, 2022; Tight, 2019; Darder, 2012; del Cerro Santamaría, 2020; Mintz, 2021) – the neoliberal turn in higher education appears firmly entrenched and institutionalised in the university. Resultantly, the institutionalised and tightly lodged neoliberal market logic as a way of being in the university presents itself through seeing students as "fee paying clients" who have to buy and pay for the Euro-American curriculum public goods of the university. The emergent neoliberal discourse also sees academics as

knowledge producers engaged in the selling of curriculum knowledge by writing and publishing intellectual thought that is packaged and sold to white academic gatekeepers turning academics into scholars in the marketplace (Mamdani, 2007).

This neoliberal commodification, commercialisation, corporatisation, and corruption of the public good purpose of higher education has been largely troubling. Simply because the public university now appears to be more obsessed with rankings, ratings, grants, and subsidies which have real and material implications for the quality of research, teaching and learning, community engagements, university institutional culture(s), and the mental health and wellbeing of academics, students, and the support staff. At the forefront of the neoliberal/market-based logic however is also the reinforcement of Mignolo's (2007) three-dimensional colonial matrix, that is, the coloniality of power, the coloniality of being, and finally, and perhaps most prominent/substantial to this study, the coloniality of knowledge (Maldonado-Torres 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013; Quijano 2000). The need to rethink what a decolonial university might comprise was at the very heart of this study which focused on the incisive perspectives of Black academics on navigating and negotiating the neoliberal university in South Africa and the need to dismember coloniality. Thus, exploring how Black academics envisioned transformed teaching and learning, research and community engagement as three KPA's of the university that were the decolonial analytical frameworks of the study was significant for re-imagining the university beyond the colonising neoliberal logic.

Moreover, exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation could have been significant for helping us: 1) to think seriously about practical efforts at transforming the higher education sector 2) help university management and leaders formulate specific policies that respond to the transformation and decolonial concerns raised by Black academics, and 3) assist the Department of Higher Education Training and Transformation (DHETT) to conceptualise some transformation measures across the different public higher education institutions in the country. To justify how these suggestions could be realised: 1) Black academics could ascertain practical efforts of transforming the sector because they have first-hand experience and are frontline runners of teaching, research, and community engagement who are much better aligned and informed on how to go about transforming these aspects of the university. 2) From their analysis of the transformation challenges and decolonial troubles of the specific institution that the study focused on, Black academics could be alerting university management on specific targeted institutional policies and practices that need to be

addressed in order to channel the university to the current transformation agenda. 3) Some of the academics who took part in the study were/are part of the Council on Higher Education and (DHETT) committees and they can take up their conceptualised ideas of transformation from this study to these committees and venture into conversations of what can be ideal for all public higher education institutions in the country.

1.6. Problem Statement

Black academics often have to traverse and navigate complex structural and systematic struggles at the university. Although broad, these include having to adapt to curriculum, institutional cultures, knowledge production and pedagogical practices that are exotic, invasive, alien and saturated with racism (Cleare, 2020). To find out how Black academics navigate these challenges as well as the extent/character of transformation and or decolonisation in the university, this study was set to explore the voices of Black academics over their struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution. Transformation in South African higher education received a strong drive pre-1994 and post-1994 as change has been, and still is appealing within this sector (Ratele, 2015). The student body and university staff made a strong drive towards this change and student societies and university staff organisations were developed to champion this change.

Student organisations like the South African Students Congress (SASCO), the Pan African Students Organisation (PASO), South African Students Organisation (SASO), the Azanian Student Congress (AZASO), National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) (Biko, 2017; Mangena, 2019; Badat, 2016) were developed. They were developed for the purposes of facilitating a changed South African higher education sector. Similarly, staff associations like the Southern African Association for Academic Development (SAAAD), the Committee of University Principals (CUP), and the Union of Democratic University Staff Associations (UDUSA) also made the resolute determination to demand change in higher education (Fourie, 1999). The higher education landscape however remains much the same as in the apartheid period even after the democratic breakthrough era which saw former HBU's being merged with HWU's to reverse the stark differences, material, cultural and social positioning of their historical formations (Jansen, 2003b; Ntombana, Gwala & Sibanda, 2023). Transformation seeking initiatives christened in hashtags by the 2015-2016 #MustFall student body campaigns in seeking to change higher education 'into the opposite of apartheid' were thus an extension

of the unresolved past which led students to protest on universities around their misgivings about 'transformation' and advocated for a decolonial turn (Muriana, Toshe-Mlambo & Cingo, 2024; Langa, 2017).

On the road towards seeking such change demanded by the decolonial student campaigns of 2015-2016, Black academics' voices on transformation can offer insights into struggles that are either enabling or inhibiting transformation in South African higher education (Makae, 2019). That is why this study focused on the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. The role of Black academics in transformation struggles in South African higher education has been minimal. This is because of the historical tensions and challenges of racism and patriarchy within the higher education sector (Hugo, 1998). For example, the composition of the academic staff in 1994 at South African institutions was widely White (83%) and male (68%), with Black South African academics represented at minimal 10% despite being the largest group of the South African population (80%), but numbers have changed in the post-1994 period (Badat, 2018). The historical under-representation of Black academics in South African universities left Black academics with a cumbersome chance to influence transformation at the university and pointed to a patriarchal and racial configuration that directs attention to the need for a de-racialised higher education to bring equity and redress in such contexts.

Literature also shows the continuation of deeply embedded racial, and demographic inequality in the South African higher education sector (Sadiq et al., 2019) with Black lack academics' involvement in transformative discourses still being negligible due to their underrepresentation in the higher education sector (Mahlathi, 2020). This study addressed such problems of negligible opportunities offered for Black academics to assert their voices in the transformative discourse of South African higher education. It was not a study that was only important for inquiring into issues of underrepresentation, inequality, racism, and discrimination, but also vital for inquiring into a constellation of issues that continue to affect Black academics. These include the cross-cutting and intersecting issues of social status, difference, class, gender, age, and spatial justice.

With respect to the search for transformed higher education institutions, the South African higher education sector legislatively enacted transformation policy frameworks to implement progressive reform. These include the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for Higher

Education Transformation (Department of Education, 1997), the report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education (Department of Education, 2008), and the Draft National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001). All these were documented to offer progressive reform in South African higher education institutions. The disjuncture between reality and what these policies propounded suggests otherwise on their expected ability to transform South African higher education (Hlatshwayo, 2020) as they have had minimal success on achieving their set outcomes. Exploring the voices of Black academics had implications for these policies on the transformation of South African higher education as Black academics can offer a way forward following a backlog from these policies in terms of implementing the transformation of the higher education system.

1.7. Location of the Study

The geographical location of the study was South Africa, at the province of KwaZulu-Natal. This study was carried out at a research-intensive university that is characteristic of many Black academics. The majority of the student population and that of academics at this university is thus Black South Africans. The Black academic population in this institution is composed of Black individuals who have birth backgrounds attached to the township and rural periphery of Nongoma, Msinga, Chatsworth, Phoenix, Tshelimnyama, KwaNdengezi, KwaMashu, Umlazi, and other contexts.

This institution offers a variety of courses with others focusing on the discipline of education. Like any other public higher education institution in South Africa, the selected institution is currently confronted with struggles for transformation and decolonisation, thus the decision to conduct this study within the context of this university to examine the struggles for transformation by exploring Black academics' voices. The institution was particularly chosen because research on the transformative conceptions of Black academic staff of this university remains minimal yet it is common knowledge that staff contributes to the success or failure of a university and or an organisation (Chiliza, Adewuni & Ntshangase, 2020). Moreover, choosing to locate this study within one institution and not do a comparative study with other institutions was for the reason of not wanting to burn time, resources and effort investigating other institutions that may have proven impossible for successfully completing the study on time.

1.8. Map of the Study Area

Presented and depicted in the map below is the study area.

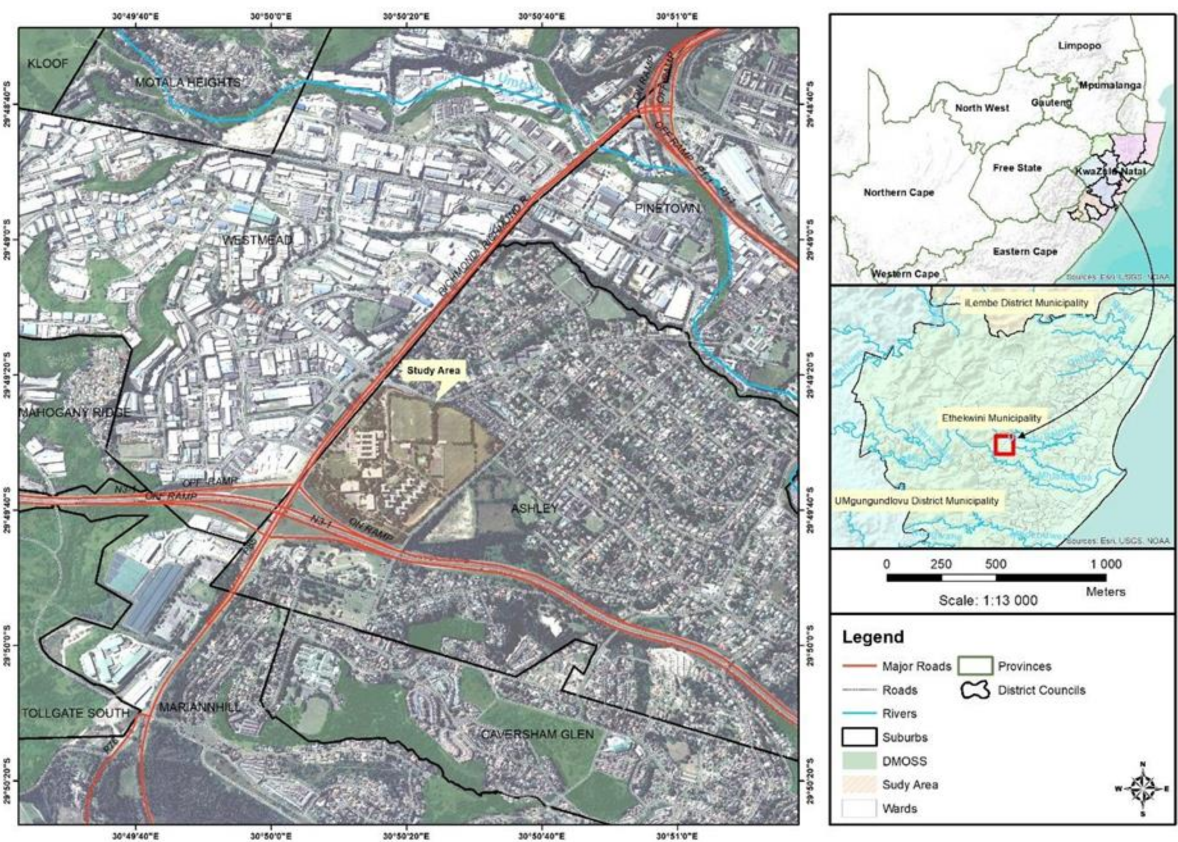

Figure 1.1 Map Showing the Location of the Study Area; (Source; Magubane, 2021).

Figure 1.1 depicts the location of the study area where the research was conducted. Although this was not historical or territorial research, it was important to provide a map showing the location of the study area so that the reader may have an idea of the area where the research was conducted.

1.9. Objectives for the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- Explore the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.
- Understand the voices of Black academics' in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

1.10. Research Questions

South African is a multi-racial society that is culturally diverse and has unique struggles, experiences, backgrounds and views about the university and the society we live in. This study focused on the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. These were the questions that were raised and asked in this research:

- What are Black academics' voices in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution?
- How do Black academics understand a decolonial university in a South African higher education institution?

1.11. Research Methods and Design of the Study

In this section of the research project, a brief description of the research design and methodology is provided. A full and detailed description of the research design and methodology is provided in the research methodology chapter (chapter 5) of the dissertation. It was crucial to provide a synopsis of each and every aspect of the research project so that when the reader goes over the sections in the ensuing chapters of the dissertation, he or she already possess familiarity with these aspects of the study.

1.12. Paradigm

In this section of the dissertation, the "concept 'paradigm' is defined, different research paradigms are disclosed and it is indicated which one applied in the study. The concept of paradigm was first used by Thomas Khun in 1962 who defined it as a way of thinking about the world (Sha & Al- Bargi, 2013). The most prominent scholars in the field (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) shared similar sentiments on the concept of paradigm that it is a set of belief systems or worldviews that guides the practice of research. A paradigm therefore represents a distinct perspective or worldview that guides our understanding of the research landscape. It encompasses the theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and practices that shape how we approach and conduct research, ultimately influencing how we interpret and make sense of the world.

For the purpose of this research, the critical paradigm was employed. The critical paradigm holds "the reform agenda and ultimately addresses issues of empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation (hence the name transformative paradigm" Rahi, 2017, p. 1). The sole purpose of critical research is to challenge and eventually address societal issues of discrimination, exclusion and those alike. When applied to educational research, "the critical research paradigm raises questions to those teaching as to whether they are aware of the established values and beliefs that underpin their seemingly natural teacher centred classroom roles" (Taylor & Madina, 2011, p. 8). In essence, when the critical paradigm is focused on educational research, it seeks to find out whether those at the centre of teaching are aware whose values and beliefs they are advancing. The critical research paradigm was a paradigm of choice to challenge the grave inequalities present in South African universities and the alienating, unjust domination of knowledge production by the Global north. This paradigm was opted for because it employs the transformative agenda, and the study sought transformation through exploring the voices of Black academics on their struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institutions.

1.13. Research Design

Different types of questions, hypotheses and experiments demand that one uses different types of research designs. It is therefore, necessary for a researcher to be familiar with the concept of research design and the different approaches to research designs. A research design is defined as a logical structure or a plan we can use to interpret and analyse the study (Rahi, 2017). One learned from this that a research design is a plan of how to answer the research plan/questions that we have drawn. One can also "think of a research design as building a structure or plan for your research" (Leavy, 2017, p. vii). A research design is a plan or guide used for the implementation of a research study to respond to the research problem you intend to study. The researcher opted to frame the study within the qualitative research design, which is outlined below.

1.13.1. Qualitative Approach

The qualitative method is an approach to research characterised by inductive rather than deductive reasoning where data gets sorted into patterns and or categories in order to develop relationships among these categories (Astalin, 2013). This definition implied that with qualitative research, we can draw patterns from our data and give meaning to this data. Qualitative research is concerned with exploring, interpreting, describing and understanding

social phenomena from the viewpoints of participants (Baškarada, 2014; Creswell, 2003; Leavy, 2017; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Qualitative research is subjective in that it explores an issue from the subjective experiences or opinions of the researched.

The qualitative approach was used in this study to explore a social issue from the views of the participants. According to Astalin (2013, p. 118), qualitative research usually "works under a combination of observations, interviews, group discussions and document reviews". This suggested that one can employ the qualitative approach in their study when using observations, interviews or document reviews. The qualitative approach is more often than not, applied in social research that attempts to strive for transformative change (Leavy, 2017). The qualitative approach was fit for the purpose of this study as it was concerned with bringing transformative change on the broader struggles expressed by Black academics in a South African higher education institution. It was also appropriate because it allowed the study to explore the voices of Black academics while using a combination of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with an intention of bringing about change on their struggles for transformation.

1.14. Methodology

A research methodology is defined as "the general approach that researchers take in carrying out their research project" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, as cited by Williams, 2007, p. 66). From the definition above, one learned that a research methodology is the general procedure that one applies in his or her research. Another definition of research methodology is "a set of procedures or strategies that govern a study and these strategies guide the choices researchers make with respect to sampling, data generation and analysis" (Lapan et al., 2012, p. 71). A research methodology thus, indicates to the researcher how to conduct their study.

Methodology as a means of generating knowledge guides the researcher on how they ought to generate knowledge (Yilmaz, 2013). This meant that in the journey of generating knowledge, methodology guides the researcher on what can be used to generate that knowledge. Included in this guide are the approaches to data generation, the research instruments, and selection of participants. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017, p. 28), "in sum, the methodology articulates logic and flow of the systematic processes to be followed in conducting a research project, so as to gain knowledge about a research problem". The methodology is thus, a step-by-step plan towards researching and ultimately reaching knowledge on a research problem.

A research methodology is a way of doing research while being guided by procedures which ultimately lead to a researcher making choices on the sampling type, instruments of data generation and the type of analysis they are going to employ in their study. There are a number of research methodologies that can be used for conducting research, the qualitative research approach is but one of the most common methods. Explained below is the qualitative approach that was employed in this study, which is later expanded on in chapter five; in the research methodology chapter.

1.14.1. Case Study Method

A case study can be defined as an exhaustive study of an individual, a number of people, or an element, with an intention to transfer the result over to all the studied individuals, people or elements (Ledford, & Gast, 2018; Creswell, 2013; Thomas, 2021). A case study is a far-reaching study of an individual, a multitude of people, and a unit with the purpose of obtaining results that can be transferable and representative of all the studied persons, multiple groups of people, and units (Hancock, Algozzine & Lim, 2021; Yin, 2014). A group of Black academics were the entities or phenomenon constituting the case being studied in this research. The case study was proper for this study because it allowed one to study a group of Black academics while generating generic results for other Black academics in the institution. An elaboration however is offered in chapter five on the single case study as a design that was applied in this study.

1.15. Selection of Participants

When selecting participants to take part in a study, a researcher must choose the sampling procedure to use. According to Oppong (2013), sampling is a procedure that a researcher uses to decide on the participants that can take part in the study, given that they can provide the information required for the research project. According to Gentles et al. (2015, p. 1772), sampling is “the act, process or technique of selecting a representative part of a population to determine parameters or characteristics of the whole population”. Sampling is defined as a method of selecting participants from a group of people with similar characteristics so that they may represent those who are not selected. Purposive sampling is one of the useable sampling methods in social science research which the study made use of, and below the application of purposive sampling in this study is accordingly elaborated.

1.16. Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is a deliberate sampling strategy employed when a researcher seeks to achieve a specific objective or purpose, as implied by the term itself. (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). With purposive sampling, the researcher makes a deliberate choice on the participants based on what they possess; knowledge or experiences regarding the research problem (Palinkas et al., 2015). For the purposive sampling strategy to assist in achieving a desired outcome, it must have a criterion for inclusion and exclusion (Obilor, 2023). The purposive sampling criteria and rationale for recruiting interested participants in this study was based on certain characteristics as mentioned in the next paragraph.

To gain detailed knowledge and voices of Black academics about transformation in the university, the participant criteria for inclusion were that the 16 participants needed to be either Black male or female, have background knowledge, and research interests on decolonial struggles in the South African academy. Participants were allowed to be from any disciplinary background given that transformation is wide-ranging and not limited to a particular discipline. They also however had to have been working in the higher education sector for 10 to 15 years and during the 2015-2016 #FMF student campaign as the most recent defining moment of decolonial and transformation struggles for Black people; Black academics, Black students and Black workers in the university. Those who were White male or female with no research interests and background ideas on decolonisation in the university and had not been working in the university for 10 to 15 years or during the 2015-2016 #FMF student campaign were excluded. This assisted on leaving out irrelevant participants and removed the possibilities of irrelevant response to the research topic (Obilor, 2023) thus assisting in making sure that the research findings were suitable to the research problem.

In using the “concept Black” in this study, it referred to Black as a racial identity of black people under the banner of Black consciousness which is a liberation movement that argued that blackness is a state of mind and a way of life that black people should value in order to achieve national freedom from their oppression (Dolamo, 2017). Black academics in this study fell under this identity and they formed part of this group of Black people who face oppressive struggles in the university. While recruiting participants considerations on the importance of diversity in terms of age, class, gender, and discipline background was taken. The participants’ distribution thus consisted of an equal distribution in terms of both genders and all sexualities

were considered. This was a precautionary measure against gender biasness and sexual discrimination on Black academics' voices in their struggles for transformation in the university.

1.17. Methods of Data Generation

There is a diversity of data generation methods that can be applied in a study depending on its approach and the problem the researcher wishes to address. Data was generated using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in this study. The semi structured interview method is explained first and how it applied in the study, and thereafter, the focus group discussions method follows.

1.17.1. Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are types of data generation methods that search for participants' views on a particular topic, not because little is known about the topic, but because there is a minority of individual views about the topic (Mclnthosh & Morse, 2015). Semi- structured interviews were utilised in the study to gain more knowledge from individual Black academics about a decolonial university and their struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

The flexibility of semi-structured interviews is that they are developed with open-ended questions which allow the researcher to probe participants if new and or unexpected views come up which add rich data for the study (Young et al., 2018). Semi-structured interviews in this study were made use of, and open-ended questions were developed to solicit further views from the participants of this study if they presented unanticipated knowledge. This served as an advantage because it allowed the attainment of rich data for the study. After deciding on the best type of interview based on the research question, a researcher must decide whether the interview method must be supplemented by another type of research method (Young et al., 2018). Semi-structured interviews were supplemented with focus group discussions in this study so that participating Black academics can engage and spark further debates from one another and hopefully yield more meaningfully relevant voices which would assist in obtaining rich data for the study.

1.17.2. Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions are a qualitative form of data generation in social science research that consists of a small number of people between six and nine who are brought together by a researcher to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions on a topic (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). Nyumba et al. (2018, p. 20) noted that "focus group discussions are frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues from the views of multiple participants". From this, it was evident that focus group discussions are a qualitative research method used in social studies to generate information from a group of participants gathered by the researcher to share their stories, experiences, narratives, attitudes, and beliefs on a topic.

Focus group discussions were utilised in this study to generate data from a group of Black academics to share their thoughts, understandings, and views on the struggles for transformation in a South African university. There are multiple benefits of using focus group discussions for a researcher. One of the benefits of focus group discussions is that they are usually used in social settings to create a sense of belonging within the group as participants share information (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Conducting focus group discussions allowed participants to come together and comfortably share the voices about their struggles of transformation in a South African higher education institution. Moreover, using focus group discussions in this study was important for allowing participants to engage, share common experiences and build on each other's memories and insights.

1.18. Data Analysis

It is not enough to only generate data for a study; a researcher has to engage in its analysis. Data analysis is defined as a procedure of interpreting the results of conclusions reached in a data set (Wayhuni, 2012). Thematic analysis was opted for interpreting the findings of this study and the conclusions reached from the data. Thematic data analysis is accordingly elucidated on below as used in the study to make sense of the data.

1.18.1. Thematic Analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a means to describing and explaining themes found in a data set. Javadi and Zarea (2016, p. 34) maintained that "thematic analysis is an approach for the extraction of meanings, and concepts from data and includes

pinpointing, examining and recording patterns or themes". This concluded that thematic analysis presents data according to the themes that emerge in a generated data set. According to Ibrahim (2012, p. 40), "thematic analysis is considered the most appropriate for any study that seeks to discover using interpretations and it gives an opportunity to understand the potential of any issue more widely". To interpret Ibrahim, thematic analysis is appropriate for any study that wishes to learn through peoples understanding and it gives a possibility to broaden understanding on any particular issue.

Thematic analysis was singled out in this study to discover and understand more about the contribution that Black academics can make towards the transformation of the university, however thematic analysis was also harnessed in the dissertation to code data into themes from the subjective interpretations of Black academics on their struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution. Researchers who use thematic analysis ask themselves whether a generated data set offers a response to the research question and the study in a fundamental and meaningful way (Lainson et al., 2019). To achieve this, researchers have iterative steps to consider and follow when conducting qualitative analysis in social science research. The renowned scholars on thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006 as cited by Maguire and Delahunt, 2017) devised a six-step framework for doing thematic analysis against this background which are: familiarise yourself with data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review the themes, define, and name the themes, and write the report. In the research methodology chapter (chapter 5), these six steps of thematic analysis are illuminated comprehensively on how they were followed in the study.

1.18.2. Inductive Thematic Analysis Approach

As a qualitative method of analysis, thematic analysis is broad and complex as it involves many approaches. Thematic analysis approaches include deductive, inductive, semantic, and latent thematic analysis. In addition to thematic analysis, social scientists have almost 50 different data analysis types to make a choice from, which include content, grounded theory, narrative, discourse, conversation, phenomenon, and template analysis (Wolcott, 1994). In this study, the inductive thematic analysis was an approach of choice.

Deductive (top-down) thematic analysis is described as an approach relying on an a 'priori' (pre- determined) sets of codes, patters and themes to emerge from the data, and these pre-determined standards are derived from the research aims, research questions, and the questions asked to participants during interviews and focus group discussions (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Proudfoot, 2023). Put simply, Deductive thematic analysis is a methodology that relies on pre-existing frameworks or theories to guide the analysis. It involves using established standards to anticipate the data that will emerge, and to code, theme, and identify patterns in a systematic and predictable manner.

There is also inductive (bottom-up) thematic analysis which is a method that relies on 'posteriori' approach where data is not treated as self-emergent in a sense that codes, labels, patterns, and themes can only emerge after data observation with no pre-sets of theoretical ideas or frameworks influencing the data (Charmaz, 2006; Proudfoot, 2023). The data with inductive thematic analysis is not treated as is or already given, as one has to read, analyse and examine the data for the emerging trends, patterns and then develop themes. Deduction means a pre-drawn pattern or framework against the observable data, while induction starts with reading the data first to find observable patterns (Babbie, 2010). In one, there is some degree of imposing, and in another, data is allowed to speak reality on its own with no pre-defined directions.

Inductive thematic analysis was relied upon in this study because the study dealt with a complex topic (decolonisation) that focused on complex participants (Black academics) whose lives are not uniform/stationary but rather diverse/dynamic thus, pre-empting the data that might emerge for this study was needless and might have compromised the authenticity of the data. Relying on inductive thematic analysis was out of the researchers interest on reading, analysing and observing Black academics descriptive views of a decolonial university, and their interpretive meaning of struggles for transformation around teaching, research, and community as KPA's. After foregrounding Black academics' voices on a decolonial university and their struggles for transformation, data from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were organised and analysed inductively to generate themes for teaching, research, and community engagement following the six steps of thematic analysis which assisted on executing an in-depth interpretation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To interpret and makes sense of the data, anecdotal insights of participants were relied upon.

1.19. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is dealt with in a research project to ensure that the findings are consistent, and precise. To make sure that the presented data or findings were truthful and trustworthy, the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, confirmability dependability and transferability were followed in this study. Given below is a glimpse of how each of the criterion was dealt with and later in the methodology chapter (Chapter 5), these trustworthiness criteria are elucidated in greater detail.

1.19.1. Credibility

One of the many ways to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research is through credibility. Credibility is defined as the confidence we have in data produced by the researcher as true and original interpretations of the participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In other words, credibility establishes how believable the researcher's findings are in reference to the participants' views. Credibility can be established through a number of procedures and in this study member checking was harnessed to establish the believability of the findings which is elaborated and given broader attention in chapter five, the research methodology chapter.

1.19.2. Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with the data and findings of a research study representing the views of the participants and not representing the biases and imaginations of a researcher (Shenton, 2004; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Confirmability in a different understanding measures the degree to which the findings of a study are based on the participants experiences and perspectives rather than the researcher's biases. Confirmability can be achieved through various techniques however in this study an audit trail proved sufficient which is delved into deeper detail in the research methodology chapter which is chapter five in this study.

1.19.3. Dependability

Dependability is an explanation of how the data was generated and establishes whether the same results can be reached over time if the study were to be repeated (Cuthbert & Moules,

2014). Dependability refers to the degree to which a research study can be repeated by another researcher and produce the same results. Similar to how confirmability can be established by an audit trail, dependability too can be established through an audit trail and other strategies (Anney, 2014). Here too an audit trail was engaged in this study to establish dependability however much broader context on an audit trail is given under dependability in the research methodology chapter.

1.19.4. Transferability

Transferability speaks to the extent to which the results of a qualitative study can be transferred to another study with different participants in a different environment (Moon et al., 2016). Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to other contexts, populations, or settings, taking into account the potential differences that may impact the results. A researcher can facilitate the transferability of their study through 'thick descriptions' (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Thick descriptions are a common way of establishing transferability in qualitative studies and this study followed suite by using 'thick descriptions' to establish transferability of the results of this study. A detailed account of transferability and how thick descriptions were best suited for this study appear in the research methodology chapter.

1.20. Anticipated Problems and Limitations

The participants of this study were Black academics who had very busy schedules. Convincing them to take part in the study required clearly explaining what the study strove to do and what interest it aimed to uncover around decolonisation and the struggles for university transformation in order for them to be willing to take their time to be part of the study. The researcher of this study also had to pre-scheduled meetings through the online platform Zoom so that they were able to take part in the study at times that were suitable to them. Had it not been that the researcher of this dissertation anticipated that potential participants in this study needed more convincing and pre-scheduling meetings with them as busy individuals, he could have had problems and limitations of not accessing potential participants who could have provided the much-needed data for the study.

1.21. Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the registrar and an ethical clearance application was made to the institution which was approved by the research ethics committee. The researcher of this study had to address ethical issues in qualitative studies that involve doing research with participants. These issues that involved obtaining informed consent, exposing the risks and harms, as well as speaking to the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Each of these ethical issues are demonstrated below concerning how they were addressed in the study.

1.21.1. Informed Consent

One of the most vital issues of ethical research is 'informed consent'. Informed consent includes researchers clearly explaining to the participants what the research is about, what is needed from them, and that they can withdraw at any time from the research activity if they feel uncomfortable (Girvan & Savage, 2012). When recruiting participants, researchers must explicitly outline the potential benefits of participation. This includes disclosing whether participants will receive remuneration or incentives, or if their involvement will be on a voluntary basis (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011).

An informed consent letter was drawn up for the participants. In this letter, it was clearly explained that the topic of research was re-imagining a decolonial university: exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. Included in this information letter was that participation in the research project was on a voluntary basis and no monetary benefits were to be gained from participating in the research. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any point, should they feel the need to do so, without penalty or consequence. The participants had to sign the informed consent letters given that they understood the research process and agreed to voluntary participation.

1.21.2. Risks and Harms

A researcher needs to consider the potential risks and harms when conducting research. Harms and risks when dealing with research participants can range from emotional, reputational, physical, and even economic loss (Fleming & Zegward, 2018). The researcher has to explicitly indicate the risks and harms of their research to potential participants (Hammersley, 2015). In

this study, it was made known to the participants that the research involved no risks and harms and they were assured that their reputation will be safeguarded/protected at all cost.

1.21.3. Confidentiality and Anonymity

The research participants identities needed to be kept confidential and anonymous between the researcher and the participants. According to Arifin (2018, p. 30) "the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants can be preserved by not revealing their names and identity in the data [generation], analysis and reporting of the study findings". Participant confidentiality and anonymity means concealing the participants' names and identities when generating data, examining and revealing the results of the study. To keep up with participant anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms were employed for the participants names. The research study was moreover carried out with a focus on Black academics' voices in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution for research purposes only, and not for any other purposes that may expose their identities.

1.22. Outline of Chapters

In the sections below, outlined are the various chapters covered in the study. Providing chapter outlines served as a crucial roadmap for readers of this study, enabling them to visualise the logical progression and connections between chapters. This outline facilitated a deeper understanding of the research by allowing readers to reflect on the information presented in each chapter before advancing to the next. Furthermore, the outline functioned as a signposting mechanism, guiding readers through the narrative flow and signalling the transitions between chapters.

1.22.1. Chapter 1: Introduction, Orientation and Background to the Study

This is an introductory chapter of the study, where the background and orientation to the study is provided. Covered in this background chapter are the study aims and the rationale, talking to the motivating factors for conducting this study. Presented as well are the problem statement, the objectives of the study, as well as the research questions. Discussions also feature the research methods, designs and approaches in this chapter. The chapter delineates on the

anticipated limitations, concerns, and problems and how they were going to addressed. At the end of the chapter, outlined and discussed are the ethical issues.

1.22.2. Chapter 2: Conceptual Clarification

In the study, some key concepts were found to be varying in meaning. In this chapter, therefore defined are key and loaded concepts that were relied on in discussing the phenomenon covered in the study. The justification for enunciating these concepts was for the purposes of showcasing how they are defined in literature and how they were conceptualised in this study.

1.22.3. Chapter 3: Review of Literature

Chapter three focused on reviewing related literature. The chapter reviewed work that has been conducted and documented nationally and internationally on the subject matter of decolonisation and the transformation of universities in general and those in South Africa. Also addressed in this chapter were some of the silences and gaps in South African literature with regard to the transformation of South African higher education.

1.22.4. Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

The fourth chapter of the study addresses the theoretical framework used in the study. The social justice theory was defined and presented from its foundations, to what it aimed to do and how it was fit for purpose in this study. The social justice theory within this chapter of the study was applied using its three-dimensional approaches namely; the economic, cultural, and political dimensions as proposed by Nancy Fraser and the latter added dimension, the epistemic dimension. The chapter was then concluded by indicating what had been aimed in the chapter.

1.22.5. Chapter 5: Research Methodology

Chapter five is the research methodology and design chapter. This chapter provided the steps and processes undertaken while conducting the study. In this chapter the design and methodological approaches used in the study are broadened and contextualised. The chapter began by looking into the critical paradigm and explaining what it is and how it applied in the study. Thereafter, discussions delved into the qualitative approach, and the case study design,

the sampling method, research tools, trustworthiness, ethical considerations and the limitations of the study and then the chapter was concluded.

1.22.6. Chapter 6: Findings and Data Analysis

In this chapter, presented are the findings as data generated from the field. Thematic analysis was first used to let the data speak for itself in themed categories and patterns before introducing the theory into the findings. In presenting the data, it was drawn from literature as supporting evidence to the issues, views, and comments that Black academics voiced out as their struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. The chapter was then summarised by focusing on what it foregrounded encompassing its conclusion.

1.22.7. Chapter 7: Theorising the Findings

In chapter seven, findings are theorised using the social justice theory by providing the findings in conjunction with the theoretical framework and the relevant literature that the study drew from. The findings were theorised in relation to the research questions and the objectives of the study. Thereafter, the chapter was concluded by providing a reflective discussion on what the chapter covered and encompassed.

1.22.8. Chapter 8: Summary, Implications, limitations and Future Research

Chapter eight discusses the implications of the research findings, highlighting key takeaways and recommendations for future action. Chapter eight thus provides the summary, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research from the findings reached in the study on the subject of decolonisation and transformation in South African higher education institutions.

1.23. Conclusion

This chapter provided a synopsis of the study by providing an overview of the work covered and to be covered in the dissertation, hence, its labelling as an introduction, orientation and background to the study. Initially, this chapter provided an overview of previous research as a background chapter and historicised research done on decolonial work and the transformation

of South African higher education. It also provided an overview of the study's rationale, which was driven by both academic and personal motivations articulated through the researcher's personal experiences at university, which served as a catalyst for the study's Moreover, the significance, research problem, setting of the study, key objectives and the research questions of the study were highlighted. Within this background and orientation to the study chapter, also provided was a brief outline of the research design and methodology for the study. Briefly outlined was the trustworthiness criteria that the study aimed to keep up with. Alongside that, also provided was an outline and an overview of each chapter as covered in the research project. In the next conceptual clarification chapter two of two, a review of some of the dense, complex and loaded terms that were used in the study is done to offer meanings/definitions of these terms.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Clarification

2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, focus was on the background to the study around the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. In the study, it was explored that there were different yet also conceptually dense keywords that had been used. Upon realising that these "loaded" terms can be given subjective meanings or definitions by individuals using them, it was found important to set forth a conceptual clarification of these terms. The conceptual clarification chapter was therefore developed to make readers aware what these terms meant and how they were applied in the study. Each of the key terms were thus given meanings attached to them within the context of what the study explored. While it was important to offer conceptual understanding of the other words used in the study, offering conceptual explanations on the three KPA's of an academic from a decolonial perspective as the core focus of this study was central in this chapter.

2.2. Decolonisation

Decolonisation was used extensively in the study hence the reason behind beginning by defining this concept. According to Saini and Begum (2020, p. 218), decolonisation refers to the "exposure of the material, intellectual and symbolic colonialism that abounds in the university system which needs to be dismantled". Decolonisation is about revealing colonial evidence, be it material, intellectual, and symbolic, that is present in the university system and that needs to be reformed. Scholars such as Mignolo (2002) and Wa Thiong'o (1981) argued differently and stated that part of decolonial thinking begins by decolonising the African mind. For the two scholars, decolonial thinking begins by Africans devaluing the use of colonial languages such as English and French and reclaiming native languages by applying them when producing knowledge.

Mignolo (2002, p. 72) stated that "credit should be given to African philosophers for successfully raising the issue and projecting a future, taking advantage of the epistemic potential of thinking from the colonial difference". Decolonial research that is African-focused

is critical to imagining a different world; a world that grants the authority to think freely and differently from colonial control. The perspective of imagining or thinking differently was applicable in this study as it focused on re-imagining a decolonial university through exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. According to Zembylas (2018), decolonial traditions are predominantly focused on reviewing or critiquing the disregarding, invalidation, and illegitimating of Global South indigenous knowledge systems. The marginalisation of indigenous people's knowledge has not gone unnoticed, and decolonial scholars have taken a critical attitude towards this marginalisation to seek their inclusion in the arena of knowledge production. The colonial silencing and de-legitimising of indigenous knowledge is what necessitated the decolonisation of curriculum knowledge. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) concurred with this and noted that decolonisation is a process of bringing humanising aspects into the curriculum, with humanising referring to the re-introduction of relevant realities that speak to African human identities generally ignored in the times of colonialism.

Decolonial discourses stem from the exclusion of developing countries in knowledge production and making their knowledge subordinate, not worthy or valid for learning in higher education. People in the Global South lose confidence in their knowledge systems when they are excluded from use in higher education institutions. This dehumanises them as a group of people is nothing without their knowledge (Davis & Parmenter, 2021). Literature in South Africa (Heleta, 2018; Higgs, 2016; Le Grange, 2016; Luckett; 2016) observed that the decolonisation project entails including the lived experiences of previously colonised people so that they may not be dehumanised. Although scholars these (Heleta, 2018; Higgs, 2016; Le Grange, 2016 and Luckett, 2016) offer simplistic arguments on what decolonisation is, they nonetheless, make important contributions. In this study, decolonisation meant exposing colonial conditions in South African higher education and adopting a deconstructionist approach to such conditions. It was based on a consciousness that South African higher education needs, not only to rely on Western knowledge systems, but also to withdraw from indigenous knowledges which deconstructs the current hegemonic-violating experience.

2.3. Transformation

While acknowledging that there is a wide range of literature on transformation, this concept is not effortlessly defined within literature due to a lack of an agreed-upon definition, and due to

the complex use of the term. Furthermore, Ramohai (2019) acknowledged that the reason for the complexity in defining the term is that it is not easy to track unless areas of change are clearly pointed out in the established institutional plans and initiatives of transformation. In formulating a conceptual definition of transformation, it is important to specify areas of transformation within higher education, considering multiple voices, to influence and shape transformative change. It is these voices that can depict, reflect, and identify the complexities of defining and identifying transformation that were probed in this study by foregrounding the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

According to Luvalo (2019) and Govinder et al. (2013), transformation is a difficult yet multifaceted concept of the 1950s that meant to bring about change, and to effect or stimulate an experience of change in the structure, nature, and appearance of a phenomenon. In South African higher education, it is apparent that transformation is used to depict such change by addressing past inequalities and exclusion, restructuring of curriculum, determination of the self, culture, creating institutional autonomy, and implementing local relevance (Badat, 2008; 2009). Given the breadth of issues and themes that ought to be addressed to ensure transformation in South African higher education, the study explored the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

While it has been problematic to define transformation, Breetzke and Hedding (2018, p. 146) argued that, from a South African point of view, it is crucial to define transformation in terms of the "undoing of the historical injustices that the majority of the Black African population suffered in terms of access, availability, and representation in the higher education sector of the country". Mzangwa and Dede (2019) stated that some institutions appear not to value the inclusiveness of various social groups within these spaces, and therefore, access, participation, and representation have been skewed for different social classes in these spaces. It is against this backdrop that the study explored the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution so that marginal groups can express their voices on inclusion in the sector. There are contested meanings of the concept transformation. While other definitions agree on the concept of transformation, others give a different meaning to the concept. The absence of an agreed-upon definition of transformation allows us space to seriously re-think what transformation means. In this study, the opportunities

for rethinking and reviewing transformation were based on exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle to transform a South African higher education institution.

As previously mentioned by Luvalo (2019) and Govinder et al. (2013), that transformation developed in the 1950s. Similarly, Du Preez et al. (2016, p. 1) mentioned that transformation has its beginning in the late 1950s as the "Latin word Transformare, the prefix trans meaning 'across', 'beyond', 'above', or 'bridging' is combined with formare meaning 'to form'". To transform includes effecting an important and needed change (Duncan et al., 2018). Transformation includes causing a significant change in the way higher education environments appear or in the way they are constructed. Transformation scholars like Makgoba (1998) and Ramose (2003) as cited in (Masaka, 2017, p. 444-445) offered their thoughts and understanding of transformation. Both scholars came to the fore and defended their definitions of transformation in opposing ways. For Makgoba (1998), transformation is a procedure of absolute and total change in the form, shape of doing things and is notably different from reformation given that it is not about superficial but about fundamentally radical change. Ramose (2003) presented an antithesis to Makgoba's (1998) definition of transformation and argued that the use of the words form, shape and norm by Makgoba (1998) is questionable and deceiving on many grounds.

Ramose (2003, p. 137) viewed transformation as a basic change and not a fundamental change. A basic change expresses the need for change on sustained domination of one model by another, and it calls for that one model to be confronted and disallowed. Despite Makgoba's (1998) and Ramose's (2003) different positions on transformation, they agree on one thing; that the continued and sustained supremacy of the Euro-centred educational models must be disallowed. A more comprehensive definition of transformation was from Eckel (2002, p. 82) who put forward that "transformation: (1) alters the culture of the institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviours, processes, and products; (2) is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole institution; (3) is intentional; and (4) occurs over time". This meant that transformation causes an adjustment in an institution by changing the nature of doing things, is a deeply rooted process, is purposeful and disrupts set conditions affecting the whole institution, and occurs over a period of time.

While acknowledging that there are many structural limitations that impede curriculum transformation to accomplish the development of many higher education institutions in South

Africa (Luckett & Shay, 2020). It was the premise of this study that reframing the curriculum might be one of the paths to questioning and challenging the structural injustices that are apparent in the academy. The higher education sector is facing the injustices of inequality, racist and discriminatory curricula, subsequently transforming the curriculum could be one of the ways of breaking away from these injustices found within this sector to cater for change (Morreira, 2017). Reframing the curriculum could relatively mean the smallest of changes in different universities of the country. Transformation changes within the curriculum could mean using all types of information, changing the way the curriculum is planned, and the core intentions of the curriculum, as well as determining who delivers the end curriculum (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). According to Luvalo (2019, p. 186), "transformation of an institution does not occur in isolation; it is usually brought about by changes taking place within and outside of the institution". Transformation is hence not restricted to an academic institution but should also be a broader reflection of societal issues which should be transformed as well.

Institutional transformation can manifest through curriculum changes, teaching methods, and delivery approaches, particularly in evolving educational landscapes (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, accelerated the adoption of technology in curriculum delivery, replacing traditional pedagogical methods like lecturing and seminar sessions with innovative approaches such as collaborative online teaching and learning (Cantali & Knight, 2018). The arguments and ideas that have been brought forward in this study presented what transformation may mean. Transformation, in this study, meant additions and technical changes. It did not necessarily mean dismantling the entire university or wholesome reform. It was about prescribing Black scholars in curricula and changing teaching and learning, strategies while not making incremental reforms.

2.4. Decolonial university

The study was based on re-imagining a decolonial university and it was therefore crucial to define and operationalise the conception of a decolonial university within the study. The apartheid government administered by the National Party in 1948 under the University Education Act 45 of 1959 disallowed Blacks from attending White only Institutions/Universities and developed HBU's like the University of Fort Hare, the first university for Black students (Ndimande, 2013). With apartheid coming to an end (1948-1994)

and the introduction of the democratic government, universities were restructured by merging HWU's and Technikons together with some HBU's. HBU's such as the University of the North at Turfloop; the University of Zululand at Ngoye; the University of the Western Cape at Bellville; the University of Durban Westville now UKZN predominantly attended by Black minority background students nonetheless remain resource underprivileged even after mergers because of their historical formation (Ilorah, 2006).

As part of following transformation imperatives and governments promulgated policies aimed at ensuring racial integration; HWU's have been confronted with opening their doors of learning to everyone in an equitable and socially just manner. Despite that, South African HWU's that did not merge such as Rhodes University, the University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria and others who maintain their colonial foundations have been proven by studies to be obliquely enforcing acculturation to Black students and staff which alters/excludes their ontological identities, epistemological cultures and traditions (Bazana & Magotsi, 2017; Machiwenyika, 2023; Daniel, & Platzky Miller, 2024). From this instance universities including HBU's have allegedly been accused of operating and thinking along the lines of colonial, global and Euro-American epistemological cultural practices, distant and peculiar to the Black and African diaspora experience (Sibanda, 2021). The grounds offered for this operationalised line of thinking are that universities have historically aspired to emulate prestigious institutions like Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge rendering them culpable to the complicit behaviour of perpetuating elitist western-dominated knowledge systems (Motta, 2013; Heleta & Jithoo, 2023). Consequently, Black African students and academic staff members indirectly experience themselves being pressured to ignore their own knowledge frames in order to adopt Western perspectives as ways of realising success in the allegedly highly westernising universities highlighting the need for decolonised universities and inclusive education.

The discourses of calling for decolonised universities are among other things prompted by the stagnant curriculum and the hegemonical nature of the euro-centred episteme of the Global North in being a universal elitist determinant of what is knowledge, what constitutes it and its production while othering, repressing and eschewing alternate systems (Mbembe, 2015; Chilisa et a., 2016; Chiumbu, 2017). The epistemic cultural hegemony of the West demotes and banishes diverse collaborative knowledge forms to the margins of myopia, mysticism, primitivity and baselessness for scholarly engagement within the university system

(Emeagwali & Sefa Dei, 2014). It is for these reasons that the delicate as well as intricate politics of knowledge production and decolonisation perspectives tend to problematise what the locus of the centre of knowledge enunciation should be. Black scholars believe that a re-imagined, decolonial university should be one that recentres locality and repositions the enunciation of knowledge from the basis of indigenous thought. Proponents of these ideas include Kasturi (2019) and Le Grange (2016) who viewed a decolonial university as one that not only mainstreams and repositions the previously marginalised yet valuable indigenous local knowledge systems but one that makes them central to knowledge development. To clarify, a decolonial university denotes one that overthrows and changes the hegemony between acknowledged and excluded ways of knowing. Envisaging a decolonial university differently, Mbembe (2015), Chiumbu (2017) and Wa Thiong'o (1986) expressed that promulgating a decolonial university is not about total 'repeal' and 'repel'; that is, it is not about an epistemic rapture that seeks the total erasure of European knowledge traditions but it is most about eloquently defining the centre with Africa being the locus of this centre along with her experiences. Mkhize (2017, 2020) shined a spotlight on a decolonial university by arguing that it is a university where the histories and experiences of the marginalised communities are centred. The scholars advanced for the procurement of the "centre" and changing the nature of the centre of perspectives on epistemology as a point of departure for a decolonised university.

In this study it was understood that there is a militant and combative decoloniality approach that seeks to exterminate and shatter the colonial apartheid edifice of practices within the university. Similar to Oliver (2019) who reckoned that the delusional fuss and obsession among some Black intellectual aspirants and decolonial traditions of proposing entirely doing away with the vestiges of colonialism from the university is misguided and lumpen, such understanding was also held in this study. A more appealing decolonial possibility approach in this study drew from Santos (2009) who maintained that decolonisation of knowledge and the university is about having diverse knowledge systems coexisting, interacting and informing one another, recognising the strengths and limitations of each other to foster rich and inclusive "ecologies of knowing". A decolonial university in this study was however largely understood as an institution that seeks to challenge and dismantle the dominant western epistemological paradigm that seeks to not embrace diverse knowledge systems and promote inclusivity, equity and social justice. It meant a university that fosters collaboration between students, faculty and community members, recognising the importance of collective knowledge production.

2.5. Voices

The concept of “voices” can be broad and abstract encompassing various aspects hence the importance of defining the concept of voices in this study as it was applied throughout the study. By acknowledging the complexity and abstract nature of voices we can better understand the diverse ways in which individuals and groups express themselves, navigate power dynamics and negotiate their identities. The various aspects encompassing voices in the ‘literal’ understanding of the researcher of this study included the physical projected sound of a person’s voice which would be a literal voice in this case. A metaphorical representation of a person’s insight, perspective, opinion and reflective sensemaking of their identity and underlying beliefs denoted a figurative voice (Schellings, Koopman & Beijaard, 2024). The abstract nature of the concept voices is however extensive, nuanced, complex and multifaceted. Voices can be meaningfully central to challenging aspects of power dynamics found in relationships between individuals or groups because of the evident dominance and oppression in these relationships (Crenshaw, 1989; Bhana, 2010). Voices can also be crucial cultural tools of resisting the silencing, marginalisation, ignoring and excluding of certain cultural groups in society more broadly and at institutions more specifically.

Voices come through advocates of change who firmly believe that society and institutions in which they work in are in a critical state of dilapidation who then press for an urgent need of change (Fomunyam, 2017; Muraina, Toshe-Mlambo, & Cingo, 2024). South African higher education continues to be in critical need for reform after apartheid because the imbalances created by the discriminatory policies of apartheid resulted in Black academics and students struggling to exist in universities. These experiences were a direct result of the lingering effects of neoliberal capitalism’s exploitation and colonialisms’ erasure of indigenous African knowledge systems (Maluleka, 2024) which perpetuated a power imbalance, the suppressing of Black peoples ways of knowing, being and thinking (Maluleka & Ramoupi, 2022). As such, the voicing of Black students and few academics of the subtle and overt racism, discrimination, white privilege, alienating and marginalising curricula, and institutional culture through the #FMF and #RMF decolonisation student campaigns (Hlatshwayo, 2020) was principally important. It was important because they were attempting to belong, be “natives of somewhere” at the academy that renders them primitive, inferior, irrational, and Black “natives of nowhere” (Kumalo, 2018; Maluleka, 2021a & b). In other words, they were seeking a human centred, inclusive university that allows everyone the epistemic freedom to

define what it means to be human and not a university imbued in the stains of toxic and contested milieu of colonialism and Black racism that uphold the Achilles of invisibility and misrecognition of the other.

In attempting to channel the real and material transformation of the higher education sector and the utilitarian public good of the academy from the centrality or positionality of the Global South around academic freedom, teaching and learning, a selection of literature on amplifying the voices of the oppressed appeared across disciplines. Covering the work of all seminal scholars across disciplines on an inclusive based university ecology would have been an impossible ambition, highlighting a few was however much more sensible and workable. The Indian philosopher and literary theorists Gayathri Spivak (2023) in her seminal essay *"Can the Subaltern Speak"?* used several theories (Poststructuralist, Marxist, Feminist and Deconstructionist) to critique the representation of the marginalised voices and challenged dominant discourses of power, knowledge and representation. In a similar theme, Bell Hooks (1994) in her seminal book, *"Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom"* in education and pedagogy drew from the work of Paulo Freire to advocate for education as a liberating and transformative experience that values diverse voices and promotes critical thinking. In psychology and sociology, Pierre Bourdieu (1991) and Michel Foucault (1980) examined the relationship between voice, language and social power through providing valuable insights into how language and symbolic systems shape social dynamics and reinforce power structures within the university fabric. The researcher of this dissertation agreed with the above seminal decolonial work which strongly argued for analysing the world through varied points of analysis and empowering the voiceless 'oppressed' subalterns. Voices in this study thus meant the cultural thoughts, practices and values Black academics uphold and employ in their line of work of teaching, research and community engagement as a way of transforming the university.

2.6. Black and Blackness

It was impossible to understand a decolonial university if it is disconnected from the idea of being a Black academic in South African higher education. In chapter one under purposive sampling, it was mentioned that Black was housed under the political tradition of the Black consciousness movement which is a liberation movement that argued that blackness is a state of mind and a way of life that Black people must value to achieve national freedom from their

oppression (Biko, 2015; Dolamo, 2017). For the Black consciousness tradition, Black refers to Black Africans, Coloureds, and Indians as part of the broader collective that were oppressed and marginalised by the apartheid regime. Under the apartheid government, Black individuals were denied access to resources such as access to education, land, and others. It was within the context of these exclusionary experiences that Blackness was highlighted and applied for use in the study while also drawing from Maringira and Gukurume (2017, p. 33) who argue that:

> "Being black' is about access to resources and ownership, in particular of land, which remains an unattainable dream for most black people in South Africa. So, the notion of a decolonised Afrocentric education goes beyond 'fees falling'; it speaks to genuine inclusivity, such as access to and utilisation of land and overcoming the continuation of racial oppression and the perpetual inequality reified though institutions like universities" (Maringira & Gukurume, 2017, p. 33)

For Maringira and Gurume (2017), 'being black' in South African higher education should be considered a social and political tradition within which Black people can have access to quality African-focused education, own land, and various resources to restore their lost African Black dignity. These are essential resources for emancipating Black people from their alienation and exclusionary situations, and ultimately for the transformation of South African higher education.

For several Black academics, the meanings connected with being Black in South African higher education have to be seen from the dichotomy of a Black man having to assimilate into the world of the White man. This understanding goes above and beyond a Fanonian perspective (1952) on the ultimate destiny of a Black man. For Fanon, the fate, destiny, and/ or end goal of a Black man has always been to be White. According to Hlatshwayo (2020, p. 174), this "reveals the operational contradictions of the structures of Whiteness in how the academy remains a priori, de- contextualised and untouched, and black academics are expected to assimilate and adapt to the colonial structures of the university". This indicated that the university remains detached, colonial, and not fit for the germane South African context as it discredits Blackness and credits Whiteness. It also indicated a ready-to-wear approach, where Black academics are expected to assimilate or simply wear Whiteness to fit into the university. Being Black in South African higher education underscores intersectional education. This is a type of education that is all-encompassing and inclusive of Blacks, while also empowering

them to be self-autonomous and allowing them to independently do and think (see Crenshaw, 1989 on the conceptualisation of intersectionality).

On the issue of being Black in South African higher education, Fanon (1952 as cited by Maringira & Gukurume, 2017, p. 38) noted that "not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the White man". It follows that to understand Blackness and Whiteness, the architects and dynamics of power, control, and subordination need to be understood as well (Green et al., 2007; Naidoo, 2015). This study reveals that the struggles for transformation in South African higher education are multifaceted, with one key dimension being the quest for Black liberation from Whiteness, ultimately aiming to humanise higher education (Walker, 2005; Roux & Becker, 2016). Humanising higher education would mean allowing Black academics the freedom to flourish in their academic lives in ways that are suitable to them.

In their struggle for transformation, Black academics in South African higher education have faced many challenges because of their Blackness. They shared their displeasures, undeserved, and unfair treatment while performing the activities of an academic. Some Black academics, particularly those who worked at HWU's expressed their frustrations and annoyance of being Black. Their frustrations and annoyances were pertaining to their experiencing of racism in facilitating teaching, at research conferences, at member staff meetings, and being subjected to substantiate their reason for being employed and belonging in the academy (Porter, 2022; Oliver & Morris, 2020; Belluigi, & Thondhlana, 2022; Hlatshwayo, 2020). The challenges of being Black and Blackness were evident from these experienced struggles. Blackness in this study meant a state or identity of being Black and a conscious feeling of being proud to be a Black being.

2.7. Whiteness

Another concept that can offer more meaning in the context of South African higher education is the idea of Whiteness. In the subsequent section below where Black South African is defined, it is mentioned that the Population Registration Act of 1950 segregated people in terms of colour, race, and location during the apartheid era (Booi et al., 2017). The segregation was largely felt between Black and White South Africans, and affected higher education inequalities between Black South African academics and White South African academics

(Badat, 2010). The outcry for the transformation of higher education institutions partly stemmed from the overrepresentation of White faculty members (Breetzke, & Hedding, 2018). The higher education sector is a racialised sector with noticeable Whiteness, a situation that is in urgent need of de-racialisation if radical calls for transformation within these institutions are to be met.

To understand 'white' and 'whiteness' in the context of the higher education sector, it was imperative to make distinction between these two concepts. White refers to an individual's being, and Whiteness is a philosophical idea, an epistemological approach, and an ontological method that serves to back up the actions of individual people, and appearances of those taken as White (Corces-Zimmerman et al., 2021). The difference is that Whiteness is a racial discourse based on social practices rather than cultural ones, whereas the idea of White represents a socially built identity emanating from skin colour (Leonardo, 2009). In simpler terms, Whiteness is a concept based on race and is built upon social practices, and behaviour patterns that White individuals display in higher education institutions. White, however, refers to a socially constructed concept of White people where they are attributed an identity of being White because of their appearance and the colour of their skin.

Whiteness has been defined as the racism that takes place in the daily operation of HWU's as they largely operate with institutional cultures that centralise Whiteness (Joseph- Salisbury, 2019). Whiteness is also defined as a structural situation with levels of hierarchies and privileges for class groups and is an implicit term that is used as a measure of progress (Milner, 2020). Whiteness is thus, a structural concept of power and hierarchy. It is based on a superiority complex and comes with privileges for certain groups that facilitate progress.

Individuals who deviate from Whiteness are thus systematically disadvantaged. For instance, being a Black academic staff member often perpetuates the notion that one is inherently less intellectually capable, less outstanding, and less deserving of recognition as a scholar. This pervasive bias creates a culture of expected failure, undermining the potential and contributions of Black academics (Behari-Leak, 2017). Black academics must thus attempt to be White or assimilate into epistemic structures of Whiteness for them to be seen as complete academics. Ratele (2015) pointed that Black South Africans are taught that to succeed academically and thrive in life, they should assimilate to the White capitalist traditions and the same applies to Black academics. These imposed and repeated forms of colonialism and apartheid come in

subtle ways (Bazana & Mogotsi, 2017). The notion of Whiteness in this study referred to the exploration of super structures and systems in place at higher education institutions that build up White superiority. The examination of components such as race, colour, gender, sexuality, class-based discrimination, and other aspects that lead to the normalisation of social attitudes and grouped behaviour patterns of White people were therefore important in this study.

2.8. Black South African

Races exist within our societies and individuals are classified into racial identities to identify who they are (Maré, 2001). Race is a global issue that has been given much attention and makes people aware of their own race while also being aware of those of others (Sisco et al., 2021). Overall research on thinking about race and race issues is still in its infancy in present-day South Africa however so it is an important topic to inquire on how "race thinking is conveyed, created and maintained, and what content it is given" (Maré, 2001, p. 76). It means that there is a need to broaden the horizons of research on issues of race in South Africa to understand how racial issues are developed and perpetuated, and what knowledge comes from these issues. In South Africa, there is an emphasis on the importance of race-focused research given the historical apartheid era which used racial identities to justify inequalities (Posel, 2001; Tewolde, 2020). Racial categorisations and classifications in South Africa were used to assign membership to a group (Seekings, 2008). Many characteristics were used to racially classify and categorise people. The racial identity that one belonged to was, and continues to be, informed by the colour of hair and the colour of one's skin (Seekings, 2008). This was informed by the racial laws of apartheid in the context of South Africa and Jim Crow laws in the United States of America.

The apartheid systems under the Population Registration Act of 1950 made the classification and categorisation of the population into three major racial classifications, namely, Black, White, and Coloured (Posel, 2001). At a late stage, the fourth classification 'Indian' was introduced to address people of South Asian descent or those of mixed blood, Griquas, Malaysian or Chinese (Park, 2008). At the dawn of the democratic era in 1994, the policies constituting and governing the country were subjected to change to address the inequalities, injustices, and discrimination that were experienced by those considered as historically underprivileged groups. This was broadly done under affirmative action (for instance, by developing the Employment Equity Act 55, of 1998 and the Broad Based Black Economic

Empowerment Act 53 of 2003). This resulted in a different idea of the construction of racial classifications and identities of individuals in South Africa (Horwitz & Jain, 2011). These acts led to the description of Black South Africans as all those who belong to the group of people classified as historically underprivileged people; meaning that Coloureds, Indians, and Africans belonged to this group.

The term Africans was largely used in this context to refer to those historically categorised as Black. It is, however, important to consider that classifications and categorisations of a group of people are contextually applicable and such historical classifications are still apparent and applicable in our society of today (Herman, 2017). One of the defining features of racial classifications in the South African society of today is the gap between the White rich population and the poor Black population, which is enormously high in South Africa compared to other countries (Horwitz & Jain, 2011). The term Black, therefore, cannot apply to every context given that there are unique definitions of this term that have historical backgrounds of racial classifications. In this study, an ethnic-cultural group is an all-inclusive construct and fits to categories of a group of people.

Ethnicity refers to "categories based on shared physical or "racial" features, which are commonly inherited genetically, as well as categories for which membership depends on language (usually passed along through families), broader sets of cultural attributes (also passed along in part through families), or the nationality of one's parents" (Onuch & Hale, 2018, p. 85). Ethnicity refers to a group of people that share similar characteristics and therefore, belong to a group, and these characteristics can be passed down through time to others. The point of departure is that people can share similar racial categories but can have different ethnicities. In this study, Black South Africans referred to racial groups of people with different ethnic attributes such as Indians, Coloured and Africans whom all possess unique ethnic qualities but shared similar historical experiences and struggles.

2.9. Curriculum

Another term that is often conceptually loaded and complex, and is often under-theorised, is curriculum (Priestley, 2019). With the globalisation of knowledge and formal education in society today, an appropriate and fitting definition of curriculum is a requisite (van Jaarsveldt et al., 2019). A definition agreed upon by educationists that is usable in the education field has

been a contested matter. Despite the common usage of the term curriculum and the focus of research on particular areas on curriculum studies, the term has a long background that predates the times of educational scholars like Plato, Aristotle, Comenious, Bobbit and Froebel (Mulenga, 2018). Looking at the history of the term curriculum, extensive and deliberative research on the meaning of this term should have been conducted a long time ago. More recently, there appears to be more interest in curriculum-related matters, from both a local point of view and from an international level. It is for this reason that one has trouble with finding a common-shared understanding of what a curriculum is. A curriculum can first be seen as a programme for education because it contains all the objectives, aims, and plans of education (Mulenga, 2018). It is a formal programme of education containing key objectives and primary aims of education. According to Lange (2017), curriculum can be defined as follows:

> "Curriculum is the process of engagement of students and staff with knowledge, behaviour and identity in different disciplinary contexts. Here knowledge refers to the specialist professional or disciplinary knowledge that universities offer in a variety of combinations. It includes conflicting traditions, approaches, notions of method, focus, boundaries, etcetera, and more than anything else, contains the rules of making knowledge and sense in that particular discipline" (Lange 2017, p. 32-33).

The argument promoted by Lange (2017) is that curriculum is a method students and academics use to engage attitudes and culturally constructed identities in specialised disciplines. Curriculum refers to specialised sets of information found in various disciplines that are part of university models and modules. Curriculum in this instance combines information traditions with disciplinary boundaries that either agree or disagree with one another and offer methods, borders, limits, beliefs, and ideas of logic to a certain discipline.

Defining concepts offers clarity, produces a greater understanding and strengthens the base of how we can effectively apply them in addressing social challenges (Mulenga & Mwanza, 2019). Many conceptions of the term curriculum are similar, yet in these offerings there is also little difference. According to Lunenburg (2011), a curriculum can be defined as a totality of information, knowledge, learning experiences, and behavioural objectives and a plan for relaying information. A curriculum is, therefore, a package that includes attributes for teaching and learning, such as information, learning experiences and a designed plan to achieve these.

Clarifying the concept curriculum ensued from that it is widely used in the study, and it is one part to focus on in the discourses of transformation and the decolonisation of the university.

University officials have been given the task of decolonising the curriculum. The University in the African context today has Europe at the core of its curriculum rather than Africa. According to Aidi (2020, p. 4), "the university, as we know it, was born in a specific European context". The European university transcended to Africa, and we now find Europe being imitated in Africa (Higgs, 2012). This has come to be largely reflected in curriculum content in African universities especially when one focuses on knowledge. White European academics are given a voice in the curriculum as they are considered the creators and holders of knowledge and can thereafter, assert their views on the curriculum at the expense of Black academics who are given a negligible opportunity to assert their voices in the curriculum (Heleta, 2016). The curriculum is one of the serious elements of transformation in South African higher education, given the issue of that while others have the power to determine what goes in/out of curriculum, others do not.

Vorster and Quinn (2017, p. 38) contended that "university curricula are not neutral as academics use their agency to select the content of their courses". They proposed a decolonial turn, posing a challenge to the kind of knowledge advanced in the university curriculum and who it is advanced for. This sought to ask whether the knowledge advanced through the university curriculum is for people located in a particular context or it is for people located elsewhere (Soudien, 2015), probably one of the reasons the 2015-2016 student campaigns in South Africa, the UK, USA, and others called for radical transformation of curriculum.

Nine years ago, in the period of the Fallist and violent student campaigns of 2015 and 2016, students and few academics took centre stage and made calls for the decolonisation of university structures and cultures, including curriculum (Heleta, 2016). The common calls for decolonisation were largely centred around curriculum. In this study, curricula referred to a taught or given syllabus, properly planned around the teaching outcomes of a course or module. It was a curriculum that ought to be more inclusive and culturally responsive by not only prescribing Western literature but also Black and indigenous material in teaching and assessment plans.

2.10. Institutional culture(s)

Another term that is deeply contested and at times vague and elusive is the idea of institutional culture(s). In the South African higher education environment, transformation and institutional culture have been approached as separate subjects yet they are interlocking and therefore, cannot be dealt with separately (Jacobs 2012; Suransky & Van der Merwe 2016). It was clear that the concept of transformation and institutional culture are interconnected, and there can never be a completely transformed South African higher education unless institutional cultures are also subjected to change. According to Luvalo (2019) institutional culture is all the customs, mindsets, feelings, traditional beliefs, patterns of behaving and assumed practices that direct how individuals and groups in a higher education institution carry themselves. The definition is crucial for the transformation of higher education because it includes critical elements that also need to be dealt with under transformation discourses. Steyn (2007) argued that an institutional culture is the totality of morals, thinking styles, relations of collaboration, and all the memorable events about a university experienced by those who perform work duties and study at university contexts.

Institutional culture is the 'default' way of doing things to offer a different interpretation. Institutional culture does not look to conform to these ways of doing things in an institution but acts as a prevailing sub-culture, affirming its customs and mindsets as an informal code of conduct, which brings about an institutional hegemony (Adonis & Silinda, 2021). The Council on Higher Education (2007), Higgins (2007), and Vice (2015) defined institutional culture as a perspective that scrutinises Whiteness as an implicit event experienced by staff of colour as over-empowered by White scholarly cultures. In her research on institutional culture at Rhodes University, Vincent (2011) shared her understanding that institutional cultures have always propagated Whiteness by means of unjustified racism, discrimination, class, level of qualifications and social or professional position. She further advanced that deliberate attempts to socially change and transform institutional cultures have been common in literature and may well be the focal point of effectively transforming South African higher education to make universities a home for all. Institutional cultures are practices that can be harmful to building an anti-apartheid and democratic higher education if not transformed. Opportunities to be different should be provided for all those in the academy, and none should be excluded on the basis of deviating from illuminating the normative institutional cultures of an institution. In

their study focusing on how to transform institutional cultures at a HWU of South Africa, Booi et al. (2017) underscored that:

> "We suggest that what is also needed is a radical change of institutional cultures and practices inherited from the colonial and apartheid past and exacerbated by neoliberal economic forces. We need to interrogate the experiences of covert discrimination and the practices at play in the micro- social day-to-day experiences within institutions that continue to resist transformation at a primary level" (Booi et al., 2017, p. 459).

The above suggestion is a fundamentally significant proposal for changing institutional practices that are on the continuum of colonialism and apartheid, and are made worse by neoliberal practices. This can happen by examining implicit discrimination and the daily life experiences of academics inside institutions, that continue to counteract transformation at the most basic level of higher education. Implementing this proposed radical change is more complex than anticipated, due to the deeply ingrained and entrenched institutional cultural practices rooted in racial, class, and gender biases. Nevertheless, efforts to transform institutional cultures must persist.

Institutional culture(s) seem to be a universal phenomenon that is alive across and within HWU's in South Africa. The report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education (hereafter the Soudien report) (Department of Education, 2008) identified institutional culture as one of the important components of transformation within higher education institutions. Most of the HWU's like the University of Cape Town, Rhodes University, and the University of the Witwatersrand have alienating institutional cultures that are in urgent need of transformation (Adonis & Silinda, 2021). Owing to the alienating institutional cultures in these historical institutions, transforming them remains crucial in a diverse country like South Africa.

Transformation and institutional culture reform point to staff diversity and equity at higher education institutions (Niemann, 2010). For example, having the racial depiction of Black academics that are equal to White academics in the university points to, not only a transformed university, but also a changed institutional culture of that university. It is imperative that institutional cultures of universities are designed in such a way that they are enabling and accommodating towards their academics (Booi et al., 2017). Transforming institutions and

their cultures is thus a noble and necessary cause for creating enabling and empowering academic institutions.

The institutional culture of a university plays a curial role in transforming it and bringing about social cohesion among academic staff members (Nieman, 2010; Amsler & Bolsmann, 2012). The remaining challenge is finding a way to approach the relationship between institutional transformation and institutional cultures, and the ability to realise that both changes need to happen simultaneously (Adonis & Silinda, 2021). In this research, institutional culture encompassed the informal, everyday practices prevalent within the university environment. These cultures and practices are often intertwined with behaviours, tensions, and dilemmas rooted in racist practices among academics. Transforming these elements is crucial for transitioning towards a democratically transformed South African higher education terrain.

2.11. Research, or re-search

To make sense of the study on re-imagining research by examining the voices of Black academics one had to first offer a conceptual understanding of the word research. In the academic discourse, research is a systematic method of inquiry that is set to trouble on a problem in order to find answers to such a problem. The word “research” originated from the old French word “recerchier” meaning to search and search again. It implies “repeating a search for something and implicitly assumed that the earlier search was not exhaustive and complete in the sense that there was still scope for improvement” (Kabir, 2016, p. 2). To rephrase, research implies re-engaging in the activity of searching for knowledge due to the preceding work of searching not comprehensively covering what it had intended to cover from the onset of the research activity.

Mishra and Alok (2017) argued that research is not just merely a systematic method of inquiry, but a pedagogical form of action that is used to strive for information or knowledge about a particular topical issue of interest or subject of concern. According to Bryman (2016), academics engaged in various fields conduct research to question practice, out of intellectual interest, because of an unmatched reporting from various studies on their findings, or because of new developments in society that act as springboards for new research. By extension of the latter, the recent 2015-2016 student campaigns working together with a number of academics

to call for the transformation of curricula and decolonisation of South African higher education was a point of departure for this research.

Research, in this study, meant engaging in a social action or study of a phenomenon because of new developments on the topic. It meant engaging in the activity of researching, not because previous research was not exhaustive, but because there were new developments on the topical issues of transformation and decolonisation in South African higher education. These were seen in the 2015-2016 student fallist campaigns that occurred across all South African higher education institutions in the country.

2.12. Pedagogy

Teaching and learning methods hereafter referred to as 'pedagogy' were also one of the decolonial analytical areas that the study explored by examining the voices of Black academics on the struggle for transformation. One therefore had to conceptually elucidate on pedagogy. Teaching simply means imparting knowledge or a set of skills to the next person who then experiences learning. One may then come to describe a such undertaking as teaching and learning. According to Morrison and Dewey (1934), as cited by (Rajagopalan, 2019, p. 5), "teaching is learning as selling is to buying". Interpreted differently, when academics impart knowledge to students in the lecture space, and critical engagement takes place between the student and the lecturer, teaching and learning can be said to have taken place. Both agents; the student and academic, involved in the teaching and learning session benefit from each other just as 'selling is to buying'. It meant that teaching and learning is a two-way process, where the lecturer actively teaches the curriculum and imparts knowledge, the student benefits by receiving it however when they engage, both the lecturer and student acquire new knowledge from each other.

The practice of teaching can happen through different teaching strategies, and this can be described as pedagogy. While many subjective and personal definitions and pedagogical methods have been proposed by philosophers and theorists of education and differ from time to time, pedagogy is a concept that commonly "refers to the art or science of teaching children" (Shah & Campus, 2021, p. 8). Pedagogy refers to knowledge and skills of teaching including strategies, methods and practices teachers use to teach children. From this, the term pedagogy

is used to pronounce the approaches and styles used by teachers to cause students to learn (Shah & Campus, 2021). This way of defining pedagogy as surrounding the actions of a teacher to affect learning in others restricts us to a very narrow conceptualisation of what pedagogy is. A broader sense of transformed pedagogy in higher education is that of 'critical pedagogy' which goes beyond the actions of a teacher alone leading to learning. Critical pedagogy encompasses a teacher's knowledge base of a subject, pedagogical elements such as a teacher's familiarity with classroom management practices, and psychological elements like a teacher's knowledge of an individual students' personality (Guerriero, 2014). Critical pedagogy deliberates on a teacher who is an all-rounder by having familiarity with not only how to teach, but also knows how to manage the classroom, and has knowledge towards the psychosocial personalities of students in the classroom.

Critical pedagogy is a concept that speaks to the interconnected relations introduced by and among teachers and students in learning contexts and in their work (Murphy, 2008). This was also evident in the work of the Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire (1970; 1971;1972), who became a leading advocate of critical pedagogy in his seminal book 'pedagogy of the oppressed'. Freire (1970; 1971; 1972) challenged the notion of education being based on a "banking concept" where teachers are seen as owning knowledge, are specialised technicians who prescribe their reality, and constantly fill and deposit their views about the world onto passive students. He saw this as boxing students into uninformed, empty slates who have nothing to contribute to knowledge but are expected to memorise, and regurgitate the knowledge they have received without critically engaging or opposing it. He endorsed critical pedagogy where teaching, learning and valuing knowledge together through dialogue happened amongst the teacher and students.

On the banking concept in education, Freire (1972, pp. 45-46) argued that it is often supposed that teachers are very well-informed whereas students are taken as entirely transparent and uninformed:

> "Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teachers' existence--but, unlike

> the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher" (Freire, 1972, p. 46).

In the above quote, Freire (1972) opposed education that is based on banking because he believed teachers were being seen as supreme power holders, sole 'knowers and authorities of knowledge while 'othering', oppressing and, disallowing students from knowledge building. He believed that this was disempowering students and taking them as ignorantly having no views about reality and about the world in the presence of a teacher who is justified to be an all-rounder on any aspect of knowledge. He proposed education based on dialogue where the teacher and student are both leading/directing/guiding/facilitating knowledge. That way, students get to discover that they can become the teacher and in turn, the teacher can become the student.

The researcher in this study agreed with the critical pedagogy approach because it promotes transformed teaching which the study focused on by exploring the voices of Black academics on the struggles for a transformed higher education institution. In this study, pedagogy denoted the act and practice of teaching that encompasses not only the transmission of subject matter and content knowledge to students but also acknowledging and trusting students inherent abilities and perspectives. This approach enables teachers to accommodate diverse student populations, including those with disabilities, and fosters a collaborative learning environment. Furthermore, it recognises that knowledge is co-constructed, with both teachers and students serving as providers and contributors to the learning process.

2.13. Community Engagement

At the heart of the lifeworld of an academic's 'three-legged' pot is community engagement. Community Engagement (CE) is centrally intended and focused on improving the participation of community representatives in a particular research activity (Musesengwa & Chimbari, 2017). Literature on community engagement suggests that community engagement is a troubling pillar of an academic as there has been a challenge in locating consensus on an agreed-upon definition of community engagement (see Bhagwan, 2017, 2019; Starke et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2015). There has been a multiplicity of meanings on community engagement for varying contexts which (Sandmann 2008 as cited by Johnson, 2020, p. 88) calls "definitional anarchy". While the cause of definitional anarchy may be more than one, its other

cause was universities different ways of engaging communities as well as their unique ways of defining community engagement.

Bhagwan (2020, p. 173-174) noted that definitional barriers to community engagement come from the term being used differently as it may sometimes be referred to as "academic citizenship"; "community engagement" and "the engaged university". The definitional barriers do not end at the term community engagement being used differently but also from the unique words used to distinctively define community engagement. Other terms that have also been used include "engaged scholarship" or "service learning" in the USA, "civic engagement" in the UK, "Solidaridad" in Latin America whereas in South Africa terms like "volunteerism", "service learning" and "engaged scholarship "are used (Johnson, 2020, p. 88). For more literature on the varying terms used to describe community engagement in different contexts, also see the work of Ahmed & Palermo (2010), Albertyn and Daniels (2009).

A working definition is nonetheless provided in literature by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention which defined community engagement as "the process of working collaboratively with groups of people who are affiliated by geographic proximity, special interests, or similar situations concerning issues affecting their wellbeing" (CDC, 1997, p. 9). Community engagement means a series of actions that are undertaken by people who work together because they have common interests to a problem that is affecting their living. Community engagement is expected to be a beacon of hope (Damons, & Cherrington, 2020) to a community by providing benefits, being a driver and or an agent of change to any community(s) hard-pressing problem that affects the well-being of its members. De-centralising the practice of community engagement in the build-up of a decolonial university is thus important for offering benefits to communities. Community engagement has been historically influenced and shaped by the logic of coloniality, where academics in Africa go to the community to "mine" or "extract" data (Chilisa, et al., 2017; Damons & Cherrington, 2020). Academics have not taken the positionality of going to society to learn and foreground the life-worlds of others through community engagement, they have rather resorted to being data "extractavists" for their own benefit of research and academic writing.

Engaging communities in this manner regularly leaves communities in their marginalised and oppressed context of suffering and being more impoverished, which is one of the reasons the study focused on conceptualising community engagement and by association the need to

rethink it. Academics often work as outsiders, in isolation, and not as community-engaged scholars or academics who collaboratively co-design knowledge together with communities. Academics pursue community engagement as in the traditionally colonial period of research in the 1900s and 1950s where academics worked as ethnographers, fieldworkers, and reporters (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Academics pursue community engagement for academic work and not as a social pursuit of interactions with communities. There has been a growing critique about the way academics engage communities as they often see themselves as absolute in practice, knowledge, perspective and understating in the scholarship of community engagement (Boyer, 1990; 1996a; 1996b; Renwick et al., 2020). We need to hold critical reflexive positionalities (Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Guillemin, & Gillam, 2004) as researchers in our practice and be careful to not hold too much power, control, and privilege as researchers in the research process. We need to move beyond the colonial, anthropological conception of community engagement which can be manifested by re-imagining community engagement as was also the intention of this study. Community engagement in this study meant colonial disengagement from the current manner or practice that academics do community engagement in. It meant doing community projects with the community and not for the community. It also meant working collaboratively with communities, not only for the sole purpose of generating data, but also to benefit communities in impoverished contexts on problems affecting their well-being.

2.14. Conclusion

In this chapter, the different concepts or terms used in this study were defined drawing from the scholarly literature engaged with. Conceptual clarification was given on terms such as decolonisation, transformation, Black South African, curriculum, institutional culture, voice, decolonial university, Whiteness, research, pedagogy, and community engagement. In the following chapter, the literature review that informed the study is offered in interpreting a decolonial university from the voices of Black academics in their struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

Chapter Three

Review of Literature

3.1. Introduction

Outlined in the previous chapter were the context and background of the study. Over and above that, presented were also the rationale of the study, the problem statement, the research aims, objectives and questions, and the research instruments. The current chapter begins by discussing Higher education policy frameworks around a decolonial university and the transformation of South African higher education. Following that, discussion is on the epistemic decolonial turn and the decolonial focus of the study. Thereafter, the contributions of the study are discussed on the transformation of teaching and learning, research and epistemic community engagement as the three KPA's that were analysed in the study as they served as the decolonial analytical frameworks of the study. The chapter is concluded by giving a brief discussion on what emerged from the literature reviewed.

3.2. Transformation in South African Higher Education

In this section, demonstrated is why transformation needs to be pursued and what transformation measures and policies were implemented in South African higher education. The section covers some transformation-oriented achievements after the colonial era. The scope of transformation in higher education is extensive and multidimensional. However, this study confined itself to teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. This was due to the fact that the three KPA's that were analysed in the study served as the decolonial focus areas of the study.

South Africa's higher education sector is undergoing a transformative shift, driven by the need for change. To achieve this vision, targeted policies and regulatory frameworks have been implemented to create a fully transformed and responsive higher education system. The Higher Education Act of 1997 (Act No: 101 of 1997) gave the Council on Higher Education (hereafter referred to as CHE) the task to advise the Minister of Education to achieve its goal of quality assurance within South African higher education. The CHE is a legal body that regulates South African higher education with many of its duties carried out by the Higher Education Quality

Committee (Council on Higher Education, 2004). The CHE is a proactive council of the higher education sector that acts in anticipation of future needs, problems and changes. The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) is a sub-body of CHE that promotes and regulates quality assurance within the South African higher education sector. The aims, objectives, and scope of HEQC's are accompanied by a number of policies and legal frameworks that regulate how higher education operates in South Africa (Council on Higher Education, 2019). The HEQC policy documents are largely shaped by the grave problems confronting higher education in a period of radical reform within South African higher education. Some of the problems include a fragmented higher education along the lines of race, colour and a lack of participation of Black women (Badat, 2004).

Several policies and reports have been documented to ensure progressive reform on the grave transformation problems experienced in South African higher education institutions. These include the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for higher education transformation (Department of Education, 1997); the report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education (Department of Education, 2008); and the Draft National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001). The Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education (Department of Education, 2008) were tasked by the Minister of Education to intervene in the challenges that are confronting higher education. The task team's findings exposed persistent inequalities in access and participation among staff, with disparities persisting along racial, gender, and socio-economic lines. Notably, the data revealed a significant underrepresentation of Black female academics compared to their White male counterparts. Additionally, the findings highlighted an inequitable distribution of infrastructure between Historically Black Universities (HBUs) and Historically White Universities (HWUs), perpetuating existing disparities.

The Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education advised the Minister of Education to address these unjustifiable institutional practices and agendas in the national education system of South Africa (Swartz et al., 2019). The ineffective implementation of policies aimed at transforming South African higher education is a pressing concern. Despite the existence of transformation policies and plans, most universities have struggled to achieve meaningful change. The root

causes of this ineffectiveness are multifaceted, but a lack of dedicated effort and political willingness to implement these policies correctly are significant contributing factors (Magwaza, 2019; Hlatshwayo, 2020; Hlatshwayo & Ngcobo, 2023; Department of Education 2008). The Department of Higher Education and Training has acknowledged these challenges, and initiatives like the Transformation Oversight Committee have been established to oversee the transformation process (Department of Higher Education, 2023) however, more needs to be done to address the systemic barriers hindering transformation. To move forward, it is essential to reassess the National Plan's goals, which emphasise achieving diversity in the South African higher education system (Badat, 2010). By revitalising the commitment to these goals and addressing the implementation gaps, South African higher education institutions can work towards creating a more equitable and transformative environment.

The Education White Paper 3: A Programme for Higher Education Transformation (Department of Education, 1997) is a pivotal policy document aimed at driving progressive reform in South African higher education institutions. This policy seeks to achieve epistemological transformation, shifting away from the discriminatory knowledge system that perpetuated exclusion and marginalisation during the apartheid era. The apartheid-era curriculum was a tool of exclusion, neglecting the diversity of human knowledge and experiences. To address these historical injustices, indigenisation and decolonisation efforts have been undertaken, focusing on incorporating indigenous content into the curriculum (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, as cited by Kumalo, 2021). This transformative approach aims to promote inclusivity, diversity, and social justice in higher education. Zembylas (2018) in his study that used theoretical concepts of humanising pedagogy around decolonial possibilities in South African higher education warned though that discourses of decolonisation ought to not be taken at face value otherwise they risk being an empty rhetoric. He agitated for 'beyond reform' where a careful and sobber approach is adopted and it involves taking into account values from the colonial past that work and refusing unworkable indigenous values (Chikoko, 2021).

Although the South African higher education sector remains, for the most part, untransformed and continues with decolonial struggles (see Seepe, 2017; Badat, 2017), it has not been all doom and gloom as there have been some transformation-oriented achievements in the post-colonial era. These achievements are apparent in the increase of Black participation in higher education to promote equity, social, cultural, economic, and personal development goals

(Council on Higher Education, 2022). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016) on a public lecture that aimed to showcase the origins of decolonial education however cautioned that decolonial thinking should not be minimalist since having a Black professor, vice chancellor and students meant the Africanisation of the university with the remaining challenge being that the epistemology of these individuals is still Eurocentric colonialism. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016) was critical of decolonisation by bringing in caution that it should not be taken for granted that having an Africanised university means a decolonised university.

Despite the disjuncture between an Africanised university and a decolonised university, teaching and learning, research, and community engagement in universities have been functional and instrumental in producing quality graduates capable of working anywhere in the world (Badat, 2010). The contemporary South African higher education landscape has undergone significant transformation, distinguishing itself from the colonial and apartheid-era legacy. While progress has been made, considerable work remains to be done to eradicate the lingering inequalities and achieve the aspirations of transformation, ultimately fostering a more equitable and just education system.

3.3. The Epistemic Decolonial Turn and Coloniality

Before looking into the decolonial aims of the study, there was a need to understand the decolonial turn. While decolonial thinking has existed for as long as from the late 15th century to the early 1600th century, an extension of this thinking was proclaimed by W.E.B Du Bois in the late 20th century (Maldonado-Torres, 2011). The decolonial turn is given different meanings by people in different locations. In this study, the epistemic decolonial turn referred to an epistemic attitude that opposes the modernist and colonising Western thought that presents itself as godlike and traditional at universities in the Global South, and is focused on unearthing new forms of thinking, being, and existing at universities.

Vorster and Quinn (2017, p. 31) employed social realism theory in their study on the decolonial turn and what it means for academic staff development whom then educated us and underscored their understanding of the decolonial turn as a phenomenon caused by coloniality. They revisited the work of Grosfoguel and Maldonado-Torres. Grosfoguel enlightened us that coloniality denotes the continuity of colonial oppression in former colonies even when colonial powers have withdrawn from the colony, it is evident through colonial institutional cultures

and structures of the modern world system. For Maldonado-Torres (2007), coloniality is a system that defines the academic organising model of literary texts and dissemination of both epistemic and aesthetic resources through ways that cultivate the reproduction of modernity's imperial project. In essence, Maldonado-Torres see's coloniality as spatiality (expansion and control over the land of the colonised), onto-epistemic racism (abandoning difference and subjugating the other) and geopolitics of producing knowledge (epistemic violence) that form part of modernity. Translated differently, coloniality denotes control over the colonies even after the departure of colonial masters, which has been transferred and transported to the modern society, and happens through control and domination over economic resources and knowledge. The subsequent consequence of coloniality is violence to the colonies in the form of racism, epistemic violence, and the elimination of diverse thinking. It is the above understanding of coloniality that up-surged the decolonial turn in the post-colonial order.

A radical point of departure on the decolonial turn was presented by Mignolo (2009) in his research paper on the need for political and epistemic de-linking as well as decolonialising knowledges, as necessary for imagining and building democratic, just, and non-colonial communities. Through his notion of 'epistemic disobedience', he asserted that part of the decolonial turn is to validate the knowledge of the culturally undervalued group. He proposed that decolonial thinking is to privilege the epistemic beliefs of people, like those of Black South Africans, whose thinking was shot down by Western epistemic traditions. The colonial trajectory of thinking however continues in post-apartheid South Africa and African higher education as Black women academics, queer individuals and the LGBTQI+ group in general manoeuvre the violent grounds of oppression and discrimination from Black cisgender, heterosexual men who actively resist their being, belonging and presence in the academy (Naidu & Mutumbara, 2017; Daché et al., 2024). Thus, for Black women and men who identify as queer, lesbian and gay, there is a devaluation of their intellectual thoughts, research interests, epistemic values due to their sexual orientations which limits them from productively engaging scholarly work. A move towards a more transformed and perhaps inclusive higher education infused in an epistemic decolonial turn requires a stretch of imagination among academics in order eradicate and transform the inferiority complex of 'othering' others by means of rendering all academics equal in terms of being, belonging and thinking.

Numerous aspects of the university require profound transformation and epistemological decolonisation, encompassing curriculum reform, pedagogical practices, research

methodologies, institutional culture, and power dynamics, to name a few (Freire, 1996; West, 2014). Critical curriculum re-evaluations and re-engagements by academics as key stakeholders are important to have institutions that are positioned and committed towards the transformation of the higher education sector. With curriculum transformation remaining a pressing global issue, the higher education space is also yoked in a "crisis". To illuminate, Hlatshwayo (2019) in his philosophical and positional paper on the transformation and decolonisation of South Africa's higher education discussed how political science as a discipline has been of irrelevance and its teaching of white dead men offers no epistemic connection to the local context of South Africa. He described this educational crisis as an "organic crisis" where there is still a requirement to create a balance in teaching and learning by transforming the information used to ensure diversity when foregrounding knowledge. It is unfortunate that little attention has been paid to creating an ideal curriculum at the university and transforming it where necessary until more recently (Mendy, 2018b; Spaul, 2013). Reforming South African post- apartheid education in the postcolonial era is key and research, teaching and learning and community engagement offers a wide range of possibilities for a transformed South African university.

Decolonisation and transformation have become buzzwords today and have taken centre stage in many higher education institutions. One would think that the roles of an academic such as research and innovative publishing and community engagement have the potential to respond to transformation-related struggles in higher education and the decolonising of learning to the emergence of a decolonial university (Alderuccio, 2010). For that reason, considering the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution had implications for the rebirth of a decolonial university which could run its course through the aspects of Teaching and Learning (T& L), Research and Innovation (R&I), and Community Engagement (CE) in the South African context (Mendy & Madiope, 2020). Although the three KPA's of an academic; research, teaching and learning, and community engagement, were used as areas of analysis and the basis for decolonisation in the study, it was important to engage with pertinent literature around the broader aspects of re-imagining them. Re-imagining the three KPA's of an academic was, not only important for the decolonisation of the university or its real transformation, but also for rendering Black academics the ability to pay better service to the university.

Khoza-Shangase (2019) in their book on *Black academic voices* aimed to enunciate the experiences of South African Black academics. She argued "that permanent intellectual and emotional toxicity of Black academics may have deleterious consequences on excellence on innovative teaching, on research, and on service in any institution of higher learning in South Africa that values these three pillars of academia"(Khoza-Shangase, 2019, p. 43. From the above quote, one understood that the enduring intellectual insult and emotional abuse directed at Black academics poses a serious threat to creativity in the three main functions of a university: research, teaching and learning, and community engagement. Identifying and classifying these toxic practices is crucial for the advancement of radical and cutting-edge research, teaching and learning, and community engagement (Khoza-Shanage, 2019). Addressing these toxic practices is essential, as they undermine the integrity and values of academia. Instead of enriching academic pursuits, they pose a threat to the very foundation of academia and compromise the three pillars of academic excellence: teaching, research, and community engagement.

3.4. Teaching and Learning, Research, and Epistemic Community Engagement

Despite literature suggesting that Black academics are beginning to make their mark in South African higher education in their teaching and learning, research, or epistemic community engagement (Khumalo, 2021). Research on problems confronting Black academics and their voices on the transformation of their academic line of work remains insignificant. Their voices need to be heard by the chancellors and vice-chancellors, university chair of council, and executive board members who are largely responsible for the management and transformation of institutions.

Literature on the voices of Black academics struggles for transformation in HBU's that gives a particular focus to the three KPA's of an academic remains minimal (Edwards & Ross, 2018). The study was henceforth undertaken to bridge this gap and to cover more broadly, the voices of Black academics on their transformation struggles through a decolonial analytical framework that focused on the three KPA's of an academic.

3.5. Teaching and Learning

One could not ignore the COVID-19 pandemic when it came to focusing on epistemological access to teaching and learning from a humanistic and decolonial perspective. Maringe's (2020) opinion piece formulated study reflected on a number of consequences and impacts of the quarantined academy and came to show that Black academics have been concerned with online learning platforms that are currently being used at the public university. More concerning for Black academics was that the public university had assumed a "one-size-fits-all" approach. There was no due consideration of the implications of online learning around whether academics and students had access to electricity, secure accommodation, supportive home learning environments, stable internet and data, working laptop devices, and other key elements that critically impact and shape learning (Porter et al., 2023; Arday & Jones, 2022; Ma et al., 2022; Hlatshwayo, 2020; Badat, 2020). Another serious consideration that slipped the public university was that the online learning platform capabilities of an academic at the universities of Limpopo, Zululand, and Venda were not the same as those of an academic at the universities of Rhodes, Cape Town, and Stellenbosch.

The faulty assumption strengthened inequality in an already highly unequal country as some academics and students struggled to facilitate online teaching and learning. Other challenges were academics' delay in their teaching plans, rising student failure and dropout rates, and lack of access to resources that significantly affect online teaching and learning in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the pandemic affecting universities in the global South there was a range of issues that deserved transformation. Online curriculum designs under the COVID-19 pandemic are among the matters that deserved transformative, decolonial attention to avoid the risk of perpetuating dominant knowledge systems while marginalising "othered" knowledge. There was a need to rethink curricula and re-assert 'othered' knowledge traditions thus the focus of this study on re- imagining a decolonial university from the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in South African higher education.

In re-imagining a decolonial university there was in particular the re-imagining of teaching and learning through a philosophical approach. The philosophical approaches to re-imagining teaching and learning in this study were principally influenced by seminal scholars of decolonial work such as (Keet, 2014; Mbembe, 2015; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017) and many others. These decolonial intellectuals noted that knowledge, curriculum, and pedagogy are deeply embedded and highly contested phenomena. Furthermore, the works of these scholars

suggested that the academics' fundamental duty is to teach in ways that allow students to think freely and have critical attitudes towards their immediate society and the rest of the world.

3.5.1. Ubuntu Currere; Reconceptualised Teaching and Learning

Ubuntu-currere became relevant in the South African context where the study took place. The concept of 'Ubuntu' (humanness) which according to Oelofsen (2015) is an African-indigenous Bantu philosophy took relevance through 'Ubuntu-currere' proposed by Le Grange (2014; 2019). For Black academics like Nxumalo and Mncube (2018), from their research study that foregrounded the value of the inclusion of Ubuntu philosophy in the South African education curriculum using indigenous games, Ubuntu-currere was also evidenced as important in re-imagining teaching and learning. Ubuntu-currere means a pedagogical approach that responds to the urgent calls for transformation in South African higher education. This framework acknowledges and incorporates diverse voices, fostering democratic thought, critical engagement, and social justice (Hlatshwayo et al., 2020, p. 120). By embracing the principles of ubuntu, or interconnectedness, this approach cultivates an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Ubuntu-currere's application in higher education curricula does not endorse a total rejection or epistemic erasure of Euro-Western knowledge traditions, but rather, for epistemological diversity in curricula where African indigenous knowledge systems can be re-centred (ibid).

In the call for the enactment of Ubuntu-currere in South African universities, Black academics were calling for the bottom-up student-centred ways of curriculum design. They were arguing that: 1) curriculum should not be offered to students as it currently is, 2) student input should be there, and 3) the spirit of curriculum design should be democratic, inclusive and socially just unlike it is currently where students only come in during module evaluations. The author of the study was of the contention that in re-thinking teaching and learning in their teaching plans, Black academics should apply the values of Ubuntu. Ubuntu, is a Nguni concept denoting humanness often interpreted as "I am because we are" (Tutu 2007) and captured by the saying "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu", which means being human is to uphold the coexistence of humanity with others as a collective that fosters human relations (Nxumalo & Mncube 2018). This view was supported by Oelofsen (2015, p. 141) who substantiated that "the Ubuntu worldview, for example, recognises the importance of others, of history, of context and community in the formation of one's identity, and the inter-dependent relations between

individuals and collectives". Ubuntu promotes working together as a collective, and re-conceptualising teaching and learning and in this manner has material implications for higher education transformation.

Chilisa et al. (2017) in their research article that aimed at unveiling the democratising of teaching and decolonising research for multi-epistemological research partnerships postulated that decolonisation and transformation of teaching should first unfold in the lecture room for the benefit of marginalised populations. The implementation of Ubuntu principles by Black academics in their teaching would benefit students from marginal backgrounds. Teaching would then not be regarded as an apolitical activity, as it often perpetuates power inequalities and privileges certain voices over others where the lecturer is seen as the absolute 'knower' and the student as 'othered' in the classroom (Freire, 2018). Chasi (2019) shared similar sentiments to those of Freire in the chapter: 'Don't teach me nonsense' in their book Black Academic Voices: emphasising the need for decolonial teaching approaches that centre the experiences of South African Black academics and students. In addition to this, Geduld (2019) in her "Belonging to One's Self" chapter where she shared her personal narrative as a South African Black academic. Geduld advocated for teaching as a means of empowering marginalised students, arguing that educators should utilise their disciplines to affirm and uplift those who have been disempowered. By adopting this approach, teaching can become a transformative force within the university.

For Daché et al. (2024) these marginalised students include Black women, queer and trans individuals that experienced homophobia, marginality and erasure of their lived experiences due to the pervasive impact of patriarchy and cisnormativity in the #RMF and #FMF campaigns which considered recognition of their voices as 'petty gender issues'. From the light of the above discussions, we learnt that academics who form part of neglected groups should be able to see, empower themselves, and affirm their identities through the own teaching. By extension, Black academics ought to also see minority queer women and trans students who have been 'decontextualised' bodies as carriers of knowledge, who bring along with them relevant contributions so that an intersectional prism can occur in the development of knowledge in the lecture hall.

There is a pressing need to prioritise the decolonisation of curriculum content, reclaiming and reasserting African indigenous identities and knowledge systems within the academic

framework. According to Mendy and Madiope (2020, p. 10), "such decolonisation could include the Africanisation of curricula whereby learning content is considered to have a distinctively African feel to foster an African curriculum identity (i.e., infused with African epistemologies and philosophies whose aim is to advance knowledge systems considered to be indigenous)". The proposal of Mendy and Madiope (2020) are important to consider for a decolonial university, given that teaching and learning in the curriculum offerings of the universities in the global South embraces Eurocentric and colonising knowledges that tend to undermine African epistemic traditions (Keikelame & Swartz, 2019; Morreira, 2017). Similar sentiments were shared by Heleta (2016), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017), and Mbembe (2016) that the contemporary curriculum in the public university still replicates the colonising, apartheid legacy of White supremacy, and the subjugation of Black ontology-based traditions, which fails to provide educational value to students.

Black academic scholarly voices are important in rethinking the curriculum, and the decentring of epistemology from the current Euro-Western centric logic. One of Chilisa's (2012) five stages of decolonisation from her book that aimed to show how indigenous methodologies can be used in research and teaching can be matched here. Chilisa (2012) in the stage of 'dreaming' spoke of imagining and re-imagining a new way of understanding the curriculum which decentres Euro-western knowledge and recentres African indigenous knowledges. Dreaming, according to Mudaly (2018), encompasses the 'colonised' re-imagining an alternative curriculum that privileges their indigenous knowledge. Black academics' re-conceptualisation of a decolonial university in their teaching and learning in the South African context should therefore also include indigenous knowledges.

3.5.2. Language Racism and Teaching Space

Language is a key factor for teaching, instruction and communication in higher education and in social contexts. According to Thomas and Maree (2021, p. 2), "beyond its use in academic instruction, language is a marker of identity". Not only is language a device for communication and instruction, but also plays a crucial role in informing how one relates to the world. South Africa's higher education curriculum and teaching is principally White, as its medium of learning was, and still is, English and Afrikaans to a large extent (Morreira, 2017). This phenomenon exemplifies language racism, particularly in the context of South African higher education institutions where the systematic exclusion of African epistemic traditions and

African languages from institutions of higher learning and broader society perpetuates a profound injustice. By marginalising indigenous knowledge systems and languages, these institutions reinforce the dominance of Western epistemologies, further entrenching the erasure of African perspectives and identities.

Literature confirmed the removal of Afrocentric thought and languages from institutions of higher learning. Sibanda (2021) employed the interpretive method in his study on academics' conceptions of higher education decolonisation and found that academics believed that there needs to be the decolonisation of the university curriculum as the language used in the curriculum lacks Afrocentric traditions and is largely Eurocentric in nature. Coloniality of knowledge and language is evident in the delegitimisation of African and indigenous languages in the university. Coloniality in knowledge, language, teaching, and content is centred around systems of colonial control and power even long after the end of colonialism (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2007).

Multiple epistemologies are vital for including, balancing, and respecting all epistemic sources and diverse languages in universities' teaching and learning practices. African epistemic traditions and languages have often been labelled as being behind time and unable to offer relevant scope for teaching and learning (Stroud & Kerfoot, 2020). Odora-hoppers (2001) saw this as a kind of colonialism that she termed 'symbolic castration', where all things African and indigenous were labelled in a negative status both ontologically and cognitively. Similarly, Wa Thiong'o (1998) argued that the planned disconnection between the language of reasoning, reflection and cognitive development as opposed to the language of daily interaction was a significant moment in the colonisation of Africa. The coloniality of language in higher education needs to be rethought for epistemic justice to materialise around the access and usage of African indigenous languages and knowledge.

The struggle for transformation by Black academics in South African higher education include grappling with alienating language policies. The Soudien report (Department of Education, 2008) pointed out that language is crucial to the transformation of higher education, and to having an impactful change on institutional cultures, access, and success. The report also indicated that considerable and appropriate multilingualism must be demonstrated in the academic activities of all public higher education institutions. Swartz et al. (2019) interviewed university leaders around who succeeds, the 'idea' of core business in South Africa's

universities and their stratification. They found that Afrikaans and English were dominant while incorporating African indigenous languages at various levels has not materialised in practice.

These instituted languages act as hegemonic mediums of instruction that oppress Black academics in their academic work and challenges academics with translanguaging[2] (Swartz et al., 2018). The voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in South African higher education signify their claim to a rightful place within the academy and their determination to overcome the challenges of language and other barriers. However, language is not the only obstacle; some Black academics highlighted the need to restructure the university teaching space as a crucial aspect of transformation. Research by Tewari and Ilesanmi (2020) revealed that Black academics face significant struggles in accessing resources, including funding and adequate teaching facilities. For meaningful transformation to occur, Black academics emphasised the need for increased funding and reformed spaces that enable them to fulfil their academic roles and responsibilities effectively. As Tumubweinee and Luescher (2019) astutely observed, physical space plays a critical role in shaping social interactions and is, therefore, a vital agent of transformation in South African higher education

Indeed, restructuring physical and epistemological spaces is integral to transformative change in higher education. Decolonial scholars emphasise the imperative of reshaping higher education, challenging dominant Western epistemologies and power structures that have historically marginalised indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives. For Le Grange (2016, p. 4) this reshaping is twofold as colonialism happened in two phases. The first he termed ‘first-generation colonialism’ which was the capturing of material spaces and the lives of colonised people, and ‘second-generation colonialism’ which was the colonisation of the mind done over various disciplines like social sciences, law studies, finance and education. Transformation and decolonisation, therefore, involve undoing both phases of colonialism. For Mbembe (2015), the project of decolonisation is about modifying and re-designing structures and spaces, sets of courses, and University Management Systems (UMS).

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[2] In this study in using the concept translanguaging I borrowed the definition of Swartz et al. (2018, p. ix) who define it as that “translanguaging refers to making use of all the languages present in an educational space in multiple and eclectic ways, and in ways that take into account the strengths and limitations of all actors”

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016), part of symbolic institutional transformation is changing the colonial names of universities into indigenous names in which he exemplified that for instance, the University of Gold Coast becomes the University of Ghana. Several progressive Black academics and Black students have come to voice similar sentiments by advocating for the renaming of university structures like buildings after the names of South African liberation heroes and liberation stalwarts like Steve Biko and Chris Hani (Maringira & Gukurume, 2017). There is symbolic and structural evidence that South African and African universities are colonial as their structural make-up have colonial, non-African names. One way of transforming institutional symbols is by having universities that embody Africa by replacing colonial symbols. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) described this as an 'epistemic rupturing' where formerly dominant perspectives are gradually substituted by emergent perspectives.

Black academics see the dismantling of colonial symbols as important for changing the appearance and "composition of the academy- the university architecture and symbols" (Maringira & Gukurume, 2017, p. 39). For Black academics, the transformation of universities henceforth has to do with the social and physical reform of the university spaces in South Africa. These were apparent in their demands for the removal of colonial symbols from the prominent geographies of South African higher education institutions into remote areas like museums or statue parks (Marschall, 2019). For Meyer and Balfour (2020) in their research work that adapted an action research design to transform current teaching practices into meaningful social engagement and for re-imagining symbols in education, raised that the reason behind the removal of colonial symbolic structures is that they represent some form of neo-colonialism, institutional racism, exclusion, and praise of White colonial elites. More to that, they were seen as oppressing Black people and rarely speaking to their realities either than those of White minority groups (Meyer, & Balfour, 2020). Transforming higher education for Black academics thus, creates a safe teaching space, free of coloniality, racism and exclusion, and speaks to their realities as well.

3.5.3. Teaching as a Critical Reflective Discourse

Teaching is not a linear but dynamic process. The transformation of curricula encompasses a constant reflective practice of teaching and learning. It consists of openness to, and development of, new methods of pedagogy within respective teaching and learning spaces of higher education (University of Pretoria, 2016). Traditional teaching and assessment

approaches are the order of the day in lecture-based models of learning devoid of critical dialogue and engagement (Tularam, 2018).

Traditional teaching methods have long been criticised for promoting passive rote learning, which often occurs in the absence of critical debate, dialogue, and engagement. This approach stifles the production of new knowledge and innovative thinking (Argyropoulou, 2021).This was evident in the work of Govender (2015) that relied on the questionnaire methodology with an intention of illuminating students' perceptions of selected methods used for teaching undergraduate students who argued that, even though the lecture method is valuable when teaching large numbers of students, teaching largely happens as a monologue with the lecturer being the sole communicator of knowledge. The transformation of teaching approaches and methods is thus, important for the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education.

For several Black academics, critical, reflective and decolonised pedagogies that encompass dialogue, discussion and the creation of new knowledge with those taught, is a serious transformation challenge in South African higher education (Khoza & Biyela, 2019; Mkonto, 2010; Mapuya, & Rambuda, 2022; Mayaba et al., 2018; Motala & Menon, 2020). Traditionally, whether in lecture halls or online platforms, student-teacher engagement in higher education has been limited, with the teacher often positioned as the sole authority and content deliverer (Govender, 2015). Vandeyar's (2019) research aimed to explore how academics in the South African academy can be agents of meaningful educational change by implementing pedagogies of compassion. Her research revealed that decolonising the curriculum will fail if it does not encompass the education triad which includes the teacher, learner and content (curriculum) as changing one aspect of the triad without considering other aspects will not affect the desired transformation of pedagogy and or curriculum. She argued that the decolonisation of curriculum project can be headed by academics through pedagogies of compassion and inclusivity.

From the literature, Black academics called for critical, reflective engagement and the transformation of teaching and learning practices in higher education. For Black academics, higher education has reached a turning point which necessitates constructive and critical pedagogies between themselves and those they are privileged to teach. Govender (2015) in her research article that endeavoured at uncovering students' perceptions of selected methods used for teaching undergraduate students contended that:

> "The new teaching and learning paradigms in higher education also stress continuous upgrading in pedagogy, and favour the view that the use of technology and assessment models should be aligned with student-centred learning. Online education in particular has created a new paradigm for teaching and learning: it differs from the traditional lecture method; it encourages high level student interaction and participation; and it redirects learning towards a constructivist and experiential mode. Consequently, this change in paradigm necessitates a shift in responsibility from the lecturer to the students; the answer to making this transition lies within the lecturer and higher education institutions (HEIs) so as to accommodate the new generation of students" (Govender, 2015, p 27).

The above extract postulated that the emergent teaching and learning patterns in higher education underscore constant improvements in pedagogical methods, and that technological advancements and assessment practices should largely support student-focused learning. Online learning has specifically transformed the direction of teaching and learning as it is unique from the conservative lecture-teaching approach. It provides a stimulus for active student involvement and contribution. Online learning also allows students to create their own knowledge and to experience education for themselves. Such transformation in education shifts the accountability of learning from the lecturer to the students. However, the full realisation and implementation of such transformation rests with lecturers and respective institutions of teaching and learning, so as to accommodate a new student generation of learning.

In essence, Black academics viewed traditional pedagogies as a hindrance to transformative teaching. Genuine transformation requires a shift towards critical pedagogy, where students are actively engaged in constructing and developing knowledge, making meaning, and co-creating learning experiences. Critical dialogue and or pedagogy are well-known, effective methods of engagement that broaden perspectives, allows for the discovery of new meaning, stimulates innovative critical thinking, and develops shared understanding (García-Carrión et al., 2020; Behari-Leak et al., 2018; van der merwe, 2022).

Critical pedagogy was proclaimed by Black academics as a thinking approach that has a strong inclination for transformation, which allows students to be catalytic agents of their education through active involvement in the development of new insights that disrupt oppressive colonising situations (Freire, 1985; Girroux, 2011; McLaren, 1999). Critical pedagogy, came

across being effective in this study because it promotes justice and academic freedom for both the lecturer and the student as they both get to be involved in conceptualising new avenues of thinking about education.

Turning to the second pillar of an academic that underpinned the decolonial focus of the study, Black academics' views around the transformation of research in South African higher education is discussed below.

3.6. Research

In this study, research was separated into two; research for publication purposes, and research supervision. In this section, discussed first is research as research for publication purposes and later on research supervision.

3.6.1. Research (Publications)

A crucial aspect of an academic's profession is publishing research in academic journals. To contribute meaningfully to their institution, academics must engage in research and produce publications (May, 2020). The corporate university emphasizes the importance of research output, encapsulated in the phrase "publish or perish", a mantra that has prevailed in academic circles for decades (Painter & Dick, 2020; Seyama, 2020; Von Solms & Von Solms, 2016). This study specifically examined how research is conducted at the university, with a focus on Black academics' perspectives on reimagining research. In particular, the study explored their views on the current research practices, how they need to be transformed, and what decolonisation of research might entail.

In their study that aimed to propose epistemic possibilities for transforming and decolonising curricula from its tradition top-down hierarchical approach; Hlatshwayo et al. (2020, p. 128) argued that "the research agenda in higher education ought to not be already given by the 'experts'- the lecturers, policymakers, funding organisations, research institutes, think tanks and others". This implied that Black academics understand research to be an undertaking that does not have to be imposed by specialists but done together with 'outsiders' to build knowledge. Furthermore, engaging in research together with community members and other stakeholders as 'outsiders' holds the potential for emancipation.

In South African higher education, the pursuit of transformation has been significantly framed through the lens of decoloniality (Maserumule, 2015). A crucial aspect of achieving this transformation is to refocus attention on research practices at South African universities, with the aim of fundamentally shifting the way research is conceptualised, conducted, and utilised. Knight (2018) in his paper discussed issues of decolonisation and transformation of the Geography curricula at different institutions in South Africa, and whether issues of decolonisation and transformation are being addressed in these curricula. His findings revealed that, for most Black academics, repositioning research entailed extensively publishing African knowledge through books and journals authored by African scholars. However, despite notable progress, with the percentage of journal articles published by Black South Africans increasing tenfold since the end of apartheid, academic publishing remains overwhelmingly dominated by White scholars (Wild, 2019). A decolonial university would be characterised by increased author diversity, notably by more representation of Black academics in published work. This shift would mark a genuine transformation of South African higher education, fostering a more inclusive and equitable academic landscape.

The complexities of transforming research at the university also centralises on its gendered and patriarchal nature. According to Magoqwana, Maqabuka and Tshoaedi (2020) Black African women academics often have to put hold their research responsibilities in order to perform emotional care labour on students because of their gendered feminine social backgrounds which the neoliberal university renders invisible. Wallace et al. (2017) also noted similar experiences of African American women and women of colour in the USA, the United Kingdom, Australia and Europe who perform caregiving duties that go down as invisible work. Care work therefore remains unrecognised, unpaid and unaccounted for in the performance metric systems of the university with the consequences of this occupational structure of the neoliberal university being that Black African women academics find themselves being perpetually relegated to the lower rungs of institutional hierarchy. Moreover, for Magoqwana et al. (2020) the implications for those who perform care work is that it has adverse consequences on their research careers, promotion and progress at the university and therefore advocated for its formalisation. This study agreed with Magoqwana et al. (2020) in highlighting the importance of formalising care work, as it has the potential to transform the experiences of Black women academics who face intersecting oppressions based on their gender and ethnicity. By recognising and valuing care work, institutions can create opportunities for Black women

academics to advance their careers, including through research outputs that may have been delayed or put on hold due to caregiving responsibilities.

3.6.2. Decolonisation of the Black mind and Research Methodology

For the most part, Black Africans are said to have a colonised mind because of the foreign values, lifestyles, oral traditions, and literacy cultures they have adopted. This change, according to Shongwe (2016), can be attributed to the coloniser's erasure of the cultural identity and sense of being of the colonised, rendering them strangers to their own culture and heritage. For Wa'Thiongo (1986), education and religion were one of the main routes to introducing colonial characteristics into the sufferers of colonial violence. Part of the decolonial project in this study evidently involved disrupting colonial education and decolonising the minds of Black people.

Decolonising the mind was crucial, but this study also emphasised the equal importance of decolonising research practices. Emphasis on decolonial research in this study was due to that traditional methodological approaches to researching, writing, and publishing about Africa have been shaped by colonial legacies, necessitating a deliberate shift towards decolonial research practices that cultivate new and contextually relevant ways of knowing and knowledge production. According to Nhemachena et al. (2016), Africa is often relegated to being a mere data extraction site, with Africans relegated to passive participation. The extracted data is then theorised and packaged by researchers from the Global North, who subsequently impose these theories on African and other contexts, perpetuating a cycle of epistemic exploitation and knowledge imperialism. The observation geared in the essential requirement to decolonise these colonial approaches which can involve African scholars taking the initiative to invent African theories, methodologies, and practices that can often be useable and fitting to the African context and other contexts more generally.

Literature acknowledges that Black academics understand that philosophical, theoretical approaches and methodological practices to research need to be decolonised. For instance in their study that interviewed 8 lecturers' for their experiences of decolonising the Bachelor of Education Honours curriculum at a South African university, Pillay and Swanpoel (2018)

found that the lecturers did not know how to engage the curriculum from an Afrocentric theoretical position as it has always been approached from a Eurocentric theoretical position. Decolonising such hegemonic constructs would demand developing, through research, African theoretical approaches to the curriculum, and combining both indigenous and non-indigenous theories when conducting research.

For a Black academic such as Chilisa (2012), part of decolonising research involves using postcolonial and indigenous research methodologies as well as knowledge systems previously excluded and marginalised from research, in the context of higher education in Africa. She comprehended that these can be in the form of folklore, storytelling, African idioms, and mixed- method research approaches including the combination of both indigenous and Eurocentric approaches. Similarly, Martinez-Vargas (2020) in her study that explored decolonial literature with the aim of decolonising higher education research believed in the use of indigenous research methodologies as higher education is entering a paradigmatic shift and hence her argument that knowledge has to be produced from a plurality of perspectives.

Decolonised and indigenous research methodologies as well as emancipatory research practices are evidently crucial when working with indigenous people and marginalised groups so that they may be able to participate and share their realities. Keikelame and Swartz (2019) used an African lens approach for decolonising research methodologies and argued that Black academics valued decolonising research practices because these types of research practices do not allow for indigenous people to be problematised but to be valued and respected as their views contribute to knowledge. The challenge remains however that even when indigenous and postcolonial research methodologies are described on what they may look like and how they may be used, they relatively remain underused (Khupe & Keane, 2017). Afrocentric research methodologies and practices were pivotal to this study, as they enabled the deployment of unique, decolonial approaches to knowledge production. By embracing these innovative methods and practices, this research aimed to challenge dominant epistemologies and make meaningful, groundbreaking contributions to the existing body of knowledge.

Attention now shifts to the language of publishing in South African higher education, its coloniality and what the beliefs of Black academics might be around transforming the struggles of colonial languages in the sector.

3.6.3. The Language Issue and Research Publication Struggles

There is an urgent need to conduct and write publishable research using African local languages in South African higher education. This is because the influence of colonialism in mainland Africa is evident by the use of European colonising languages (English, Portuguese and French) in teaching and in research (Gwaravanda & Ndofirepi, 2020; Webb, 2009 as cited in Tsebe, 2021). Wa Thiong'o (1986) exposed that language is the most powerful tool held by the colonisers to colonise the minds of their subjects. The language problem in education is thus, a colonial one when one looks at the language of publishing research work in South African higher education, necessitating its transformation.

Prior to the year 1994, English and Afrikaans were used as official languages in all areas of life in South Africa. The democratic government, through the constitution of South Africa, recognised IsiZulu, Sepedi, isiXhosa, Xitsonga, Sesotho, English, Setswana, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, Siswati, and Tshivenda as official languages (Madadzhe, 2019). The recognition and inclusion of African languages was meant to rectify the historically disproportionate use of diverse languages within the country during apartheid (Madadzhe, 2019). Even after such recognition, and notwithstanding that the university community is accessed by people who come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, English and Afrikaans in the 26 public universities of South Africa are still predominantly used, and enjoy an esteemed status (Department of Education and Training, 2015).

The prominent use of European colonial languages happens in two of the KPA's analysed in this study, that is, teaching and learning, and research. Gwaravanda and Ndofirepi (2020) in their position paper on the utilisation of Eurocentrism in African philosophy posited that there has been limited or non-use of concepts from indigenous African languages in university teaching and research. In their single case study of a university that experienced the heat of decolonial demands from the 2015-2016 student protests, Shaik and Kahn (2023) used samples of text and discourse analysis including speeches, interviews and articles – authored or recorded between the years 2015 and 2018 by stakeholder official structures of the institution, campus formations, individual lecturers, students, administrators and alumni to centre the challenges of decolonising the higher education institution. Their findings brought to light that Black academics saw the side-lining of African scholarship and Black scholars as esteeming Eurocentric epistemologies and European intellectuals. Further to that, Black academics felt as

if their identities, perspectives, and thoughts were insignificant as Africans, and saw themselves being deprived of knowledge production using their African indigenous languages.

For Black academics, the marginalisation of African indigenous languages, Black scholarship, and African identities meant that they were excluded from the academy as Africans because they could not write or speak about themselves through research publications. In a sense, Black academics were yearning for transformation and the decolonisation of higher education research by centring it on African scholarship, and Afrocentric, indigenous philosophies and ideas. In other words, Black academics saw the transformation of research and the decolonising of publishing philosophies as decentring Eurocentric scholarship and its epistemic traditions and re-centring African epistemic traditions for producing knowledge (Jansen, 2017; Msila, 2017).

Language remains a worrisome issue in the South African and African education system (Madadzhe, 2019). Research has revealed a shortage of published books and other reading sources in African languages in South Africa, with the government stating the issue of funding as the cause of a such shortage (Tsebe, 2021). For Black academics, funding was not the issue but the scholarly journals of publishing research work. Baloyi (2020) in his position paper on Black-on-Black violence philosophically typified how Black people perpetuate Black self-hatred and proposed a need among the Black masses to move from decolonisation to reconciliation. He also noted Black academics struggles about journals agencies that publish their academic perspectives, which are in the hands of the White select few whom do not identify with Black experiences. He further revealed that Black academics often practice Black self-hatred by writing critically about White people, often failing to be published, and adhering to the standards of White academic gatekeepers.

Black academics re-imagine research as, not only the re-conceptualisation of the languages used to publish scholarly research work, but also the transformative reworking of publishing outlets like research journals. This was because academic research publishing agencies are colonial and marginalise Black African cultures and experiences. Black academics advocated for the social transformation of research towards the development of more accommodative research paper publication agencies that also cater for the Black experience.

3.7. Research (Supervision)

Research supervision was another role of an academic in higher education that was covered in this study. Black academics' voiced desires for transformation in research supervision in South African higher education were brought out in this section. The discussions highlighted the imperative for research supervisors to transform their approach to supervision, adopting a more deliberate and structured methodology. This includes prioritising regular, planned supervision meetings, and being fully present and engaged during these interactions. By moving away from an operational mindset that often leaves supervisors preoccupied and inaccessible, Black academics maintained that supervisors can better support their postgraduate students' academic journey.

Academics juggle multiple, overlapping roles and responsibilities, necessitating a delicate balance between competing priorities. One critical role is that of postgraduate research supervisor. Effective supervision requires consistent communication with students to ensure timely research completion (Hamid et al., 2021; Yende, 2021). Supervisors must also engage with students to address challenges, provide guidance, and support their research needs. Productive student-supervisor relationships rely on supervisors providing timely feedback, guidance, challenges, recommendations, and motivation (Hamid et al., 2021). Ultimately, supervisors play a pivotal role in facilitating research progress and degree completion (Rispel, 2023). Through mentorship, they guide postgraduate students through their academic journey, from initiation to completion.

3.7.1. Alternative Approaches and Planned Research Supervision

The ever-increasing academic workload in the higher education sector demands a series of far-reaching reforms to the traditional methods of postgraduate research supervision. Supervisors frequently subscribe to traditional, hurried postgraduate research supervision approaches without thinking of alternate models of supervision (Bitzer & Albertyn, 2011; Backhouse, 2010; Pillay & Balfour, 2011) making supervision horded in non-transformative approaches . Alternate approaches to research supervision have been researched and recommended by scholars and include supervisor "critical friends' teams" (Samaras & Roberts, 2011, p. 43), research communities of doctoral students (McKenna, 2017), person-focused supervision (Heyns et al., 2019), and supervisor-implemented cohort groups (Molefe & Magubane, 2022). Notwithstanding the recommendation of alternate approaches to research supervision, the

traditional, apprenticeship approaches to supervision continue to be dominant despite critical attitudes and limitations against such approaches (Nkoane, 2014; Heyns et al., 2019; McKenna, 2017). Research supervisors need to be cognisant of the need to transform customary research supervision methods, think of other approaches, and carefully plan the postgraduate research supervision processes.

Black academics, such as Molefe and Magubane (2022), have emphasised the need to reimagine student-supervisor relationships. They argued that transforming traditional research supervision approaches requires a deliberate and collaborative process. This entails clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of both supervisors and students from the outset. Furthermore, Black academics advocated for a planned and structured approach to research supervision, moving beyond conventional methods to explore innovative and adaptive strategies that prioritise mutual growth and success.

Nkoane (2014) adapted a sustainable learning theoretical methodological approach in his paper and argued that Black academics in their research supervision processes ought to be radical, democratic and challenge the dominant structural power relations involved in the supervision process (Nkoane, 2014). Black academics saw the need to dismantle, transform, and/ or decolonise the colonial trapping approaches to postgraduate student research supervision (Knowles, 2015; Ndlovu- Gatsheni, 2019). This form of decolonisation necessitated a critical examination of the entrenched assumptions underpinning supervision methods that are uniquely relevant to the South African context (Knowles, 2015). Furthermore, it involves seeking alternative, socially just supervision approaches that disrupt traditional power dynamics and promote a more equitable research paradigm (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019). Traditional supervision approaches have been structurally organised in dominating ways, where the supervisor is seen as powerful and knowledgeable, whereas the student is seen as patient, obedient and passive to the supervisor. This culture and practice of supervision should change for the success of both the supervisor and student (Heyns et al., 2019) and for nurturing socially just supervision cultures and practices in higher education.

Drawing on Freire's adult education and Hackman's social justice education as theoretical tools to reflect on transformative supervision workshops with 10 postgraduate students from one South African university School of Public Health; Rispel (2023) advanced that decolonial research pedagogies and research supervision processes that decentre the power of supervisors,

and allow postgraduate students to realise their potential and capabilities of producing knowledge are crucial. Interpreted differently, Black academics noted that research supervision practices need to be decolonised and transformed from colonial approaches and not take the supervisor as the knower, and have a critical attitude towards postgraduate students being othered in the process. Black academics also suggested that research supervisors should share their own, previously learned knowledge, research experiences, and expertise with postgraduate students (Freire, 2005; Rispel, 2023) and not necessarily impose their knowledge on postgraduate students. For this study such rethinking and re- conceptualisation of research supervision practices and processes in South African higher education would enhance learning and students expertise to produce knowledge.

3.7.2. Research Supervision Struggles: A Preoccupied Supervisor and Delayed Completion

Effective and efficient supervision practices are important in the production of knowledge in higher education. They are also important for the student's completion of postgraduate studies. Studies by Andrew (2012), Sussex (2008), Willems et al. (2011), and Wisker (2008) showed that effective and balanced postgraduate supervision is a concern in higher education institutions globally even where postgraduate students study on a full-time basis. For Black academics, effective research supervision is a concerning since as in many African universities, there is poor supervision given to students due to work overload, which often leads to students' poor academic conventions and writing capabilities (Sidhu et al., 2014). The intense pressures and demands associated with an academic career can have a deleterious impact on research supervision, potentially compromising the quality of guidance and support provided to students. For instance Yende (2021) adopted a descriptive phenomenological research design in his paper to purposefully sample 30 postgraduate students, 10 alums, and 10 supervisors from 4 universities for the purpose of exploring factors of effective postgraduate student-supervisor relationships at selected universities in South Africa. One of the findings by this Black academic on postgraduate students getting poor quality supervision was that it is because supervisors' lacked the necessary supervision skills and the intensive academic workload of supervisors (Yende, 2021). Other Black academics observed that in the Republics of South Africa and Ghana, masters or doctoral students fail to complete their research degrees because supervisors fail to provide quality guidance and do not know how to create a working balance

around their workloads (Cloete et al., 2013). Other consequences brought up by Black academics were that students engaged in postgraduate studies battle to complete their studies within the allocated time because of their supervisors' many academic roles (Manyike, 2017).

A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted by Matin and Khan (2017) in 20 different medical colleges and institutes in Bangladesh through a purposive sample of 133 postgraduate students and 46 supervisors participating in the study to explore the common problems faced by students and supervisors during thesis writing. These academics called attention to that most postgraduate students struggled to complete their postgraduate research studies due to not understanding their assigned tasks, lack of institutional support, supervisors having multiple students, insufficient resources and funding. These challenges in postgraduate research supervision lead to inefficient or dysfunctional relationships between postgraduate students and their supervisors. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct a thorough examination of the underlying factors contributing to dysfunctional supervision relationships, with a concerted effort aimed at transforming and redeeming these relationships to foster more supportive and productive research environments.

Supervisors at times do not provide feedback to their postgraduate students on time since they juggle multiple responsibilities and therefore have limited time for their students submitted academic work. For Black academics, many of the challenges that come with supervisors being busy and preoccupied are that postgraduate students get delayed in the completion of their studies, drop out, withdraw, or even end up suspending their studies (Yende, 2021). Black academics have advocated for a fundamental transformation in the management and expertise of research supervision. This call to action is prompted by concerns that numerous supervisors lack sufficient experience in research supervision, often resulting in inadequate student engagement and poorly managed supervision processes (Katikikireddi & Reilly, 2017). Considering Black academics' voiced transformation needs on research supervision will help us to think seriously about securing the services of research supervisors with extensive experience in research supervision and those who are capable of attending to other roles that come with being an academic.

3.8. Community Engagement

Community engagement is dynamic and challenging for academics. One of the barriers to has been a lack of practical conceptualisation of community engagement (Jonhson, 2020). One cause of this is the prioritisation of teaching and learning and research over community engagement even though all these are important roles of an academic. Johnson (2020) conducted a comprehensive literature research on the obstacles and drivers of community engagement following an interpretive qualitative method in which he argued that community engagement is taken as the stepchild of the university and academics lack a shared understanding of community engagement. From his research an omission of community engagement as one of the KPA's of academics was evident while teaching and learning, and research enjoy a primary status.

With universities undertaking community engagement in distinctively varying ways, few academics possess the necessary practical experience and skills to successfully execute community engagement (Wood & Zuber-Skerrit, 2013). This was highlighted by Wood and Zuber-Skerrit (2013, p. 1) in their conceptual study using participatory action learning for capacity building among academics on the pursuit of the emerging scholarship of community engagement which concluded that:

> "Community engagement (CE) is a core function of the university in South Africa. In the field of education, the imperative to pursue and promote CE provides an exciting opportunity for researchers to work with school communities to address the many challenges that threaten the quality of teaching and learning. Yet, relatively few researchers in education faculties have expertise in this emerging area of scholarship. There is therefore a need to develop among academics a capacity for community-based research and deep knowledge of how to approach it effectively" (Wood & Zuber-Skerrit, 2013, p. 1).

Wood and Zuber-Skerrit (2013) argued that community engagement is also a core service that universities provide.. They emphasised that community engagement in education offers a collaborative opportunity to work alongside communities, co-creating solutions to address complex societal challenges. They however also revealed that few academics in the field of education possess the knowledge to positively pursue the recent and emergent work of community engagement. They recommended that academics need to engage in community-based action research, acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively facilitate meaningful community engagement.

Part of re-inventing community engagement entails endowing academics with the knowledge and the skills for approaching community engagement as evident from above. The situation suggested that a deeper analysis of the way community engagement is done at university is needed. Below, it is therefore discoursed on how Black academics believe community engagement can be rethought and approached in transformative ways.

3.8.1. The Re-Conceptualisation of Community Engagement

Community engagement has been approached from a colonial slant at universities of the Global South. The Black academic Shawa (2020) in his research study on invigorating, prioritising and placing community engagement in par with the teaching and researching roles of universities argued about the challenges facing this KPA of an academic. He argued that the notion of community engagement in higher education has been put up around the epistemological attainment of knowledge rather than the ontological understanding of problems facing communities so as to serve social justice in communities. Put differently, the university community sees community engagement as a mere anthropological study of humankind for knowledge generation, rather than an understanding of the real and contemporary challenges requiring communities of engagement.

Black academics like Hlatshwayo et al. (2020, p. 129) maintained that "the results of such a conceptualisation of community engagement are that both communities and students do not learn from the activities and therefore the activities do not contribute to the transformation agenda that the country seeks to achieve". Community engagement projects and activities ought to be developed through mutual conceptions that allow for the input of students, academics, and communities. Black academics conceptualised community engagement like Hlatshwayo et al. (2020). However, they did so in a much broader scope of engaging the community.

Bhagwan (2020) captured this appropriately in her qualitative multiple case study that interviewed 1 vice chancellor, 2 deputy vice chancellors, academics, middle leadership and administrative staff on discourse of the saliency of community engagement in six South African universities and how to institutionalise community engagement locally. In her findings, Bhagwan (2020) found that Black academics argued that community engagement should unfold through 1) combining it with research, teaching, and learning; 2) involving academics

in engagement; 3) allowing for student input/participation; 4) building a community engagement institutional culture; 5) developing institutional support programmes; 6) opening up to community collaborations-partnerships; and 7) rewarding engagement.

One can deduce from the above-mentioned points that Black academics' reflexive thoughts on different approaches to community engagement were that community engagement must not be taken solely as a third wheel of the core functions of the university, but must be infused into research, and teaching and learning (Bhagwan, 2020). Black academics saw the three core functions of the university, not as separate but as intertwined functions, that must be considered together for the greater good of each function and the embracing of a decolonial, transformative university.

Scholars such as Lazarus et al. (2008), Hall et al. (2015), Roades., et al. (2008) highlighted that involving academics in community engagement meant that community- engaged research must be done in participatory approaches, and must be supported through transdisciplinary ways to understand community challenges. This denoted that community engagement ought to be done in collaborative ways where many disciplines come together through participatory research to understand community issues and produce knowledge to solve community issues.

For most Black academics, community engagement must also be characterised by student involvement. Student participation was pointed out by Black academics as important because students can learn much about community engagement and build educational relationships with communities (see Antonio et al., 2000; Beere et al., 2011). This approach has significant implications for teacher education, as it enables students to acquire knowledge and experience beyond the university walls, better preparing them for their future teaching profession and providing them with relevant, real-world knowledge that complements their academic studies.

3.8.2. Institutional Culture and Rewarding Community Engagement

Community engagement has not been a deeply ingrained or prioritised aspect of the university's institutional culture. Deducing from Naidoo (2017) in her article that drew on an ethnographic approach to focus on the role of two theological institution's culture and how the culture shaped

diversity management, and ultimately student formation; she opined that an institutional culture is the most noticeable thing in universities and colleges. Unlike Naidoo (2017), Black academics thought differently when it came to institutional culture being easily recognisable in higher education institutions. Black academics proposed a rethink on community engagement and suggested that building a community engagement institutional culture is crucial for re-imagining approaches to community engagement. For example Olowu (2012) drew from comparative university experiences in his literature review article to provide some practical directions for developing a systematic approach to benchmarking university–community engagement within the South African milieu by using Northwest University as a case study. He discovered that Black academics championed the integration of community engagement into the fabric of the university, advocating for its adoption as a normative practice and cultural value that permeates every aspect of university life.

Part of re-imagining community engagement in this study was to foster change in the practice of community service. According to Tierney (2008) as cited by Naidoo (2017, p. 532), "institutional culture is important because it is a vehicle for implementing organisational and institutional change". Black academics sought a community engagement institutional culture as an important factor for effecting institutional transformative change. Dedicated institutional support programmes and financial resources for community engagement were also singled out by Black academics as crucial for pursuing community engagement (Beere et al., 2011; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010; Mugabi, 2015). The contention reached in this study was that institutional support remains important, not only for community engagement, but also for the effectiveness of putting into practice any other educational discourse.

According to van Eeden, et al. (2021, p. 2) who in their article presented a literature trend analysis of the developments of CE contemplated that "research involving community engagement (CE) amplifies the voices of researchers, educators and students, as well as communities; but the community is the epicentre of these interactions between higher education institutions (HEIs) and broader society". This suggested that community-based engagement empowers researchers, teachers, and students to amplify their voices. Moreover, it prioritises community voices, positioning them at the forefront of the engagement process. By doing so, community members are enabled to articulate their challenges more effectively and develop context-specific solutions that address their unique needs

Recognising academics' community engagement efforts through awards and prizes, similar to those given for research excellence or academic achievement (O'Meara et al., 2011), is crucial for sustaining, enhancing, and transforming community engagement. Institutional support can be strengthened by providing professional recognition, promotions, and honorary titles to academics demonstrating exceptional community-based work. This approach sends a powerful message that community engagement is valued, supported, and appreciated by the institution, motivating academics to continue and expand their community-focused endeavours.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter synthesised emerging literature on the voices of Black academics and their challenges in transforming South African higher education. The review revealed that existing research is insufficient to address the challenges Black academics face in their academic work. The chapter discussed the study's contribution to amplifying Black academics' voices in the struggle for transformation in South African higher education. It examined higher education transformation policy frameworks enacted by the South African government, aiming to inform and implement progressive reforms. The literature review also foregrounded the epistemic decolonial turn, aligning with the study's decolonial intentions. A comprehensive review was conducted on teaching and learning, research, and community engagement, highlighting Black academics' struggles and proposed transformations in these KPA's of an academic. The subsequent theoretical framework chapter employs Nancy Fraser's social justice framework as a lens to examine the voices of Black academics and their transformation struggles within a South African higher education institution.

Chapter Four

Theoretical Framework

4.1. Introduction

This dissertation delved into the voices of Black academics in a South African higher education institution, with a specific focus on their struggles for transformation. Key terms, complex and nuanced in nature, were elucidated in the preceding concept clarification chapter through a thorough review of relevant literature. This chapter builds upon that foundation, presenting the theoretical framework employed to contextualise and describe the voices of Black academics within the South African higher education landscape. At the outset of the chapter is a definition of the theoretical framework and the indication of how applicable the social justice framework was in this study. Subsequently, a narrative account of the history of social justice is delved into while also describing the two social justice types. After that, the key characteristics of the social justice theory are presented in tabular form, with an explanation below the table. Fraser's social justice theory is then portrayed on how it framed and informed the study. Contemporary local and international studies that have used Fraser's social justice theory as a framework are covered and illuminated. In the later parts of the chapter, the rationale for using Nancy Fraser's social justice framework in the study is explained. Following that is the summary and conclusion of the chapter.

4.2. Towards a Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework can be defined as a summary of theories that are developed and suggested by experts in one's area of research which one can draw from to contribute to one's study or even to interpret the findings of one's study (Kivunja, 2018). In essence, a theoretical framework is an assembly of theories advanced by specialists in an area of research which one can use to navigate through a topic of interest and can assist him or her theorise the data through the lens or framework of a chosen theory.

While there are several theories like the Social Justice theory, Feminist theory, Critical-Race theory, Decolonisation theory, Marxist theory, and Postmodernist theory, just to name a few (Gabriel, 2008), the Social Justice theory was identified as a suitable and fitting theoretical

framework to base this research study on. The tools provided by this theoretical framework allowed for an opportunity to examine the extent to which attention is given to the aspects of equality of opportunity and participation in the academy. It also had direct relevance to this study on exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. In the later parts of the chapter, it is explicated further on how the social justice theoretical framework was appropriate for the study.

4.3. What is Social Justice?

In reviewing the literature on social justice education, most scholars presented diverse definitions. According to Hage et al. (2011) social justice generally includes fairness and equitable access to power and resources regardless of one's wealth, social status, class, body ability, age, gender and religious or spiritual background. Similarly, Bhugra (2016, p. 337) concurred that "social justice means that all institutions—structures, as well as processes, should be freely and equally accessible and available to all individuals, irrespective of their characteristics".

Social justice is based on equal access to opportunities and resources and within this equitable access, external factors that characterise individuals are irrelevant. The study adopted a form of social justice that works towards equal access to opportunities and resources for Black academics in a South African university regardless of external factors such as their social status, heritage, religion, ethnicity, and different bodily abilities that may characterise them.

What is particularly outstanding in the definition of social justice is 'fairness'. In his social justice theory, Rawls put forward the idea of distributive justice as 'fairness' (Rawls, 1958). Rawls, as quoted in Nieuwenhuis, (2010, p. 272-273) offered two principles of social justice:

> "The principle of Equal Liberty claiming that each person is to be granted the greatest degree of liberty consistent with similar liberties of everyone. And, secondly, the Difference Principle, stating that practices that produce inequalities among individuals are allowable only if they work out to everyone's advantage and the positions that come with greater reward are open to all" (Rawls, 1958 in Nieuwenhuis, 2010, p. 272-273).

For Rawls, social justice education is about equality of opportunity, and accords every individual basic equality and democratic freedom, and it works to their advantage or benefit.

The difference however lies in that actions that divide people are permissible if they afford everyone to be privileged but to be privileged demands that opportunities and positions of power are equally open to benefiting everyone. Following the conceptualisation of social justice education by Rawls (1958; 1971), few scholars like Nozick (1996) and Brighouse (2002) maintained a similar position of social justice education as being about equality of opportunity. The positions taken by Rawls, Nozick, and Brighouse on social justice have been critiqued from many aspects of social justice education as they were seen as providing a minimalistic approach to justice. A more substantive approach to social justice was as a consequence essential. A more comprehensive approach to social justice would be based on a capability approach where individuals can realise their potential after engaging in an activity (Sen, 1992; Ruger, 2010). This was an approach to social justice based on equality.

With equality of opportunity focusing on treating each individual on an equitable basis and with equal human rights, it remained important to remember that treating everyone the same does not in itself manifest the principle of justice-that is fairness of treatment (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). For that reason, it was argued that social justice is, not only needed for robust reform of equal opportunity, but also broadly for a holistic form of social reform (Bhugra, 2016). Equality of opportunity must be provided with social justice values, one of which is to provide substantive equality to historically marginalised people (see Nieuwenhuis, 2005). Social justice was used in this study to enhance substantive equality to Black academics as part of a group of Black South Africans that were previously marginalised and excluded from society during apartheid. Social justice was thus, important for social reform and equality of opportunities for Black academics in higher education, and it was a meaningful approach for exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

Social justice is established by creating equal opportunities for all even for those formerly excluded through considering their past disadvantaging experiences perpetuated by historic social, economic and political racism (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). More succinctly, social justice means that the previously marginalised must see themselves deserving of equitable opportunities. There must first be a mapping of the historical injustices that disadvantaged them in order to draw out the social, economic, and political obstacles that constrain and continue to prolong these historical discriminatory injustices. It was from this notion that Fraser's philosophy and her three-tiered model of social justice was applied in this study, where social

justice is underpinned by the economic, cultural, and political dimensions of life (Connie, 2006) which are elaborated and clarified later in this chapter.

While the above-mentioned notions of social justice offered definitions that are traditionally familiar and commonly used, they do so inadequately. This was due to that a great deal of scholarship on social justice 1) assumes a universally applicable definition that has not existed and does not exist, 2) most social justice discussions focus on eliminating injustices, and 3) the definitions pay little to no attention to the means of translating the ideals of social justice into practice (Reichs, 2014). Social justice does not necessarily imply the same meaning to all those who use it (Griffiths, 1998; Ornstein, 2017) and in this study, it was opted to apply social justice in a way that speaks to the focus of the study.

While advocates, scholars, practitioners, and activists use social justice in a common and traditional way, in this study Sensoy's and DiAngelo's (2017) term of critical social justice was adopted. It's adoption was for the purposes of making a distinction between the position the study took on social justice and the positions taken in mainstream perspectives of social justice. According to Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017, p. xx-xxi):

> "A critical approach to social justice refers to specific theoretical perspectives that recognizes that society is stratified (i.e., divided and unequal) in significant and far-reaching ways along social group lines that include race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Furthermore, critical social justice recognizes inequality as deeply embedded in the fabric of society (i.e., as structural) and actively seeks to change this" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. xx-xxi).

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) stated that a critical attitude to social justice is one that recognises that society is imbalanced and uneven, and that we find inequalities that have considerable effects on various groups based on race, class, wealth, heritage, social status, gender, and age. In addition to this, social justice recognises that inequalities are deeply rooted in the social structuring of our society, and it consistently strives to change such inequalities. The applied definition of social justice in the study was based on a critical theoretical approach from a broad range of fields with some critical and commonly shared principles. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017, p. xxi) shared that:

- As people we can be seen as individuals, but we are also seen as members that belong and form part of social groups.
- These social groups come to be valued on an unequal basis in society.
- Social groups with more value in society possess greater proximity to access resources of a society.
- Social injustice is a reality, taking place even today, and has the greater effects of unequal access to resources amongst groups of society.
- Those who are committed to social justice must take part in self-reflection around their own socialisation into these groups (that is, their “positionality”) and must tactically act from a position of critical awareness, in ways that challenge social injustice.
- This action requires that one engages social justice as a long-term commitment and as an ongoing process.

Based on these, firstly, one who is engaged in the practice of critical social justice should realise that the affairs of unequal power relations in our society can be recognised from an individual level and at larger levels such as at group levels. Secondly, it also meant that we must be aware of, and understand the position we take concerning unequal power relations found in our society. Lastly, acting on all these ideals is important for a more equitably just society. This study was approached with an open mind on unequal power relations in South Africa higher education using critical social justice while also the perspectives of a group of Black academics by exploring and theorising their voices in the struggle for transforming the academy. Acting on the principles of critical social justice was important for the study’s commitment to a decolonial, socially just and transformed South African higher education.

4.4. Formulations of Social Justice: On the History of Social Justice?

In applying the social justice theory within the study, it was important to cast light on the historical formulations of social justice. Although the concept of social justice is widespread and commonly used in many areas of our society today, it is not a new term, and its use is rooted in Western thought in the economics of industrial Europe (Brodie, 2007). The concept of social justice first came to life in the 19th century in the times of the industrial revolution and protest actions in Europe came at this time as a revolt against the capitalistic traditions of

exploiting human labour (United Nations, 2006). Social justice was thus, first enunciated for economic emancipation from the neoliberal capitalist traditions in the 19th century.

The revolutions were because of the stark inequalities between the rich and the poor at that time and therefore, earlier proponents of social justice paid careful attention to investment, capital, and the sharing of wealth (Corporate Finance Institute, 2021). At the turn of the century, in the 20th century specifically, social justice moved from primarily focusing on economics to focusing on other domains of life which included human rights, race, class, gender, and other root causes and indicators of inequality (Pachamama Alliance, 2021). This meant that social justice has come to be primarily concerned with human rights issues and the uplifting of the lives of those previously discriminated against on the social basis of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, class, and ensuring the redistribution of wealth (Corporate Finance Institute, 2021). In this study, as in the 20th century, social justice was applied to focus on uplifting the lives of Black academics as a race group facing struggles of transformation in a South African higher education institution.

The decision to use social justice theory in this study was because it allowed for the interrogation of human rights issues of Black academics. These are important issues requiring change and the effect of transformation. Before turning to explain the two types of social justice theories that exist and reveal which one was applied in the study, it was important to disclose who the dominant agents of influence on social justice are, and how they conceptualised it.

4.5. Rawls, Young and Fraser on Social Justice as a Theory

The study was situated within the social justice theoretical framework and made use of the scholarly work of Rawls (1955-2009), Young (1990-2011) and Fraser (1997-2016). While there are major writers on social justice theory within the social sciences more specifically under political philosophy and education Miller (1976), Sen (1990-2000), Harvey (1973-2000), Smith (1994-2000), Freire (1987-2018) and others. Scholars who are considered to have much more dominance in its advancement are Rawls and Fraser. For Rawls, social justice was about the fair and equitable distribution of goods and or resources in society, hence the name distributive justice (Hocking, 2017). In Rawls' conception of social justice, distribution was a point of departure and the most important thing. Rawls believed that "justice is an a-priori, a natural right to an individual despite the inequalities that are seen as societal norm in social

institutions. He also believed justice was fairness" (Udoudom & Bassey, 2018, p. 111). For Rawls, social justice should be given, as it is a natural right of an individual that cannot be taken away regardless of the changes that may occur within society and institutions. He therefore conceptualised justice on the idea of fairness.

Fraser (1997) and Young (1990) criticised the social justice framework of Rawls and asserted that, basing social justice on distribution alone is limiting when it ought to happen broadly and precede the simple distribution of material and non-material goods notion (Cho, 2017). The implication here was that social justice extends beyond mere distribution to encompass a broader range of cultural and economic social justice issues like cultural alienation, political imperialism and economic domination (Young, 1990). This simplistic view of social justice was challenged by the critical perspectives of Young and Fraser, who introduce a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of social justice.

The structure of social relations for Fraser was more important for a socially just society, hence the name relational justice (Dotolo et al., 2018). Relational justice refers to that "people in their humanity as cultural, economic, and political beings, ought to interact in intersecting ways that do not neglect others based on their class (redistribution), status (recognition) and power (representation)" (Lynch et al., 2021, p. 53). Relational justice meant that people own and hold differing cultural values, unequal economic structures, and different political views. There was thus a need to engage in ways that champion the redistribution of resources to different classes, recognition of people from different classes, and allowing them to represent themselves according to their own voice, ability and power. This is why distributive justice was criticised because it recognised the economic dimension while neglecting and suppressing the cultural and political dimensions. This pointed to a form of social justice that did not respond to the social injustices facing society today.

Frasers ambitious of theoretically dichotomising matters of justice between economic and cultural procedures however was also brought under the critical microscope which revealed that such procedures produce categorisation that are too stark (Young, 2004). For Young (1997) a more plural categorization better guides action because it shows how struggles can be directed at different kinds of goals or policies. Moreover, critics levelled against Fraser's theory were that giving too much attention on essentialising racial and cultural identity by advocating for a status order that reflects equitable patterns of cultural recognition ignores economic

inequalities. Fraser nonetheless brought in that she was in no way limiting the number of dimensions and categories of her social justice theorisation but for her the economic, redistribution), cultural (recognition) and political (representation) dimensions prove critical in a highly globalised world order.

To reveal the differences between relational justice and distributive justice, it was borrowed from the work of Gewirtz (1998) who argued about social justice from the perspective of Fraser (1997). It was mentioned in this study that social justice scholars and critics revealed that relational justice comprises distributive justice but goes further than distributive justice (see for example Gewirtz, 1998 & Fraser, 1997). For instance, Gewirtz (1998) wrote that;

> "For Rawls, justice is about the distribution of rights, duties and the social and economic goods accruing from social cooperation. It does not appear to be about the form of social cooperation itself. Relational conceptions of social justice do, however, focus on the form of social cooperation. These conceptions refer to the political/relational system within which the distribution of social and economic goods, rights and responsibilities takes place. In one sense this arena can be conceived of as another dimension of distributive justice in that, in part, it refers to the way in which relations of power are distributed in society. But it is not just about the distribution of power relations, nor is it just about the procedures by which goods are distributed in society (commonly referred to as procedural justice). Relational justice might include procedural justice, but it is about more than this. It is about the nature and ordering of social relations, the formal and informal rules which govern how members of society treat each other both on a macro level and at a micro interpersonal level. Thus, it refers to the practices and procedures which govern the organization of political systems, economic and social institutions, families and one-to-one social relationships. These things cannot unproblematically be conceptually reduced to matters of distribution" (Gewirtz, 1998, p. 471).

In the above excerpt, Gewirtz (1998) elaborated on the work of Rawls (1971) and extracted from the work of American political philosopher, Fraser (1997). Gewirtz argued that relational justice might feature distributive social justice but goes beyond the distribution of primary human rights and primary goods. Gewirtz opined that social justice is about the structure of our relationships in society and how we behave towards one another at all levels of our interaction. Social justice therefore, includes the behaviours and procedures that regulate politics, economics, organisations, family life, and day-to-day social interactions. These cannot be

regarded a matter of distribution; other important factors must be factored into social justice. This called our attention to what relational justice upholds;

> "The relational dimension incorporates what Fraser refers to as cultural justice, examples of which would be cultural autonomy, recognition, and respect. But it is a much broader category. It also includes aspects of what Fraser calls economic justice, examples of which would be the reorganization of the division of labour and subjecting investment to democratic decision making" (Fraser, 1997, p. 15).

In the above quotation, Fraser (1997) made us aware that social justice is a broader phenomenon that surpasses the implied notion of distribution. Social justice should be understood as a phenomenon that combines our cultural and economic relations. Hence the development of what Fraser called cultural justice which includes and speaks to cultural independence, recognition of difference, and tolerance. Relational justice is a far-reaching type of justice, covering what Fraser referred to as economic justice incorporating aspects of restructuring work and creating an attitude of democratic participation. The study concurred with Fraser in that social justice does, not only expire at the distribution of material and non-material goods and or resources in society, but also goes as far as allowing everyone to have equal access to cultural, ontological, economic, social, epistemological and political privileges and opportunities of recognition.

4.6. On the Two Dimensions of Social Justice Types

In the preceding section, it was evidenced and indicated that contemporary social justice is mostly focused on the question of human rights and to transform the lives of those whose rights were formerly violated owing to the colour of their skin, their sex, and class. It however also focuses on wealth redistribution. While there may be varying types of social justice like procedural justice, what is increasingly becoming common is distributive social justice and relational social justice (Merrett, 2004). Elaborated below are these two types of social justice. The two theoretical methods of social justice (Distributive justice and Relational Justice) are a logical consequence of the philosophical work done by Rawls and Fraser as mentioned above. While distributive justice came to life with its development being mostly influenced and championed by John Rawls (Watts & Hodgson, 2019). The most influential proponent of

relational social justice was Nancy Fraser (Musara et al., 2021). To understand social justice, it was significant to give a brief description or account of the two dimensions of social justice:

- Distributive Social Justice
- Relational Social Justice

4.6.1. Rawls' Distributive Social Justice

The focus of distributive justice is the equitable distribution of material benefits and material burdens deemed relevant to individuals in society (Cohen, 2008). This type of justice materialises under certain conditions that must be met. According to Olsaretti (2020, p. 3), "distributive justice arises only when there is relative material scarcity (neither great abundance nor extreme scarcity in the resources people need and want)". The point here was that distributive justice is founded on competing claims not equity, and that an individual is entitled a stake or claim to a primary life benefit as long as an individual sees it from his or her best interest.

It was on this basis that scholars like Young (1990), Fraser and Honneth (2003) came to criticise and reject the distributive sense of justice as being deficient and narrowly focused on the allocation of resources at the backdrop of neglecting for example the fundamentals of identity politics. Aguayo (2020, p. 192), however, claimed the contrary and stated that "by displacing the distributive paradigm, these authors not only restrict to a strictly economic question to Rawls's conception of primary goods, but they also fail to grasp the moral and political perspective of his project, a perspective firmly based on reciprocal recognition and self-respect". The point made by Aguayo (2019) showed that the scholars rejecting the Rawlsian approach to social justice hold in check and confine his idea to exclusively an economic position, and fail to comprehend that, in some measure, it responds to mutual recognition and high opinions of other individuals.

Aguayo (2020) however agreed with Fraser and Honneth (2003) to an negligible degree that there are some limitations in distributive justice as problems of identity, lack of respect, and low socio-economic status, cannot be responded to by distributive procedures. This indicated some insufficiency within distributional justice as it was not an all-inclusive type of social justice to deal with the distribution of possessions and wealth as well as with economic and

cultural recognition. It was for this reason that relational justice was chosen as it is comprehensive and deals with recognition, even distribution of wealth, and participation from a cultural, economic, and political point of view. More evidence will be provided when explaining the three dimensions of Nancy Fraser's idea of social justice and the epistemic dimension with revelations on how relational justice assisted in framing Black academics' voices in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. Briefly, under the economic dimension, it was useful for the equal allocation of resources; cultural recognition, and respect under the cultural dimension; as well as democratic participation, representation, and the appreciation of minority groups' voices under the political dimension. It was useful for the discussion of epistemic diversity and the advancement of African scholarship under the epistemic dimension.

4.6.2. Nancy Fraser's Critical-Relation Social Justice Theory

In our human social interactions, we are dependent and interdependent for emotional care, empathy, love, and solidarity. In these affective social relations, inequities can happen just as they do in the political, economic, and cultural domains of life (Lynch, 2020). In her earlier work on redistribution and recognition, Fraser (2020; 2016) identified affective matters or relational justice as core and inseparable from the operations of society, particularly because interdependency and care are politically contested issues.

In her work, on scales of justice, Fraser (2009) however went beyond the limits of redistribution and recognition and brought to life a three-layered model of the theory of social justice. In this model she proposed "incorporating issues of political representation as social justice matters" (Lynch, 2020, p. 4). This appears in the study under the political dimension as one of the three dimensions that she proposed together with the economic and cultural dimension. What follows is an explanation of how the study used relational justice as an idea brought forward by Nancy Fraser.

This study used the normative framework of Nancy Fraser as a lens to critically discuss and theorise the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. Nancy Fraser (2008) asserted that there is a growing demand for the recognition of differences in terms of race, social-class, identity, sexuality, and ethnicity against the backdrop of economic distribution (Robeyns, 2003). Fraser located justice as a

framework that caters to participatory parity. In other words, giving people the ability to participate in social life with others on an equal basis (Fraser, 2007, 2009). She argued that justice should cater for societal arrangements that permit people to equally interact as peers and so she drew from a three-dimensional approach- focusing on the economic, cultural, and political aspects of the social justice framework she proposed (Howard & Maxwell, 2018; Bozalek & Boughey, 2012; Lynch, 2020). This was apparent in the work of Lovell (2007) as cited by Howard and Maxwell (2018, p. 536) who noted that:

> "Fraser (1997) posits that socio-economic and cultural injustice need to be considered together. She calls for a politics of re-distribution) of socio-economic resources), of recognition (of an identity that has value) and of representation (so that all groups have a voice in negotiating forms of re-distribution and recognition)" (Lovell 2007 as cited by Howard & Maxwell, 2018, p. 536).

The idea around this approach was that people should be able to socially engage and participate in the economic, cultural, and political spheres of life on an equal basis. Fraser pushed for this idea in her three dimensions arguing that there are diverse units of social justice and may therefore uniquely affect people's abilities to participate in society on an equal footing (Fraser, 2009). She opined that these three dimensions should be seen as distinct units from a social point of view, but are interwoven and intersect in an individual's life either allowing or constraining their ability to equally participate in society.

Table 4.1. below demonstrates the contrasts and comparisons between the two social justice theories of Rawls and Fraser. The table uncovers for each social justice theory type the key philosophical thinker, major philosophical root, ontological and epistemic perspectives. The table also features the polarity of freedoms, nature of equality, transformation agenda, scales of rights and the policy implications.

Table 4.1. Table showing the contrasts and the comparison between the two social justice theories; Source: Merrett (2004, p. 94) and Gewirtz (1998, p. 471).

	Distributive Justice	**Critical-Relational Justice**
Key Philosophical Thinker	• Rawls	• Fraser
Major philosophical root	• Individual concern • Capitalists/elites	• Critical self-reflection • Concern for others • Oppressed/minorities
Ontological perspectives	• Individualistic and atomistic	• Holistic and non-atomistic
Epistemological perspectives	• Research *a priori* as the researcher knows what is needed and is not absorbed in bringing about change	• Researcher immersed in the research endeavour to bring about change
Polarity if freedoms	• Freedom *from* fear or hunger (Berlin's 1969 notion of '*negative freedom'*)	• Freedom *to* pursue goals (Berlin's 1969 of *'positive freedom'*)
Nature of equality	• Equality of outcomes	• Equality of opportunity
Transformation agenda	• Maintains status quo, perpetuates power inequalities/exploitation	• Disrupt power inequalities
Scales of rights	• Individuals prioritised • Emphasis on private property	• Focus on the community • Redistribution of wealth
Policy implications	• Higher taxes • Regulated markets • Extensive welfare • Less inequality	• Low taxes • Free markets • Minimal state welfare • Unequal school funding

4.7. Economic, Cultural, Political and Epistemic dimensions of Frasers' social justice theory

Dimension	Injustices	Affirmative response	Transformative response
Economic	Maldistribution: *of resources: economic inequality*	Redistribution: *of resources*	Restructuring: *of economic model*
Cultural	Misrecognition: *attributes of people and practices accorded less respect, status and inequality*	Recognition: *valued, respected, esteemed*	Re-acculturation: *the plurality of perspectives but always fallible*
Political	Misrepresentation: lacking rights to frame discourse, norms and policies	Representation: *social belonging*	Reframing: *parity of rights*
Epistemological	Epistemic violence: *characterisation of knowledge from one dimension*	Reframing: *epistemological stances*	Re-centring: *inclusion of African scholarship; recentring African epistemic traditions in curricula*

Table 4.2. Conceptualisation of Fraser's Social Justice Framework Source (Hodgkinson-Williams and Trotter (2018, p. 208).

Table 4.2. Summarises how Fraser's conceptions of Social Justice in this study were thought of in this theoretical framework chapter. This framework appears again when the theorisation of the findings take cause later in the study in chapter 8. The tripartite dimensions of Fraser's social justice framework are mapped and revealed on how they served as tools for theorising the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation at a South African higher education institution. The economic dimension of Fraser's proposed social justice theory is discussed first focusing on *participatory parity* or simply *equality of participation* in terms of having equal distribution of economic resources. The second dimension, the cultural dimension, focuses on cultural *recognition* and *misrecognition* of certain societal groups. The last dimension proposed by Fraser, the political dimension, centres the discussion on ordinary *misrepresentation* and *mis- framing*, where oppressed and marginalised groups have not been given political voices to equally participate in society. In this study, the author was of the

conviction that there was theoretical gaps and limitations in Fraser’s proposal to social justice hence the development of another dimension, the epistemic dimension. The recognition of theoretical gaps, limitations and slips in Frasers theory were that while her work on “Recognition” and “Redistribution” (1995) and “Scales of Justice” (2008) have proven influential on shaping contemporary debates on social justice by emphasising the importance of participatory parity where all individuals have equal opportunities to participate in social and economic life . Her theory however had theoretical gaps regarding knowledge suppression in the Global South as it could not fully account for the ways in which dominant knowledge systems perpetuate epistemic injustice, where marginalised groups are denied the opportunity to produced and disseminated knowledge. Fraser’s work also did not fully engage with decolonial perspectives and epistemological diversity which emphasise the need to challenge dominant Western epistemologies and promote alternative forms of knowledge production. It was from this basis that in the fourth dimension, explored rethinking university knowledge to challenge dominant Euro-Western epistemologies that perpetuate epistemic violence.

4.7.1. The Economic Framing of Transformation

In the economic dimension, economic equality plays a vital role and is achieved by distributing resources equally, ensuring that peoples’ material conditions are well funded, and enable them to fully participate and engage in society equally as others (Hölscher, 2014). A limitation to participatory parity arises if there is a deficiency and mal-distribution of financial resources and the limitation results in exclusion, deprivation and imbalances in income, wealth and leisure time (Thrift & Sugarman, 2019; Hlatshwayo & Fomunyam, 2019). Social arrangements should, thus, be organised in ways that allow for equal distribution and allocation of resources, wealth, and leisure time so that everyone participates in societal institutions equally.

In the economic dimension, social class stratification perpetuates and exacerbates inequalities, hindering individuals from participating in society on an equal basis. This causes distributive injustice to occur when looking at the economic structures in the higher education landscape (Wildschut et al., 2019). In South African higher education, economic distributive injustice manifests in the experiences of Black academics. The underlying cause of this is the economic background Black academics come from, that constrains them from taking part in higher education as academic equals. In other words, there is distributive injustice from the perspective of their socioeconomic status.

The #FMF campaign was inspired by many factors including economic burdens faced by Black South African students and academics at university. Black academics from working-class groups "those who come from homes with parents engaged in semi-skilled labour and pay relatively low income", had economic constraints as they receive remuneration packages relatively lower compared to Government and public sector staff" (Higer Education, 2014, p. 37-39). Financial burdens are common for Black academics across all higher education institutions.

According to Breetze et al. (2020), Black academics are usually resource-underprivileged within higher education. Receiving limited funding for their research, if any, having to self-fund their research, sustain their lives and simultaneously face Black tax through remitting the little they earn from the university back home constrains Black academics (Swart et al., 2019). The inadequate financial resources and limited research funding subjects' Black academics to economic exclusion, marginality and deprivation. They then cannot advance their voices through research on the struggles for transformation in South African higher education. The inadequate financial resources and limited research funding experienced by Black academics could also be described through the notion of 'negative freedom'. According to Berlin (1969), 'negative freedom' happens when there are obstacles hindering one from the 'natural freedom' of accessing what is essential, and one is therefore considered 'unfree' and in the experience of 'negative freedom'. Black academics' political liberty is directly or indirectly hindered as they have limited political freedom to economic resources due to economic slavery or oppression (Berlin, 1969). These human-made hindrances prevent them from having access to adequate economic resources to get freedom to participate fully as other academics. Their professional and economic freedoms are thus, violated with little to no social justice.

Using the social justice framework, under the economic dimension, the economic constraints that disable the equal participation of Black academics in the academy were mapped out in this study to advance knowledge and contribute to the transformation of South African higher education. This unfolded through exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

4.7.2. The Cultural Framing of Transformation

Culturally, the arrangements of our society should allow for equal respect for all individuals and there should be opportunities for individuals to participate and achieve social esteem (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012). Participatory parity is inhibited, repressed, or limited when the arrangements of our society do not recognise the cultural values and the activities of some people (Hlatshwayo & Fomunyam, 2019). In the cultural dimension, there exists a recognition or misrecognition of some of the cultural attributes that are associated with certain categories of people which devalues their capacities to equally participate.

The calls to decolonise curriculum and transform South African higher education can be seen as a cultural project. For example, while universities do not fully support the idea of decolonising the curriculum, some Black academics do so as they see that the curriculum does not speak to the day-to-day cultural realities of Black people and leads to academic alienation (Ndelu, 2017). Decolonising and ultimately transforming the South African higher education, advances beyond decolonising the curriculum. It also encompasses transforming toxic institutional cultures encountered by Black people at universities.

Looking at institutional cultures from a Black perspective, a host of issues can be ascribed to the challenges Black academics face in the academy. The problems of Black South Africans in the academic pipeline include low inclusion in academic staff development initiatives, whereas White academics have informal development networks (Cloete, 2020). Additional challenges confronting Black academics, including government budget cuts, unequal power dynamics, and pervasive low expectations of Black leaders. Identity politics and tensions between Black and White academics in the university setting further exacerbate these issues (Cloete, 2020). Consequently, the struggles faced by Black academics in South African higher education institutions are multifaceted and relentless. The struggles and challenges of Black academics are brought about by the lack of social and cultural transformation in the university, which in part, causes cultural alienation and makes it difficult for people ascribing to different cultural identities to co-exist. Black academics henceforth find it a challenge to navigate the university and feel like equal partners with other academics in the university community (Davids, 2018).

According to Fraser (2000), at the turn of the century, demands for recognition and identity have been central issues and important dimensions of justice. Culture is a project of difference, which Fraser (2000, p. 107) acclaimed as:

> "Claims for the recognition of difference especially in struggles over identity and difference or struggles for recognition keep exploding in recent times and this is due to the fact that claims for recognition drive many of the world's most intense social conflicts – from battles around multiculturalism to struggles over gender and sexuality, from campaigns for national sovereignty and subnational autonomy to newly energised movements for international human rights" (Fraser, 2000, p. 107).

The struggle to be seen as culturally different and the struggle of identity politics keep brewing and surfacing, and tend to be the cause of cultural social issues associated with gender factors, sexual orientations, and national freedom. To some extent, institutional transformation can be seen as a cultural struggle for recognition of Black academics against differentiated, resentful, marginal, and racist institutional cultures (Booi et al., 2017). Black academics in HWU's are seen as non-beings and are subjected to intimidating, bullying and racist cultures. For example, the bullying of Black women leaders by naming them as "varsity bigwigs" can be cited as a form of racism at UCT and raises the need for transforming institutional cultures (Cloete, 2020).

Injustice speaks to identity politics focusing on race, gender, preconceived identities, prejudices, serotypes and social class. It also speaks to being sensitive to diversity in the university community (Belluigi & Thondhlana, 2019). This was underscored by the fact that Black academics have to negotiate recognition of their identities as they are exposed to institutional cultures that marginalise them to non-beings. This is similar to that of the 2015-2016 student campaign of #FMF where the students relied heavily on identity politics refusing to be a part of higher education that praises apartheid legacies and influences to affirm that they are Black beings who wish for their identities to be recognised at the university (Ngoasheng & Gachago, 2017). Being in solidarity with one another and through using identity politics, Black academics can incite one another in their socio-cultural struggles and work towards dismantling injustices and rectifying their cultural struggles.

The unimaginative institutional cultures that misrecognise the cultural values of Black academics, and a lack of social unity in the academic community to break these patterned institutionalised cultures counteracts social justice. With social unity, the institutional cultures that affect Black academics can come to be truly understood. The university should cultivate participation and recognition of diverse cultural people. The institutional culture should be transformed and the university door should remain wide open and welcoming to inclusive

recognition through equal participation and shared institutional values. Within the cultural dimension, explored and theorised were the institutional issues that affect Black academics in South African higher education. Discussion now takes a turn to the political dimension of social justice as proposed by Nancy Fraser.

4.7.3. The Political Framing of Transformation

In her earlier proposition, Fraser had only brought social justice to our understanding as a two-dimensional approach. In her recent work, she proposed that social justice can be understood as a three-dimensional approach and therefore included the political dimension. In the political dimension focus was on "the boundaries of Nation states in a post-Westphalian environment where the rise in neoliberalism and global governance, transnational finances, migration, politics and global media flows have established the questioning of who might be entitled to consideration in matters of justice" (Keddie, 2012, p. 273). To rephrase, injustices impacting people's ability to political participation as brought about and perpetuated by transnational relationships should not be framed within the boundaries of a nation-state.

The political domain of society should allow for all people even those located elsewhere to have a political voice and to influence and make meaningful decisions on issues that affect them – this had to do with representative justice (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012). Fraser proposed that there are two ideas around the notion of political injustice. Firstly, the idea of ordinary misrepresentation allows us to understand within the boundaries of nation-states the political representation of minority groups and secondly, the idea of misframing which pertains to how the set national boundaries cause social belonging or the social exclusion of some groups (Fraser, 2007). This unfolds in South African higher education when barriers are established, thereby causing the exclusion or inclusion of certain groups.

Society is governed by politics and politics shapes how we think about critical societal issues. The Greek philosopher Aristotle echoed this by arguing that it is the nature of man to be a political animal (Abbate, 2016). The 2015-2016 #FMF student campaign can be seen as a political one on the transformative calls to decolonising South African higher education. The political positions of Black academics on the student campaign meant they were presenting themselves as political. The student campaign allowed academics to share their voices on the

campaign in divergent ways on the different effects the campaign had on the South African higher education sector and the larger society (Sibeko, 2016).

Academic voices on the 2015-2016 student campaign were twofold. While some academics stated that the #FMF campaign disrupted academic programmes by causing the national shutdown of universities and lengthening the academic calendar, others saw the campaign as a major drive for continental liberation against Black victimhood (Mutekwe, 2017). During this period, some academics were allegedly siding "innocent students", while others maintained the status quo by conservatively supporting the university administration (Sibeko, 2016). Interestingly, some argued that the university was functioning adequately, despite entrenched institutional cultures, a questionable curriculum, and its underlying values (Hlatshwayo & Fomunyan, 2019). By advocating for a "business-as-usual" approach, these academics failed to demonstrate responsible scholarship, neglecting their role in promoting critical knowledge production, institutional reform, and curriculum transformation.

The point of academics being conservative and supporting the university was further highlighted in how they saw the cause of student demonstrations as having nothing to do with the university but being caused by the Minister of Higher Education announcing a percentage increase on fees towards the academic year of 2017 (Mutekwe, 2017). The academics' views on the campaign pointed to the political framing of the campaign and the political meanings and needs of redress that can be assumed by different actors and stakeholders. For Fraser (2009), political reconstructions happens by shifting and destabilising the ways we think about knowledge in a post-Westphalian nation-state, and allowing boundaries to be open for others to participate and to not limit, constrain, or prevent parity for all.

The social and political structures of society must allow all in the political space to be given a political voice to make decisions and influence issues (Keddie, 2012). In so far as the student campaign was based on rising tuition fees, decolonising the curriculum, and transforming South African higher education. It also spoke to higher education as a political space with boundaries and barriers that affect Black academics, hence, their political positioning on the issues of #FMF and decolonisation student protests. Under the political dimension of the social justice theory, considerably focus was on the political boundaries in higher education causing a barrier to Black academics' political voice, their views, and visions on the struggle for transformation in South African higher education and how these can be transformed.

4.7.4. The Epistemic Framing of Transformation

Nancy Fraser's social justice theory was initially based on only three dimensions; the economic, cultural, and political dimensions. Scholars such as Lynch (2013) thought that Fraser's three dimensions were lacking in conception of other dimensions, and added the love or affection dimension as a fourth dimension to her social justice theory. With a similar confidence to that of Lynch (2013) about this lack, this study saw a gap in her theory on the dimensions she had proposed. To address this gap, another dimension; the epistemic dimension was developed. Recently, progressive academics and several students have engaged in the 'buzzword' decolonisation, calling for the general decolonisation of South African universities and also for the transformation of higher education knowledge. To draw from Liu (2021) and Dei (2017), the fundamental call for a decolonial university with a transformed thinking approach about knowledge was based on the one-dimensional characterisation of knowledge at university, where Western knowledge is idealised as the only knowledge courtesy of the invalidation of Black indigenous people's knowledge. In other words, the university adopts and champions a single view to epistemology, through a Euro-Western culture (Kumalo, 2021), causing epistemic injustice to Black indigenous people's knowledge.

Undoing this culture and offering knowledge based on social justice called for rethinking the current university and ushering in a decolonial university with transformed knowledge. This can unfold in emancipatory and transformative ways when curriculum writers are Black academics because the Black student body that learns from the curriculum possesses similar lived backgrounds, experiences, and realities. Such academics would be appropriate for undoing the colonial culture of the university and reflecting on the epistemic and ontological realities of Black indigenous people. Similarly, Kumalo (2021, p. 92) concurred:

> "In a more radical proposition, the African university- once decolonised and truly an African institution and not rather a westernised university that finds itself on the African continent-becomes the tool by which coloniality of being is itself resisted through the inculcation of a culture that affirms the epistemic and ontological schemas of Black/Indigenous people". (Kumalo, 2021, p. 92).

In the above quote, Kumalo (2021) offered a drastic position about decolonisation, and proposed that a reasonably decolonised African university should be African and not be like

the contemporary Western university located on the African continent. This university can be truly seen as decolonised if it resists the dehumanising coloniality directed at Black indigenous people, by championing their ontological realities and epistemological experiences. Reframing the social institution to not only be persuasive, but also responsive to the current demands of decolonisation by having a diversity of knowledge should be at the top of the agenda of South African universities (Msila, 2020; Cross & Ndofirepi, 2016). The North West University's social science faculty of education has prioritised this as a social justice agenda in transforming its curriculum. The institution introduced pedagogical methods connected to education for sustainable development in two of its modules in the faculty, which present the curriculum as valuing ecological and social justice and the appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems (Leal Filho et al., 2018). Such reframing of curricula sought to disrupt the colonial structural inequalities at the institution while promoting social justice.

The decolonial and transformative reframing of curriculum, thinking, understanding, truth and being at universities, not only encourages social justice, but also promotes 'positive freedom'. 'Positive freedom' means the freedom that comprises an individual's desire to be his or her own life leader (Berlin, 1969). Put simply, it meant that an individual is a self-prescribed leader of his or her own life and not an imposed object or knowledge slave. To draw from Berlin (1969, p.178):

> "The `positive' sense of the word `liberty' derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men's acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes, which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside. I wish to be somebody, not nobody; a doer--deciding, not being decided for, self- directed and not acted upon by external nature or by other men as if I were a thing, or an animal, or a slave incapable of playing a human role, that is, of conceiving goals and policies of my own and realizing them. This is at least part of what I mean when I say that I am rational, and that it is my reason that distinguishes me as a human being from the rest of the world. I wish, above all, to conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for my choices and able to explain them by references to my own ideas and purposes. I feel free to the degree that I believe this to be true, and enslaved to the degree that I am made to realize that it is not" (Berlin 1969, p. 178).

In the above quote, Berlin (1969) made a significant contribution to 'positive freedom' and brought into play a consciousness about the self. He argued that an individual is a leader of his or her own life and not a dependent object but a critical being who can engage in self-directed thinking about knowledge or life goals. This was critical for this study because positive freedom is liberating and allows individuals to think for themselves and from the perspectives that define them. This argument empowers Black academics to centre their perspectives within their own epistemic traditions and ontologies, reclaiming and asserting their own definitions of knowledge, being, and existence. It advocates a transformative academic knowledge base (Kumalo, 2021) that allows for academics to think about real-world challenges such as transformation, from multiple perspectives. In this way, social justice becomes the centre when thinking about knowledge.

In a study on Education Development as an intervention for curriculum transformation using Nancy Fraser's social justice framework, Luckett and Shay (2020, p. 57-58) wrote:

> "In Fraser's terms, the interventions have been largely affirmative, not transformative. In addition, they have focused on only the first dimension of justice, redistribution, and have generally failed to attend to misrecognition and representation" (Luckett & Shay, 2020, p. 57-58).

From the above excerpt, Luckett and Shay (2020) advanced that curriculum transformative interventions such as Education Development, have been largely affirmative rather than transformative. They insisted this given that they found that interventions have focused on the first two dimensions of Fraser's three-dimensional social justice theory while overlooking the last dimension. In simpler terms, curriculum interventions have only maintained the existing state of affairs, failing to fully transform the curriculum in a meaningful way, going beyond superficial affirmative and structural changes to achieve true transformation. Unless accompanied by explicit structural reforms, even seemingly transformative interventions can perpetuate existing injustices, ultimately failing to promote the social justice that South African higher education institutions urgently need

The current university, specifically the HWU's, assumes norms and values for all people while it mal-distributes resources, misrepresents cultures, and does not recognise Black indigenous people's languages and knowledges (Luckett & Shay, 2020). Equally redistributing resources, culturally recognising different people's norms, and representing diverse knowledges, would

mean that a transformative approach based on Nancy Fraser's three-dimensional social justice theory has been considered within the university. It would also mean that the fourth dimension as an extension of Fraser’s three dimensions; the epistemic dimension that constitutes the transformation of knowledge at universities has taken its course in small to incremental reforms.

4.8. Situating Social Justice in Different Contexts

This study used the social justice theory in search of a re-imagined decolonial university. In response to this search for a decolonised university, the study explored the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. This was done under the subjective thematic analysis and qualitative approach, to capture as much as possible, the lived experiences of Black academics in South African higher education (Wadams & Park 2018). With the study using subjective thematic analysis and the qualitative approach, it allowed Black academics to voice out their longings, experiences, perspectives, challenges, frustrations, successes, and failures related to transformation within their university. This also allowed for an opportunity for Black academics to seek social justice on their challenges and successes through their voices.

According to Hytten and Bettez (2011, p. 11), “it has become increasingly common for education scholars to claim a social justice orientation in their work” hence, the use of social justice as a theory of choice and a theory of relevance in several studies at both the local and international level. In the section below, shown are contemporary studies using social justice and how other scholars used the social justice theory in their field of work in order to depict how their studies had relevance to this study.

4.9. Contemporary Studies Using Social Justice

In a study in Hong Kong employing the critical-relational-social justice lens that drew from Nancy Fraser’s model, Aktas (2021) proclaimed that academics in their role of teaching and learning need to include issues of social justice education, ethics, and student participation. In other words, in our teaching and learning roles as academics, we need to teach in ways that touch upon social justice issues by including them in our learning material and offering a socially just education underpinned by students’ voices. Aktas (2021) consequently developed

a study on the conceptualisations of social justice from a documented body of work in the context of higher education. The researcher proposed Participatory Action Research (PAR) as an appropriate model for a socially just education by promoting pedagogical-educational preparation across disciplines together with students, to foster student participation. Developing collaborative educational-knowledge communities "through student voice we can create space for knowledge redistribution, recognition, and representation of different student groups and can ensure social justice is at the forefront of educational reform [emphasis added here] in higher education" (Aktas, 2021, p.1). Collaborative student-academic relationships were thus being maintained as crucial for collaboratively developing knowledge through social justice. This was seen as having important potential outcomes for the development of an academic community space that prioritises student engagement and voice on the redistribution, recognition and representation of knowledge ways over diverse student population groups.

This was valuable for endorsing an education imbued in social justice and it could be important for transformation in South African higher education. There is need for good teaching practice, prioritising student pastoral care and allowing for epistemic and ontological access for a diverse student body within South African higher education. The study maintained a similar position to Freire (2018) by stating that PAR is an appropriate approach that frees the oppressed from their politicised struggle in the higher education context. Aktas (2021) also suggested that through "using PAR, students may recognise their positions in the power dynamics of higher education institutions and work towards creating more equitable power structures within the classroom" (p. 3). "This can help move higher education institutions towards being more socially just through the students and educators working together to create individual course content that accurately reflects the students' lived experience" (Ibid).

The study observed that using PAR, academics may make students aware of their position, hegemonic structures, and the power network in the academy. They; the academic and student, can then try to disrupt truth, power, inequality, and injustice through collaboratively working towards a more socially balanced educational experience. The collaborative efforts between students and academics yield a transformative higher education model, characterised by socially equitable justice, where the curriculum reflects and addresses the realities and experiences of both students and academics.
Below is the participatory model proposed by Aktas in her study for social systems that are more socially just within the context of education, where academic lecturers can integrate

students into their teaching and learning practices in the classroom. The study reflected on Nancy Fraser's arguments on maldistribution, (mis)recognition, and (mis)representation as injustice in society that argued that when the three dimensions of her theory collectively work as a balanced force, social justice can be achieved. The same model in Aktas' (2021) study aimed to correct these injustices in China's and Hong Kong's higher education. The context of this study can offer insight on the transformation of South African higher education. The proposed model reflected how social justice has a concrete underpinning of participation and how it can be brought to life in the lecture room by providing democratic-bureaucratic processes that can allow for the *Economic-Distribution, Cultural-Recognition,* and *Cultural-Representation* of knowledge for assorted student groups within higher education.

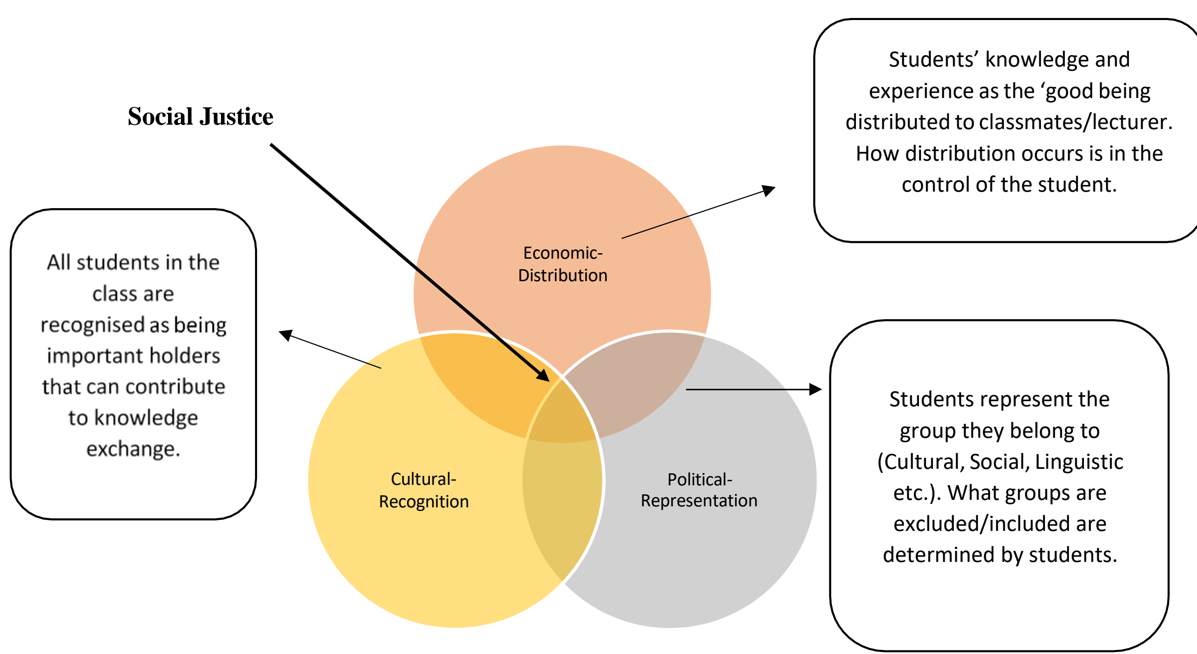

Figure 3.1. An educational adaptation of Fraser's social justice framework (Fraser 2007, 2008, 2008a, 2013 as adapted from Aktas, 2021, p. 6)

In a research project on the experiences and perspectives of social justice on economically low working-class and underprivileged youth in Scotland's Mainland Area, McPherson (2019) made use of Nancy Fraser's social justice proposed theoretical model. Reasons for the use of social justice theory included locating and recognising the youth's ideas and lived experiences of injustice around their outcomes of unemployment and marginalisation from education

because of their deprived situated-place contexts. There was then a focus on some aspects which included social alienation, economic exclusion, enduring unemployment, and disconnection from education.

From the research project of McPherson (2019), findings revealed youths' experiences of injustice of misrecognition through being unemployed, underemployed, and out of opportunities. This was so because participants held low-level educational qualifications and had less work experience. The researcher found that participants were unemployed, underemployed, or out of opportunities because of non-permanent employment, being in contract positions and lack of real opportunities. The research project made known the youth's perspectives on justice as the injustice of misrepresentation through being voiceless and disconnected. This came as most of the young people of Mainland Scotland were persuaded by their school teachers, local community members, members of the public, career advisers, and business owners to go straight into the job market for employment. Against this backdrop, they felt they were side-lined, shamed, overlooked, and underestimated because of their low social status and ancestral background. They could thus not pursue higher education. The findings of the study on the youth's experiences and perceptions of social justice were on the injustices of misrepresentation: voicelessness and being discounted. This was made known and brought to life by the youth who shared that they felt and experienced an alienating, distant-inaccessible, hostile, and antagonising culture, and a complete separation of their experiences, and ways of life than those of previous generations.

In the South African context, social justice as a theoretical lens has been used in several studies. In a study conducted by de Kadt (2020) on the experiences of academics who took part in a professional learning programme, the South African Teaching Advancement at Universities (TAU) Fellowships Programme, social justice was used. To be more specific, Nancy Fraser's social justice theoretical lenses were used to examine academics' views about the possibilities of the programme, renewing and refocusing academic spaces to have social justice in the teaching and learning processes at the university.

To get a sense of the participants' views and lived experiences of the programme, data was generated through reflective evidence in the form of documentation and evaluation reports. Some of the aspects that came from the documented reports and evaluations were that the programme harnessed and enhanced academics' passion for teaching, and allowed for

participatory parity (collaborative interaction) amongst academics. Furthermore, academic reports revealed that the programme allowed them to remove the culture of institutional bias and the act of disguising their disciplines while engaged in the programme. Moreover, academics were able to challenge and change their values, uphold respect for one another, and meaningfully contribute to through their strengths and expose improve their evident weaknesses while engaged in the programme.

In a study carried out by Winberg and Winberg (2017) on academics, students, and industry partners' voices on decolonising the computer engineering curriculum, the social justice theory was used. The academic researchers argued and established that Nancy Fraser's multilateral social justice approach was an appropriate approach for determining and establishing participants' voices on how a decolonised curriculum unfolds as a socially just curriculum. A variety of qualitative design approaches were used for data generation, ranging from surveys to telephonic interviews. The researchers also used "fictive scripting" for data generation, where engineering educators were given various scenarios and made their recommendations on how they envisaged the development of a future transformed and decolonised curriculum.

Winberg and Winberg (2017) engaged in the analysis of fictive scripts to formulate a discussion of the findings. The researchers concluded that academics viewed decolonising the engineering curriculum as a multifaceted and complex process. It was stated that to have a reworked engineering curriculum and to produce a "world-class specialist African computer engineer", there needs to be extensive editing and a deep-seated review of the engineering curriculum.
The researchers emphasised that the primary objective of revising and reviewing the curriculum is to create a tailored program focused exclusively on computer engineering systems and software approaches that are context-specific, regionally relevant, and responsive to the unique needs and challenges of the African region. The researchers argued that a decolonised curriculum had the merits of high student achievement. They also offered that it could cater to the local context and provide ground-breaking and state- of-the-art solutions to engineering challenges facing the higher education landscape of South Africa and other African higher education environments.

Another study conducted by Lebeloane (2017) was situated and embedded in the social justice approach to decolonising the general school curriculum. The author took it upon himself to develop a conceptual study and therefore revisited the literature and engaged in the reviewing

of literature without generating data from participants either qualitatively or quantitatively. The study, however, made important contributions to the focus of this research project on decolonising curriculum and the transformation of higher education. It particularly made contributions to re-imagining higher education's curriculum studies for a decolonial university as focused on this through exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

On decolonising the curriculum and for its offerings to be rooted in equity and social justice, the author recommended a fundamental and drastic emancipatory shift that fits into, and concurs with the work of Winberg and Winberg (2017). The author proposed that decolonising the curriculum can be achieved through a multifaceted approach, involving: 1) curriculum transformation by decoding, renovating, and reforming existing curricula. 2). Self-autonomy: empowering local institutions and communities to take ownership of their educational content. 3). Internationalisation of indigenous perspectives: incorporating and valuing indigenous lived realities and knowledge systems within global educational frameworks. The emphasis was on re-constructing and redefining the inaccurate curriculum by reworking it to appropriately fit into the lives of the people for whom it is designed for. The author placed importance on decolonising the curriculum and cautioned that one of the main dangers of a non-decolonised curriculum is acculturation and the overall loss of students' Black ontologies of 'being'. The author meant that if students remain exposed to a colonial curriculum, they can lose themselves and the components that go with their true being, which comprises of their cultural beliefs, values for life, locality as well as standards of living.

4.10. On the Rationale for Using Fraser's Social Justice Theory

The driving purpose of social justice research is to study lived injustices and aims to foster a much fairer and just society from the perspectives of the minority, marginalised, oppressed, secularised and secluded people. The above international and local studies that employed social justice illuminated that the social justice theory was well-matched for rethinking the university for the important determinant of a decolonial university through exploring the voices of Black academics on their struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. The theoretical methodological approach proved resourceful and offered a multipurpose outlook to understanding people's experienced injustices.

Nancy Fraser's tri-dimensional classical model of social justice spoke equally to, and addressed matters of, injustice comprehensively. Although her theory had a slip on the epistemic dimension, her tripartite model addressed the economic, cultural, and political efforts needed to realise a socially just society that caters to inclusivity, recognition, and representation. Her social justice model and its dimensions had crucial considerations in the social justice ethic agenda for oppressed people. From a sociological and humanistic perspective, she argued for a common humanity by recommending a justice that is not based on Capitalist-Marxist traditions, and not on race as a colour concept. She rather fostered a human race that collectively recognises every individual regardless of the colour of their skin (Howard & Maxwell, 2018). The study was in accord with her due to the belief that there is one race; "the-human-race" which should be recognised equally.

Nancy Fraser's theory was important for use in the study as it allowed for the scrutiny of universities in the Global South in order to bring about change. This theory assisted in the study on re-centring and reframing universities to allow Black ontological beings to be expressed as it focused on exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. The social justice theory was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study due to its critical approach, which enabled the researcher to gather rich, nuanced perspectives from participants through in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. This approach allowed for a high degree of freedom and tolerance, fostering open and candid dialogue. The social justice theory significantly expanded the scope of this dissertation, providing a platform for amplifying the voices of Black academics, sharing their stories, and highlighting the injustices they faced. This enabled a nuanced exploration of the transformative efforts undertaken by Black academics within a South African higher education institution.

4.11. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the theoretical framework, focusing on social justice. It examined the historical development of the social justice theory, highlighting influential scholars and their contributions. The discussion centred on the differing perspectives of Rawls, Young, and Fraser, with particular emphasis on the distinctions between Rawls' distributive justice and Fraser's relational justice. The chapter provided an in-depth explanation of Rawls' distributive

approach and Fraser's critical-relational approach. Fraser's model comprised of three key dimensions: economic, cultural, and political. There was furthermore, an added fourth dimension, the epistemic dimension.

In the economic dimension, deliberations covered how unequal resource distribution generate systems of inequality. The cultural dimension highlighted the need for equal recognition and respect for diverse cultures to achieve social justice. The political dimension emphasised the importance of representation, recognition, and framing in societal decision-making processes. The epistemic dimension stressed the need for diverse knowledge and inclusive decision-making in education to prevent systems of inequality and injustice.

Contemporary international and local studies that employed Frasers social justice approaches were reviewed under this chapter, providing a brief synopsis of each and their contribution and or relevance to the study. The chapter concluded by explaining the rationale for using Nancy Fraser's perspective on social justice as the theoretical framework guiding this study. The subsequent chapter outlines the methodological design employed in this research.

Chapter Five

The Research Methodology

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the social justice theoretical framework that the study used was delineated upon. The current chapter discourses over the research approach, design, and methodology. The chapter is begun with offering the context of the study and the research paradigm, with descriptions on where the study was conducted and the paradigm chosen. Following that, the research design, methodology, selection of participants, and data generation methods are unveiled. The data analysis method, trustworthiness, data protection, and storage, and limitations of the study are disclosed and then the chapter is concluded.

5.2. Context of The Study

This study was conducted at one South African higher education institution situated in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The institution that the study was based on can be described as a research-intensive university[3] that underwent a merger to become a traditional university that has a family of five campuses with four colleges and various schools. I focused on re-imagining a decolonial university by exploring Black academics' voices in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

Black academics who participated in this study were from different rankings ranging from lecturers, senior lecturers, post-doctoral research fellows, and professors. According to Kerr (2022), post-docs are de-professionalised, and seen as mere students in training and professional development. Kerr (2022, p. 550) says the training happens in subtle ways as "postdocs produce research outputs for universities more cheaply than employees, and in a way, which makes universities score better on various metrics that only count permanently-employed academics". This underlined a commodified, corporatist, and neoliberal university that embraces academic undermining and therefore the rationale of including postdocs as academics in this research was because they engage in academic work, whether semi-employed

[3] A research-intensive university is an institution that has a very high research focus, profile, highest research output and it is an institution that tends to make it or appear in the top tier ranking of the Academic Ranking of World Universities at the national and international level.

or not, and they work as academics. Included varying ranks of academics was for the intention of yearning for a comprehensive understanding of their 'insights, voices, experiences, and attitudes' towards the struggles for transformation in South African higher education. Doing this was crucial for bringing the study closer to achieving its significant objectives and critical key areas of the study which were: 1) to explore the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher institution and 2) to understand the voices of Black academics' in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

5.3. Paradigm

Researchers have a choice of paradigm to use in their study to respond to the research question or topic. According to Rahi et al. (2019), the notion of 'paradigm' is a set of philosophical beliefs on how we make sense of research issues, our interpretation of the world, and how we conduct research. Paradigms are sets of beliefs and assumptions that guide how we analyse problems that are worth research. A research paradigm can thus, be thought of as how a researcher looks at the world or at the nature of their research. Inescapably research paradigms consist of the positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, pragmatism, interpretivism, and critical realism paradigm (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Ugwu et al., 2021; Kumatongo, & Muzata, 2021). In this study, the critical paradigm was seen as appropriately fitting and was therefore selected.

5.3.1. The Critical Paradigm in Relation to My Study

The advocacy paradigm, also known as the critical paradigm, holds that realities are subjective, multiple, and historically constructed, and that systems of our society are politically oppressive (Goduka, 2012). The approach of this paradigm towards knowledge is change-driven and emancipatory-orientated (Rahi et al., 2019). The critical paradigm was employed in this study to raise critical consciousness about the realities faced by Black academics in South African higher education, with the ultimate goal of driving for socially emancipatory change and challenging the historically oppressive circumstances that have persisted in this context.

According to Chilisa and Kawulich (2012), African indigenous researchers often rely on traditional paradigms that overlook the value of indigenous research approaches and designs. These traditional paradigms frequently fail to address the unique needs of indigenous communities. Karl Marx, the founder of the critical paradigm, critiqued traditional political

economy and argued that those in power, specifically the capitalist class, control not only the means of production but also the means of knowledge production (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). This results in a monopoly on knowledge, where one dominant class dictates what is considered acceptable wisdom.

The knowledge generated and developed by capitalists create dominance of one class over other classes in society. This causes African ways and other cultures of seeing, knowing, thinking, and believing to be dominated by westernised ways of thinking (Woldeyes et al., 2018). This translates to gross power imbalances and inequalities among members of society and between different social groups based on their gender, social class, and economic, political, and cultural backgrounds. Black academics are part of the members of society that have experienced inequality due to their race, social class, economic, and political positions. Using the critical paradigm was meant for the aspiration to disrupt the inequalities that Black academics experience through their sharing of their own voices, reflections and agency.

The decision to use the critical paradigm was based on desires to re-imagine a decolonial university and see through the lenses of this paradigm the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. Critical research is expected to change the lives of the participants (Creswell, 2007; Asghar, 2013; Sheppard, 2022; Aryal, 2023). Using the critical paradigm in this study enabled Black academics to voice out what burning issues of decolonisation and transformation they have encountered in their academic lives and meaningfully contributed to what they would like to see being changed in the university.

The critical paradigm emphasises a search for knowledge that is emancipating and intended for action and freedom (Crotty, 1998). Adopting the critical paradigm in the study served to establish Black academics emancipatory narratives on their job roles and responsibilities of teaching, learning, research, and community engagement in the academic workplace. The critical paradigm thus guided this study, prioritising the voices of Black academics as participants who shared their perspectives on envisioning a higher education system that is more just, equitable, and decolonial.

5.3.2. Philosophical Assumptions of the Critical Paradigm

The assumed beliefs and probable realities of a paradigm are embedded in its ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology which are distinctively interrelated, and assists on differentiate one paradigm from the other (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Varpio, & MacLeod, 2020). The following section elaborates on the philosophical underpinnings of this study, including its epistemology, axiology, ontology, and research methodology.

5.3.3. Epistemology of the Critical Paradigm

Epistemology is a component of a research paradigm that speaks to the study of knowledge, its origin, the justification of having certain beliefs about knowledge, and methods used to find this knowledge (Green, 2017). Critical epistemology is based on subjectivism. Subjectivism is the idea that knowledge is not value-free; that is, it is not free of external ideas or objective truth, and that the researcher's biases and positionality are apparent in the research (Mwangi et al., 2018). This is because reality or knowledge is constructed through constant engagement between the researcher and the participants. Knowledge is, therefore, transactional, and subjective, as the researcher and participants are intersubjective and linked in the research, and conclusions are value-mediated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Held, 2019). This meant that knowledge is an interactive-subjective interchange of ideas, opinions, and views between the researcher and the participants. The research conclusions reveal what is most important between these two agents.

Critical epistemology questions existing social ideas, the often-taken-for-granted assumptions, and long-held beliefs about knowledge (Lather, 2006; McLaren, 2009; Bonache, & Festing, 2020) as we live in an established world where agreements on what counts as valid knowledge have already been made (Crotty, 1998; Williams et al., 2020). The endorsed and authorised knowledge claims complement systems of power, control, oppression, inequality, stratification, racism, privilege, and social injustice (Giroux, 2011; 2020), hence, the need to decolonise and transform knowledge. This study was grounded in the critical paradigm, which enabled a critical examination of the intersections of race, class, and gender (McLaren, 2009; Maarouf, 2019; Scotland, 2012), with the ultimate goal of challenging and transforming the existing social order.

The application of critical epistemology in this study enabled the interrogation of Black academic'' perceptions of decolonising knowledge and the significance of transformation. By adopting this framework, a platform was created for Black academics to share their distinct experiences and challenges, generating knowledge that can drive change and address the racial, class-based, and gendered barriers they encounter in academia.

5.3.4. Axiology of the Critical Paradigm

Axiology communicates ethical issues in research and exposes a researcher's value system (the right or wrong) in a research study (Simui, 2018). Axiological underpinnings of research include ethical behaviour and respect towards participants' rights, values and respect for participants in general (Maarouf, 2019). Accordingly, Kivunja and Kuyini (2018, p. 28) reasoned that axiology "involves defining, evaluating and understanding concepts of right and wrong behaviour relating to the research". To restate, researchers should be cognisant of right and wrong in research, and have regard for human rights and values. Thus, research processes should flow in peaceful, democratic and socially just ways that dignify, respect and uphold research participants as valuable.

As with axiology, respect and value of participants' voices about transformation in the South African university was respected by not introducing any new ideas on what they had shared. The researcher of this study knew that he was an external researcher to the study and acknowledged the limitations of his perspectives and prioritised respecting and valuing the experiences, views, and concerns of Black academics. More succinctly, a safe and inclusive space was created for Black academics to share their insights and perspectives on transformation within their institution, recognising that their lived experiences and expertise were invaluable to this research.

5.3.5. Ontology of the Critical Paradigm

Ontology is a philosophical questioning of whether reality and knowledge exist and how can we best interpret them (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Bryman (2008) as cited by Ryan (2018, p. 2) argued that "ontology relates to the values a researcher holds about what can be known as real and what someone believes to be factual". In simpler terms, ontology refers to a researcher's beliefs about what can be known as reality. The ontological assumption of the

critical paradigm is that of historical realism. The take of historical realism is that reality, and/ or knowledge is shaped by social, cultural, ethnic, historical, and economic factors. Furthermore, what is taken or constructed as true reality is influenced by power holders or advocates of specific knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These historical realities are improperly taken as real and unchallengeable in today's society (ibid).

This paradigm believes that social reality is dynamic, and ever changing (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). This boils down to a nature of cultivating unequal power relations, hegemony, and alienating, oppressive circumstances for marginalised groups. Black academics are part of a marginalised group facing oppressive conditions in the academy (Ramohai, 2014; Wilson, et al., 2021), and thenceforth the critical paradigm was used to reveal or expose these historical and deeply embedded structures that affect them in the South African higher education space.

5.6. Research Design

The concepts of research design and research methodology are usually used interchangeably by novice researchers as if they mean the same thing (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). To offer conceptual clarification and ally confusion that may arise on the readers' part, a research design is defined alongside the design adopted in the study . Earlier on, in the study, a conceptual clarification of what a research methodology is was offered, and together with the methodological approaches adopted in the study. However, an depth conceptual clarification of research design did not unfold and it is given under this section. A research design can be defined as the means for generating, evaluating, analysing, reading, and reporting data in a research study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Bloomfield, & Fisher, 2019). One learnt from this that a research design is the process of generating, examining, and giving meaning to data in a study or research.

The research design spells out the procedures to be followed, the useable techniques to generate and analyse data in order to respond to the research questions (Creswell, 2014). A research design is a researcher's plan of action. It assists the researcher on avoiding unwanted hindrances in the research endeavour by having a structured plan of action where the important components of the research project are put together, spelling out how to respond to the research question (Asenahabi, 2019). A research design can also be viewed as a consideration of the researcher's ideas to generate data. It also rescues the researcher from having to do unstructured

or unplanned research as the research design also assists in planning how to tackle the research question(s). It is the general plan of action for addressing research problems (Lelissa, 2018). This was also noted by Akhtar (2016, p. 68) who argued that a "research design can be considered as the structure of research, it is the glue that holds all of the elements in a research project together, in short, it is a plan of the proposed research work". A research design is thus a conceptually drawn-out plan on how proposed research will be done.

5.6.1. The Qualitative Approach

The use of qualitative approaches in research has grown significantly over the last five decades (Aspers & Corte, 2019), and in recent times. Interest by social scientists in education to use qualitative research has grown rapidly (Mohajan, 2018). This indicates that qualitative research has gained momentum in education. As a social scientist researcher in education, the researcher of this study was inspired to utilise and further explore the qualitative research approach in his study. Consensus has not been achieved on one single definition of a qualitative research approach because of its use across a variety of disciplines (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Jovanović Jovanovic, 2011; Flick, 2007; Hollin et al., 2020). This meant that contextual and discipline-specific definitions of the qualitative research approach might come up given the absent nature of an agreed-upon definition.

There are some research approaches for knowledge production. The most common, however, are the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research approaches for creating and examining knowledge (Allsop, & Saks, 2019; Ishtiaq, 2019; Strijker et al., 2020; Grønmo, 2019). Firstly, quantitative research approaches deal with numerical data such as numbers and statistics. However, qualitative research deals with the interpretation of events, and situations, or even explaining a particular phenomenon (Mokoena, 2021). Secondly, while the quantitative approach has been the main school of thought in knowledge generation for over a decade, the usage of qualitative approaches in the field are more recent (Magubane, 2021). Both schools of thought are significantly key for attaining, generating, and producing different types of knowledge. Mixed methods research approaches use more than one method or a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The study now provides an explanation of the qualitative approach as it was adopted in this study.

Qualitative research is an approach that uses various methods to study meanings from individuals; such as individuals' reflective accounts of their attitudes, inspirations, behaviours, particular occasions, circumstances as well as what is expected of individuals in specific social places and contextual settings (Creswell, 2009; Hollin et al., 2020). Authors like Bernhard (2018, p. 2) confirmed this view by asserting that "method-oriented (qualitative) approaches rely on qualitative methods to understand meaning-making processes in social relations". This revealed that qualitative research is about studying social situations.

In this study, the researcher employed qualitative research to examine the voices of Black academics in their struggle for transformation within a South African higher education institution. The qualitative approach proved fitting, as it enabled an in-depth exploration of Black academics' reflective voices on transformation within a specific context. Through this approach, the researcher investigated how individual Black academics perceived and made meaning of their struggles for transformation in South African higher education.

According to Flick (2018, p. x), "qualitative research is intended to approach the world 'out there' (not in specialised research settings such as laboratories) and to understand, describe and sometimes explain social phenomena 'from the inside' in a number of different ways". He added that qualitative research focuses on verbal data by using interviews, focus groups, and biographies. Qualitative research is done in situ; in natural site spaces, and not in custom or research-exclusive spaces like science and biomedical laboratory spaces. It gives descriptive details of a social reality from the views of individuals in countless ways. The qualitative research approach proved valuable in this study, as it enabled the researcher to explore the voices of Black academics (a social phenomenon) within their natural setting (a university environment in South Africa). This approach facilitated a deeper understanding and description of their views on the struggle for transformation in these environments. By employing a qualitative research approach, the researcher aimed to generate rich verbal data through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, leveraging the approach's capacity to yield detailed, contextualised insights.

The researcher found it necessary to broadly and deeply apply the qualitative research approach in relation to existing literature on the voices of Black academics in higher education. Previous studies on Black academics, such as Mahlaula (2019), have relied on qualitative research approaches to engage participants and amplify their voices. Similarly, the researcher was

motivated to employ this approach to give Black academics a platform to share their struggles for transformation in various aspects of university life. Another influential study by Clemons (2019) highlighted the value of qualitative research in developing knowledge from individuals' experiences, particularly in the context of Black feminist thought. The researcher adopted a qualitative approach to capture the voices of Black academics and generate knowledge about a decolonial university based on their experiences working within the institution. The research methodology employed in the study is discussed next.

5.8. Research Methodology

Methodology seeks to understand how a researcher explores, generates, and theorises knowledge (Perera, 2018). Methodology is thus, concerned with how information is obtained to develop new knowledge. Scotland (2012, p. 9) documented that “methodology is concerned with why, what, from where, when and how data is generated and analysed”. The methodological underpinning of a critical paradigm is to query hidden ideologies and expose hegemonic conditions, unjust realities, and social inequalities to bring about social transformation (Scotland, 2012). Critical methodologies probe into subtle and often taken-for-granted, unjust, social issues of power and inequality, so as to transform them. The research methodologies used in this study intended to uncover implicit social challenges of power and inequality in an attempt to transform these educational problems by helping to create practical solutions and more comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena.

The term research methodology is a combination of two concepts; research and methodology. The conceptual clarifications chapter covered under research or re-search relying on the work of (Kabir, 2016) that the term “research” developed from an ancient French word “recerchier” which meant a repeated search for something as there was still room for more research. According to Naidoo (2011), research can be defined as an essential activity of wanting or seeing the need to know. The concept of research is thus, an old one and basically developed to mean a repeated exploration of something. This happened because previous research had not been comprehensive enough in that there was still an opportunity for more research around a particular topic.

Methodology is defined as a logical process of finding solutions to a researchable problem by generating data using varying procedures, providing an analysis of the generated data, and

drawing intellectual conclusions about the data (Bouchrika, 2021). Methodology is thus, a systematic process of developing solutions to a topic or research problem through gathering information using various methods, giving meaning, and reaching conclusions to the gathered information. Methodology refers to the overall procedures and perspectives the researcher uses or follows during the research activity (Bouchrika, 2021). Drawing from the given definitions of research and methodology, it can be ascertained that research methodology is thus a procedural and thorough search for a solution to a topic or research problem. In this search, there is use of different methods to find new information on a topic, examine the new-found information, develop an enrich understanding of it and arrive at logical conclusions. A researcher can use a research methodology following different, yet related procedures, methods, approaches, and philosophies.

Of late, decolonial scholars have however adopted a critical attitude about the notion of researching (see for example Smith 1999; 2021, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017 & Antoine, 2017). For Smith (1999, p. 1), “Research is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary”. Smith recorded this conception of research as a ‘dirty word’ because she believed that research involving indigenous people is often undertaken through a historically Western colonial logic of doing research that needs to be decolonised.

For her, this stems from non-indigenous researchers focusing on indigenous people as objects of research for extracting, generating, capturing, and documenting data while disapproving the worldviews of these people. Antoine (2017) affirmed this by emphasising that indigenous knowledge remains underappreciated in academia where Western modes of knowing supersede over all other knowledge systems. Another decolonial academic and scholar who also positioned a critical attitude about the notion of researching was Ndlovu- Gatsheni (2017, p. 186) who stated:

> “It underscores the fact that “researching” involves the activity of undressing other people so as to see them naked. It is also a process of reducing some people to the level of micro-organism: putting them under a magnifying glass to peep into their private lives, secrets, taboos, thinking and their sacred world” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017, p. 186).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) talked about researching through the work of the powerful; Maori anthropologist Smith (1999; 2021). Smith (1999; 2021) drew our attention to ‘researching’ as

continuing to allow researchers to see themselves as absolute authorities or “masters” of knowledge and truth through thinking for the researched and not thinking or working with them. Similarly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) warned researchers to be careful about the notion of re-searching as ‘dirty’ because it is a colonial undertaking where researchers make people subhuman and invisible by seeking to have a view into how people lead and live their lives in the world, and ultimately think for them.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) called for epistemic freedom because indigenous people are made to remain silent and neutral under such research, where they stare and gaze at the researcher while thinking for or on their behalf even though they have something to contribute on the research undertaking. He went as far as to observe that such research has become like an ironed straight life jacket that every researcher has to put on if they are to generate knowledge. This consequently acts as a barrier to knowing differently and he vouched for decolonised research methodologies that are based on epistemic freedom. The study agreed that traditional research approaches require decolonisation, as they often perpetuate power imbalances. Instead of imposing external perspectives, it is essential to empower the researched individuals to take full ownership of the research process. As they possess intimate knowledge and firsthand experience of the issue, their voices and insights are invaluable in shaping a more authentic and contextualised understanding.

5.9. Research Onion Model

Saunders Lewis and Thornhill (2007) developed a research methodology sample as a stepped guide for researchers which they call a research onion model (see figure 5.1).

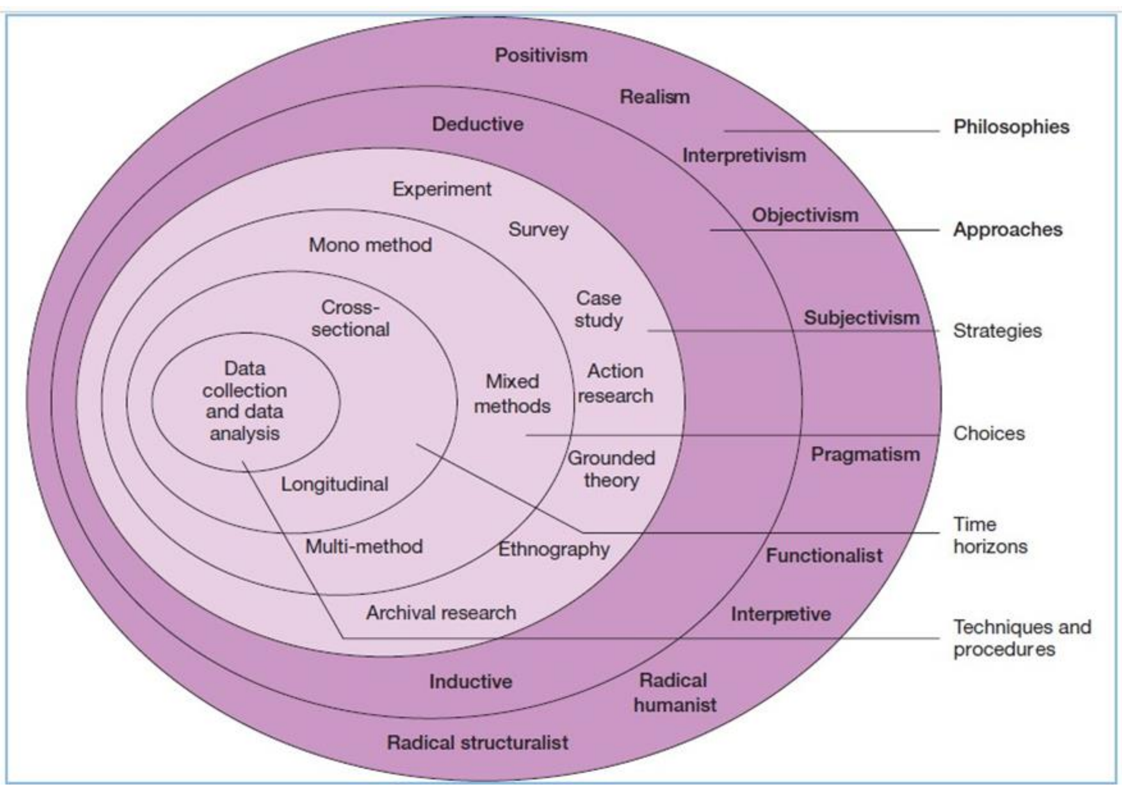

Figure 5.1 The research Onion: Source: Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2006, p. 102).

In this study, the researcher utilised the research onion model of Saunders et al. (2007) to guide the selection of a research methodology. This model informed various aspects of the study, including data generation methods, analysis procedures, and participant selection. The model also facilitated paradigm choice and provided a framework for structuring the methodology. A key takeaway from the model was that researchers must carefully consider the most suitable research methodology for their study, based on its aims, goals, and paradigm. This consideration must be justified and rationalised.

5.10. The Single Case Study

Case study research is common in various areas such as educational, social, clinical, and business areas. According to Yin (2018), a case study can be defined as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary life phenomenon in its context using multiple sources for information. The life story or life phenomenon that was explored in this study were the voices of Black academics using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to obtain information about their struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. A case study is advisable when the boundary between phenomenon and context is

not easy to perceive (Creswell, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2011). The nature of case study research is to explore, robustly investigate, and understand a situation from the participant's point of view (Baškarada, 2014). This meant that case study research at most tends to explore a particular issue through the views of those which the research is based upon.

Case study research explores in detail a programme, a process, a group or an individual and complex issues through past documented studies (Hancock, Algozzine & Lim, 2021; Williams, 2007; Stake, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). The unit of study or analysis in this research was a group of Black academics. It was from this point on that the case study design was decided on in this study for exploring and theorising the voices of a group of Black academics on a complex issue; the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

The case study design was particularly suited for this research, as decolonisation is a complex, dynamic, and ongoing process, rather than a discrete event (Auerbach et al., 2019). This approach allowed for an in-depth examination of the nuances and evolution of decolonisation efforts over time. One of the essentially important aspects of case study research is the selection of a case study type. A researcher can either adopt a single case study or multiple case study for their research project (Ridder, 2017), as well as the explanatory, exploratory, descriptive, or intrinsic and instrumental case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For this study, a single case study design was used.

The single case study design was employed to provide an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perspectives of a specific group of Black academics, shedding light on their struggles and voices in advocating for transformation within a South African higher education institution. Case study scholars observed that various scopes or sources of data generation can be used in a study employing a single case study. They shared that these, more often than not, incorporate observations, interviews, focus groups, document and artefact analysis (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2006; Yin, 2014 Simons, 2009; Stewart, 2014). The single case study methodology was therefore well-suited for this research, as it enabled the use of multiple data generation methods, including semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. This triangulation of methods enhanced the depth and dependability of the findings, providing a richer understanding of the research context.

According to Gaya and Smith (2016, p. 531), one of the justifications for using a single case study in qualitative research is "the potential significance to practitioners of the findings to the study". Expressed in a different way, a single case study is useful because the reported findings in one's study can potentially prove to be significant for other specialists in the field. Using the single case study in this study was based on that the findings in this study might offer significance on how to best tackle the challenges, struggles, and frustrations of transformation that Black academics face in the South African higher education space. Case study research is most commonly identified as a form of qualitative research (Harrison et al., 2017). The single case study methodology was selected thus because it harmonised with the qualitative research approach used in the study, ensuring a logical and coherent research design and methodology.

5.11. Selection of Participants

In this section, the researcher discusses the selection of participants in the study. Initially, the concept of a sample and various sampling techniques are explained, demonstrating the informed decision-making process involved in participant selection. Subsequently, the researcher elaborates on purposive sampling, justifying why and how this method was employed to select participants for the study. The characteristics of the selected participants are presented in a table in the following sections.

5.11.1. Sampling

According to Moser and Korstjens (2018, p. 10), "sampling is the process of selecting or searching for situations, context and participants who provide rich data of the phenomenon of interest." Sampling is a practice of choosing situations or individuals to study so that they may provide a wealth of information on a studied issue. A sample is defined as a selection of individuals representing the whole group (Etiken et al., 2016). A sample is chosen in the research enterprise if possibilities do not allow for the whole population to be studied. For all types of research, it would be best to study the whole population, but in most instances, the size of the population is large- enough to be a representative of the entire group. A researcher can use one technique out of the many sampling techniques that exist; see figure 5.2. below depicting the sampling techniques, a researcher can choose from.

5.11.2. Sampling Techniques

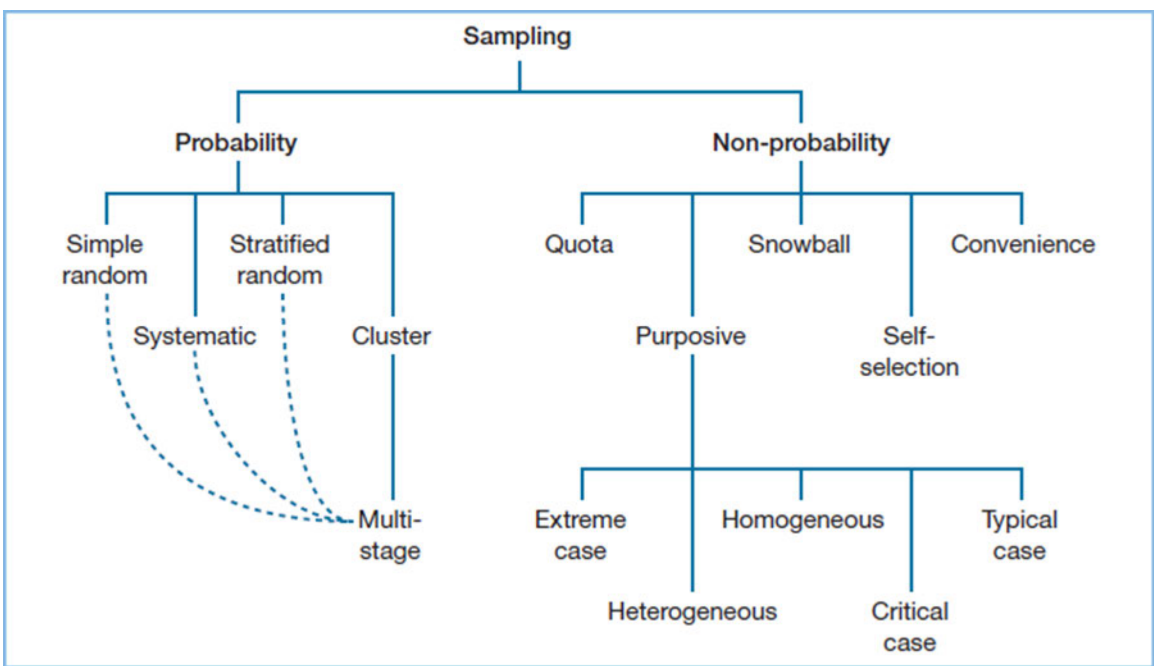

Figure 5.2 Sampling techniques as adapted from Saunders et al. (2007 p. 207)

According to Saunders et al. (2007), the sampling techniques available to a researcher can be divided into two major types; probability and non-probability sampling types. Within these major sampling types, there are several sampling techniques that a researcher can adopt. In probability sampling, all the subjects from the entire population stand an equal chance of being selected to be part of the representative sample (Elfil & Negida, 2017). Non-probability sampling is also known as judgemental sampling because it relies on the researcher's own discretionary judgment (Elfil & Negida, 2017). The cornerstone of non-probability sampling is its reliance on the researcher's knowledge or expertise.

Unlike probability sampling where all the members of the population stand an equal chance of selection into the study, in the non-probability sampling type, not all the members of the population stand an equal opportunity of selection into the study. In non-probability sampling, participants are selected by the researcher with full knowledge that they are not representative of the whole population (Etikan et al., 2016). In this instance, it is not all the members that are selected as a sample but a few, who will be representatives of the whole population. Probability sampling techniques include simple sampling, stratified sampling, systematic sampling, and clustered sampling; while non-probability sampling techniques include convenience sampling, purposive sampling, judgemental sampling, snowball sampling, and others as depicted in the above figure (Saunders et al., 2007; Etikan & Bala, 2017). It is worthy to note that this is not a

complete list of sampling techniques. The study used the purposive sampling type explained below.

5.11.3. Purposive Sampling

The purposive sampling method was opted to assist in selecting participants for this study. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018, p. 10), purposive sampling is about the "selection of participants based on the researchers' judgment about what potential participants will be most informative". Purposive sampling is done based on the researcher's knowledge on which participants will be most informed about the research. In this study, the researcher employed purposive sampling, recognising that Black academics with experience and knowledge about transformation in a South African higher education institution would provide valuable insights. The selected participants, although from diverse disciplines and schools, shared a common trait: they had been affiliated with the specific institution under study for a considerable period and had expressed informed views on transformation and decolonisation in a university setting.

The targeted population sample of the study was Black academics from all four faculties of the institution which are colleges of Humanities, Law and Management, Agricultural science and Engineering and Health sciences. In terms of demographic characteristics on educational level and occupation, participants had to be a master's and doctorate graduate and be employed either permanently or on a fixed term appointment. Their geographic location had to be in South Africa and be based around the city of Durban. The psychographic characteristics of the participants were that their attitudes, values and research interests had to be the scholarship of decolonisation and the transformation of higher education.

The sampling frame of Black academics was solicited from the university faculty directory which had a comprehensive list/profile of faculty members, their names, departments, areas of interest and contact information. Initially the targeted sample for the study was 30 Black academics in order to ensure that the sample unit would have rich effect and high confidence level on the data generated for the study. However this was also to ensure the sample was not too small which would have yielded untrustworthy results or too large which would have resulted on wasting resources (Ahmed, 2024). The researcher however decided deliberately to reduce the sampling unit to 16 Black academics to minimise data variability, thereby facilitating the identification of codes, patterns, and themes. This reduction in sample size also

enhanced the feasibility of data generation by optimising resources, time, and budget, while simplifying data analysis with fewer data points to manage and analyse. The number of participants, that is; the 16 purposively recruited participants were based not only on managing data well but also on information power which refers to the degree or scope in which the sample can provide richly relevant, clear and detailed data/information that addresses the research topic (Malterud et al., 2016). As discussed in the first paragraph of this section, the researcher decided to purposively recruit 16 participants considering that they can provide meaningful data with the awareness that they had direct/relevant experiences, their articulateness and reflectiveness would provide thoughtful insights related to university struggles for transformation and the decolonisation of the higher education sector. Moreover, utilising the university faculty directory facilitated the recruitment of 16 participants who embodied the ideal decolonial academic profile, focusing on critical consciousness in reshaping teaching, research, and engagement as the decolonial analytical frameworks of the study.

In table 5.1. below on the research participants characteristics, an overview of the research participants who took part in the study is presented:

5.12. Overview of Participants Characteristics

Name[4]	Gender	Discipline Background	Qualifications	Title
Richard	Male	Curriculum Studies	PhD	Professor
Seipotlane	Male	Geography	Masters	Lecturer
Marjyd	Female	English	PhD	Professor
Thuluxolo	Female	Gender	PhD	Lecturer
Mariet	Female	Engineering	Masters	Lecturer
Thulile	Female	Tourism	Masters	Lecturer
Monterio	Female	History	Masters	Associate Professor
Anande	Male	Housing	PhD	Post-Doctoral Research Fellow
Jacob	Male	Anthropology	PhD	Senior Lecturer
Philip	Male	Community Development	Masters	Lecturer

[4] All names were anonymised

Marry	Female	Political Science	Masters	Senior Lecturer
Sdumiso	Male	Criminology	Masters	Post-Doctoral Research Fellow
Sbongi	Male	Developmental Studies	PhD	Lecturer
Mcebo	Male	Natural Sciences	Masters	Lecturer
Sindi	Female	Technology	Masters	Lecturer
Lindelani	Male	Mathematics	Masters	Lecturer

Table 5.1. The characteristics of the participants that took part in the study.

5.13. Pilot-test or pretest

A pilot test was conducted before making use of the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions as data generation methods that underpinned this study. “A pilot or preliminary study is a small-scale study or a pretest for a particular research instrument such as an interview guide or a questionnaire” (Shakir & ur Rahman, 2022; p. 1620). A pilot-test is a smaller portion of the full scale study that seeks to evaluate and refine the research tool such as an interview schedule. The significance of a pilot test is that it assists researchers to familiarise themselves with the feasibility of the research instruments before engaging with the full study or going into the field for data generation.

To determine the effectiveness, feasibility and practicality of the interview and focus group schedules as research tools that were intended for use in the study, a pilot test was carried out with 8 (eight) participants. The decision to conduct a pilot test with only half of the 16 participants was informed by risk reduction as pilot testing with a smaller group reduces the risk of errors, biases on other issues that could compromise the entire study (Turner, 2005; Robinson et al., 2021). Iterative refinement also informed the decision to use half the participants for pilot testing as with half participants one was able to refine their research methods, instruments and procedures in order to enhance the overall quality of the study before proceeding to commit to the full study. Moreover, allowing for adjustment was another consideration as pilot testing with a smaller group allowed the flexibility to make necessary adjustments to the research design, sampling strategy and data generation methods before proceeding with the full study.

One and the same participants were used to test both the individual interview guide and the focus group discussion guide, and the same sample of participants were later used in the full study. The rationale behind using the same sample of participants for pilot testing the interview and focus group guide was for the purpose of consistency due to that participants may provide more focused responses when they are familiar with the research topic and context (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Another logical basis was comparability as using the same participants allowed for direct comparison between the interview and focus group data (Morgan, 2019). The study also found it accurately appropriate to rely on the same participants as this was exploratory research that drew from a homogenous sample of Black academics which was crucial for helping to identify patterns and themes in the data when going into the full study.

Participants were asked in the pilot test if they believed that physical face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions were appropriate given that the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants recommended that they were not suitable given that everyone had to observe the COVID-19 protocols of social distancing as advised by the government of the republic of South Africa during the national shut down period. It was at this point of the pilot test that the researcher realised that physical face-to-face semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were a challenge and decided in the full study to conduct them using the Zoom meeting platform in order to generate data for the study. The semi-structured interviews were done through the Zoom online meeting platform and by an online Zoom chat room for the focus group discussions. Participants were asked to read and review the questions in the semi-structured interview and focus group discussion schedules. There were challenges and some limitations that participants picked up with regard to the wording and structuring of the questions which could have resulted in the generation of data that might not have been fittingly focused on the study. The questions were restructured, omitted, edited, or re-worded so that the data did not deviate from the focus of the study. The results of the pilot test are provided in Appendix C3[5]. The study now turns to discussing the two data generation methods used in the study.

5.14. Data Generation Methods

[5] See Appendix C where results of the pilot-tests or pretest are indicated and explained.

There are a number of data generation methods that a researcher can use to generate data for their study. The type of data generation methods depends on the type of study that a researcher is doing and their research goals. Data generation methods include, but are not limited to, questionnaires, surveys, group discussions and interviews to mention a few. In this study the qualitative data generation methods of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were employed to generate data. The following sections expand on how semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions assisted in generating data for this study.

5.14.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were one of the key data generation methods that were used in this study. The most common types of interviews that can be used as data generation methods include open interviews, structured interviews and semi-structured interviews (de la Croix, Barrett, & Stenfors, 2018). Irrespective of the type of interview that can be useable as a method of data generation, the aim of all the interviewers is to generate responses from the interviewees about a particular subject.

Maccoby and Maccoby (1954) as cited in Young et al. (2018, p. 11) defined an interview as an "in-terchange in which one person... attempts to elicit information or ex-pressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons". An interview is a two-way process in which an exchange of ideas happens whereby one individual seeks the ideas of another individual or individuals. In this regard, interviews are helpful for getting the views of individuals regarding a phenomenon. McGrath et al. (2019) affirmed this by stating that interviews in qualitative research are preferred when a researcher wishes to develop an understanding of the interviewee's personal viewpoints about a situation, rather than producing transferable viewpoints for large numbers of people.

A semi-structured interview is a type of interview between two types of interviews; open interviews and structured interviews, where a researcher can use a number of pre-planned questions and allows space and time to probe interviewees further on their responses (de la Croix et al., 2018). This allows a researcher to pursue a topic with a high possibility of generating in-depth, detailed data for their particular study. They are used around a set of themes but give space for the interviewee to talk freely about their points of view on the topic in question and the interviewer can probe further on the responses of interviewees. To put it

another way, the advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they allow the researcher to adjust their line of questioning. They also allow the researcher to interrogate the interviewees for in-depth views on their responses to the topic.

Semi-structured interviews were a preferred method of data generation from the 16 purposively selected participants for this study. Simply because the intentions was to prompt views from Black academics about the challenges of transformation in a South African higher education institution rather than to generate a generalised understanding for all Black academics without engaging them. Semi structured interviews were opted for to explore further the views of participants. The semi-structured interviews gave the researchers of this study a chance to take charge and be in control of the interviewing session through predetermined questions while in turn allowing room for Black academics to share without restriction their subjective responses on the topic. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, physical interviews were not allowed by the university management. All the interviews were conducted using the Zoom online platform and sessions were timed up to last for an hour. All the conducted semi-structured interviews were recorded and were later on transcribed to give a more precise, concise, and reflective account of the views of the participants.

5.14.2. Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were another data generation method that the study utilised for generating data. Focus group discussions can be described as data generation methods that intend to find out participants experiences, ideas and attitude's by grouping them together through a process that encourages them to engage and respond to one another thereby locating their insights (Scheelbeek et al., 2020). There are various focus group discussions that researchers can use, which range from single focus groups, online focus groups, two-way focus groups, mini focus groups, dual moderator focus groups, respondent focus groups, and duelling moderator focus groups (Nyumba et al., 2017). In this study, the single focus group discussion was used. This is the most well-known type of focus group customarily used across various fields by scholars (Morgan, 1996; Sim, & Waterfield, 2019). A single focus group is described as consisting of one facilitator asking, probing, and searching for views of a group of participants on a given topic (Gammie et al., 2017). The researcher conducted a single focus group discussion to solicit the views and perspectives of Black academics on transformation in a South African higher education institution. This methodology was chosen due to its versatility

and widespread application across various fields and disciplines, making it a suitable and effective data generation tool for this study.

The researcher utilised a single focus group discussion to complement and triangulate the data emerging from the semi-structured interviews. Building on the insights gained from the interviews, the researcher strategically selected 8 key participants from the total of 16 for the focus group discussion. The specific number of eight participants stemmed from the reason that 8 participants were a manageable group size for the focus group which allowed for meaningful discussion and interaction. Eight participants proved workable on providing a diverse range of perspectives and experiences while still allowing for in-depth exploration of specific ideas, comments and views. Overall, the intentions was to elicit more information based on what was said in the semi-structured interviews. The focus group discussions allowed participating Black academics to engage with one another more likely in the same manner as they did in the semi-structured interviews. The researcher also employed focus group discussions to facilitate an exchange of opinions and debates among Black academics. This methodology allowed the researcher to build upon the semi-structured interviews, highlighting key points, clarifying collective understanding, and sparking debates to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives. The real and material value of inviting Black academics from interviews to participate in the focus group discussions were that participants who had already shared their individual perspectives through interviews were afforded a chance to provide more nuanced and detailed insights in the focus group setting (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The involvement of the same participants in both interviews and focus groups held value on increasing the credibility of the findings tough triangulating data from these two sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

Focus group discussions can also be used for more practical purposes. “Focus group interviews allow participants to tell their own stories, express their opinions, and even draw pictures without having to adhere to a strict sequence of questions” (Adler, et al., 2019, p.1). Focus group discussions were put to use in this study to allow Black academics to share meaningful insights on what they considered as the most crucial aspects of a decolonial university, to allow them to share their ideas about transformation and express such ideas without being limited in any way. Following the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with the 16 Black academics, where they shared their perspectives on transforming the academy and decolonising higher education, the researcher conducted a follow-up field visit. This was not

only an attempt to gather more data, but to verify that no crucial aspects were overlooked. Fortunately, the follow-up visit confirmed that data saturation had been reached, as no new themes emerged from the data also confirming that the sample size of 16 participants was appropriate as it was also beyond and above the minimum recommended sample size of nine interviews or four focus group discussions (Wutich et al., 2024; Hennink & Kaiser 2022; Guest et al., 2006; 2017).

5.15. Data Analysis

Data analysis is like 'a delicate organ' of a research study because it is where crucial aspects of the data gathered are summarised and interpreted using analytical tools of research. Data analysis is the act of examining, summarising, and explaining data using analytical tools to reach meaningful conclusions (Arora, 2021). This study was qualitative and relied on qualitative analysis. Qualitative data analysis responds to 'why, what, and how' questions, and is an analysis of data that comes as text/ written, audio, or video (Busetto, 2020; Arora, 2021). This study was premised on re-imagining a decolonial university by exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

Qualitative data analysis was relevant and employed in this study to examine the responses of Black academics gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Field notes in the form of written text and audio recordings were taken during data generation. Given the textual and audio nature of the data, qualitative data analysis was deemed appropriate. Data analysis types include the grounded theory analysis, hermeneutics analysis, content analysis, and thematic analysis (Ibrahim, 2012) and this study used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was specifically used to identify and interpret patterns and themes within the data, as described below.

5.15.1. Thematic Analysis

One of the analytical approaches a researcher can use to analyse the generated data from participants is thematic analysis. Jowsey, Deng and Weller (2021) provided context here by evidencing that overall thematic analysis as a qualitative method is commonly used with interviews and focus group data to help researchers analytically understand people's views and conceptions of a given research topic. The understanding one deduced was that thematic

analysis as a qualitative research approach concerns itself with making sense of people's comprehensions of subject matter in order to help researchers to analytically interpret and make sense of interview and focus group generated data. Castleberry and Nolen (2018, p. 812) noted that "unfortunately, data do not 'speak for themselves'. This critical stage in the research process involves the researcher making analytical conclusions from the data presented as codes and then themes". After a researcher has gathered data, it needs to be analysed to allow it to speak or give it meaning. This is where thematic analysis interprets the generated data through coded themes and patterns. This is because thematic analysis is a technique for finding, evaluating, and reading patterns of meanings which are otherwise known as themes within a data set that is qualitative in nature (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Maguire and Delahunt indicated (2017) that thematic analysis, in its broadest sense, is a means for identifying an arrangement of patterns or themes found in a qualitative data set.

From the above indications, thematic analysis is used to find, arrange and decipher data into themes for meaning-making. In this study, thematic analysis applied to capture, and examine interesting and relevant views of Black academics to the topic. This happened by asking Black academics for their views using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions about the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. Nowell et al. (2017) perceived that thematic analysis is a suitable method for observing the unique individual views of participants, emphasising, and underlining unique to non-unique views, and producing unexpected perceptions. Thematic analysis applied in this study to scrutinize the converging and diverging views of Black academics, categorising them into distinct themes. Although the primary objective of thematic analysis is to summarize and interpret data through thematic identification, the researcher employed this methodology not only to condense the data but also to unearth key and valuable insights that emerged from the data set. This is explained more clearly in the words of Clarke and Braun (2017, p. 297) who shared that:

> "The aim of TA is not simply to summarize the data content, but to identify, and interpret, key, but not necessarily all, features of the data, guided by the research question (but note that in TA, the research question is not fixed and can evolve throughout coding and theme development)" (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297).

Clarke and Braun (2017) highlighted that, while thematic analysis aims to summarise the data, its ultimate goal is to 'cut the meat out of the bone' meaning to determine key data for

interpretation and not take the whole data content for consideration into the study. They further highlighted that in thematic analysis, research questions are dynamic and can change when creating, coding, and developing themes. Thematic analysis was leveraged in this research work to summarize and infer meaning from the voices of Black academics regarding their struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution. Furthermore, this methodology enabled the researcher to identify key data components through the application of themes.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) provided a guide for thematic analysis through a six-phased step of analysis as follows:

- Immerse and familiarise yourself with the data: through interactive ways such as noting it down (transcribing) if needed, repeated engagement with the data and writing down the actual ideas.
- Develop units of codes: coding the key features of the raw data, that appear as important aspects, systematically throughout the data set, assembling, organising or grouping your data in a meaningful way.
- Look for themes: arrange the codes of units into possible themes and combine the data to analyse or find the predominant themes that appear from the data.
- Revise the themes: review and refine your themes, other themes may be found as 'candidate themes' and not as real themes while others may need to be broken down into separate themes or subthemes may need to be fed into main themes as they cannot be standalone themes.
- Define and label the themes: indicate what is the purpose of each theme, what is the overall agenda or story of a theme and define what each theme entails or anticipates to present.
- Write up the report on the themes: the final stage of analysis by telling your final story of the data in a simple way, using data quotations, and vibrant examples as an analytical description of the story you are telling about your research problem.

While using thematic analysis in this study, the six-phased guide proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed to analyse data. Phase1) Before transcribing the data, the researcher read through the entire data set by for example listening to the zoom interview recordings a few

times to be familiar with the whole depth of the data while at the same time making notes on theme development ideas that surfaces about the data. Familiarising one's self more and developing knowledge about the data unfolded through repeated engagements with the data when transcribing the verbatim-spoken words of the Black academics involved in the study. Phase 2) then involved producing codes from the data by identifying features of the raw data that were interesting and likely helpful on formulating patterns (themes) that could be useful to addressing Black academics struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution with a focus on teaching and learning, research and community engagement. The data was labelled with different codes and grouped similar extracts of the transcribed data from Black academics to make generating potential themes more manageable. Phase 3) Involved the research analysing the coded data and considering how the different codes may come together to formulate an overarching theme for teaching and learning, research and community engagement. To analyse the data for themes, the author of this study wrote the name of every code while giving it a brief description in a separate piece of paper and manipulated them into themes.

Phase 4) encompassed the researcher of this study revisiting and revising the candidate themes that had developed to see if they formed a coherent pattern. Some of the themes were problematic, fell outside of the focus of the study and were not really themes in the absence of adequate data to support them which fled to discarding them from the data analysis. Some themes however collapsed into one another which meant that themes that had been developed as separate and distinct interlocked with one another to form one theme. To ensure that data within themes cohered together meaningfully, some previously distinct themes were reworked into one theme. In an effort of ensuring that the themes worked together in relation to the data set, they were revised one more time to see if no additional themes were missed in the coding process, fortunately the themes were fitting well together.

Phase 5) At this point the real essence of each theme was defined together with an accompanying narrative covering what aspect of the data each theme captured and themes were labelled by giving each themes a core-fitting name or title. For example, at the beginning of every theme, a storyline divulged what each theme was about and labelled it with an appropriate name or topic. The content of themes were covered in relation to the research questions of the study (see introduction of chapter 6) as a way of ensuring that there was no overlap between themes. Phase 6) After having a full set of clearly worked out themes, the research report (the

findings) was written to provide an account of the voices of Black academics struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution in and around the analytical frames of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. When providing the research report, data extracts from Black academics were used to provide a clear and concise description of their views on the challenges of re-imagining a decolonial university and the problems of transformation in a South African higher education institution. The research report was written with the provision of sufficient evidence of data extracts demonstrating the prevalence of each theme in the study.

5.15.2. Inductive Thematic Analysis

Chapter one revealed that the study employed inductive (bottom-up) thematic analysis. This chapter provides a more elaborate discussion of inductive thematic analysis. Thematic analysis as a qualitative method of research is used when researchers aim to arrange complex components of data sets in a systematic way to identify and define themes from accounts shared in a data set (Dawadi, 2020). Themes are identified through careful and active reading of transcripts (Nowell et al., 2017). Themes can be developed either through a deductive (top-down) or inductive (bottom-up) approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The study elaborates on both aspects before explaining why the researcher chose to utilise inductive thematic analysis.

Researchers relying on inductive analysis work from a data driven approach where themes emerge from the data with no pre-existing researcher codes, conceptions and frames to approach the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interpreted differently, themes are closely aligned with the data, emerging without a pre-existing framework to predetermine the findings. Swain (2018) confirmed this by stating that researchers working from an inductive method, approach data analysis from constructivist and interpretivist epistemologies where data are still awaiting discovery as new themes are yet to be discovered and developed from the transcribed data.

While the epistemological approach to this study was informed by Nancy Fraser's theory of social justice, which is a critical social theory of action that explores inequality, power and attempts to foster social change in the life of participants. The researcher was convinced that working towards social change in this study necessitated the generation of new ideas, themes, and interpretations of a decolonial university. These were yet to be discovered because change means something that is not static but the development of something new. The researcher also

concurred with the term “data generation” as it is a more nuanced term than “data collection”, which implies a more passive process of discovery, collection, and retrieval of data. Data generation was a better term for the author of this study due to its broad nature that does not imply ‘making’ or ‘creating’ data out of nothing, but covers the agency, accountability, interests, concerns, notions, and learning of the researcher and participants.

On the reverse side, researchers relying on deductive analysis approach data from a researcher driven position where the researcher interprets or analyse the data in line with their framework of interest to the issues being researched in a study or in relation to already covered themes in a literature review (Braun & Clarke, 2006). One learned that deductive analysis is researcher orientated in that the researcher analyses data through pre-conceived ideas, prior literature knowledge and theory that informs him/ her what set of themes to expect from the data. Swain (2018) pointed out that researchers working with deductive methods approach data analysis from positivist epistemologies where data are regarded as “pre-defined” or “already made” hence the word “collect data”.

The researcher of this study was critical of the deductive analysis method because of the belief that rich insights from the data can be missed and theme development can be challenging when working with a deductive logic that treats data as already made or pre-existing. A hybrid approach proved even more complex as the study was not working from a positivist epistemological approach to the data. Even though the elaboration on how data collection unfolds was sensible, the study disagreed with “data collection” as a term and opted to use the term data generation. Data collection sounded arbitrary or at least value light because it sounded like as a researcher data is out there waiting for you to discover and collect it. It did not capture the sophisticated ethical dilemmas of being in the field, the complex nature of doing research, and the analytical and probing process involved when a researcher is in the field.

The author of the study employed inductive (bottom-up) thematic analysis to actively engage with the data through repeated readings, thereby uncovering Black academics' experiences and struggles for transformation. The focus of inductive thematic analysis was of course on teaching, research, and community engagement as the analytical framework that underpinned decolonisation in the study so as to systematically organise these KPA’s into themes that emerged from the data. To ensure quality of the data analysis process, the researcher adhered to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework for thematic analysis, as outlined in the

preceding section on thematic analysis. Although Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework provided a structured approach, the analytical process proved iterative and dynamic. The author of the study engaged in a continuous cycle of reflection, checking, and refinement, navigating between phases to ensure a complex analysis and interpretation of the emerging themes.

While Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) tools like Atlas.ti, NVivo, MAXD, Dedoose and others were not used for aiding the data analysis process of this study, data was managed and analysed manually. This unfolded through the manual methods of coding by hand and thematic mind mapping by organising, representing and analysing data in a non-linear and creative way making it easier to identify patterns and relationships (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clark, 2021; Nowell et al., 2017). Keywords, colours and symbols were used by the researcher in the mind map to represent different ideas and concepts. Branches and connections were also used to link related ideas, themes and concepts and to illustrate the relationship between them. The different colours and symbols were used to differentiate between themes, concepts and ideas to highlight important information. The thematic mind map was then refined as needed to add new information and revise existing connections and relationships for full theme development for the study.

The researcher's decision to manually code and use thematic mind mapping instead of CAQDAS was based on the researcher's unfamiliarity with CAQDAS software, limited expertise/insufficient knowledge to effectively utilise CAQDAS and no access to software, training, or technical support (Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Saldaña, 2013; 2021). There were benefits however to the manual approach/method of coding by hand and thematic mind mapping which were intimacy with the data as the research had close engagement with the data. These manual approaches were also cost effective as they did not involve the purchasing of CAQDAS software which would have meant the incurring of unaffordable costs.

5.16. Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness refers to establishing quality of the research by asking how truthful, believable, justifiable, or trustable the findings or interpretations of a study are, and what confidence we have in the interpretations of a study that they deserve our attention (Satu et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was confirmed by Cypress (2017, p. 254) who asserted that "trustworthiness refers to quality, authenticity, and truthfulness of findings of qualitative

research. It relates to the degree of trust, or confidence, readers have in results". Trustworthiness speaks to the assurance of quality on the findings produced by the researcher.

Although it may not be as easy as it seems to cross-assess the level of trust we may have in a qualitative study, there are few methods that can be used to enrich trustworthiness in qualitative studies. It is suggested that trustworthiness or the principles of quality in qualitative research can be registered through credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Guba et al., 1985; Nassaji, 2020). The following section examines the credibility of this study, along with other criteria that established its trustworthiness.

5.16.1. Positionality Statement and Reflexivity

The decision to include the positionality statement in the study and reflexivity was on the basis of wanting to acknowledge the potential biases and perspectives the researcher of this study had in the research process. Positionality can be described as an ideological stance, worldview and school of thought a researcher affiliates with which is largely influenced by their personal and philosophical backgrounds (Bourke, 2014). In other words, the way the researcher views the world to be researched upon and the position a researcher takes is informed by their ontological and epistemological assumptions which concerns what can come to be known about the world (Holmes, 2020). This happens based on the beliefs and values of an individual researcher. Positionality is subjective as it concerns the researcher's understanding of the world and what they are for or against.

Positionality has an effect on the research process and outcomes as researchers hold views that influence their research work and therefore researchers have to be open and honest about the role they played in influencing the findings and interpretations of their work (Sultana, 2007; Jones, & Bartunek, 2021). The researcher of this study too strived to be honest, practical and transparent by declaring his research positionality in the study. His positionality followed Black decolonial advocacy, social justice activist and transformation proponent with his research interests being transformation and decolonisation of higher education in the Global South, student movements, recentring African indigenous knowledge traditions and ubuntu philosophy. Given this positionality, the researcher of the study was aware that his personal experiences as a Black individual had potential of influencing the research questions, methods

and interpretations. He however strived to not have emotional investment and commitment to the advocacy orientation in the topic by distancing himself and being as neutral as possible when drawing up the research questions, generating, analysing and interpreting data so that findings and conclusions reached in the study were authentic (Holmes, 2020).

In more ways than one, researching the given topic created more room for researcher bias which required critical and careful awareness on the part of the researcher of this study on the influences he had in the research process through the criteria of reflexivity. Reflexivity is a crucial concept in qualitative research which refers to the researchers self-consciousness that allows them to actively acknowledge their own biases, assumptions, and influences before, during, and after the actual research process (Jamieson, Govaart & Pownall, 2023). Given that the researcher of this research project shared the same ethnic, cultural background, gender and identify with Black academics whom he identified with, presented potential 'researcher bias', power dynamics, assumptions and oversight.

To minimize bias, he employed negative case sampling, a strategy that enabled him to systematically challenge and eliminate his preconceived notions and expectations about the study, thereby enhancing the truthfulness of the findings. (Johnson, 1997; Hignett, & McDermott, 2015). The researcher also kept in mind the importance of not assuming a homogeneous Black experience, ensuring that the diversity of views from participants was not neglected. Recognising that each participant brought unique and valuable insights to the study, the researcher provided a platform for them to share their thoughts on what they considered essential for a decolonial university. The researcher of this study maintained an objective stance by "wearing his researcher hat" being mindful that his role was not to direct or lead participants' responses. Instead, he employed an inquiring approach, asking probing questions to seek further clarification, elaboration, justification, and meaning behind the participants' responses (Stoner, 2010; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; McGinley, 2021). The researcher thus made a conscious effort to ensure that the participants' voices, experiences, expressions, and accounts of life events were thoroughly represented and incorporated into the data analysis. Furthermore, the researcher subjected his study findings to rigorous peer review, engaging in discussions with a group of academics, critical peers, as well as her current and former supervisors. By taking these strategic steps, he ensured the accuracy and quality of the findings, confidently capturing the authentic voices and experiences of the participants.

5.16.2. Credibility

Credibility is one of the trustworthiness procedures that ought to appear in a research study. Guba and Lincoln (1989 as cited in Nowell et al. (2017, p. 3) argued that a study can be truly credible when it reflects the experiences of its participants. Credibility speaks to the truthfulness of the researcher in representing the views and experiences of participants. Credibility seeks to respond to the question of how much confidence readers have in the interpretations of the study as accurately representing the original views of those studied (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). Put differently, credibility addresses the accuracy of the way participants' views are represented by the researcher. Credibility seeks to answer how true is the representation of the data (Stewart et al., 2017). It seeks to authenticate the originality of the data or views of the participants. Credibility can be established using notetaking, memorandums, member checking, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation (Stewart et al., 2017). Like any other trustworthiness criteria, credibility in research can be established in many ways. However, in this study, member checking was relied on.

According to Amin et al. (2020, p. 1474), "in the process of member checking the researcher returns data, analytic categories, data interpretations, and or even conclusions to study participants". The point is that by granting study participants a chance to analyse the data, they are able to assess interpretations. Member checking can be done as formal and informal member checking, in this study informal member checking was operationalised. Amin et al. (2020) mentioned that informal member checking assists a researcher in evaluating intentionality, in other words checking what information the participant intended to convey to the researcher. Most importantly, member checking also affords a participant a chance to remember further opinions, thoughts, correct mistakes, and offer context (McKim, 2023).

To establish credibility in this study, the researcher endorsed informal member checking, a technique that involved verifying the accuracy of the data with the participants themselves. This process entailed sharing the transcriptions and recordings with the participants, allowing them an opportunity to review, assess, and validate the data for truthfulness and accuracy. Specifically, the researcher provided participants with the transcribed field notes, enabling them to confirm whether their original statements had been faithfully represented. Additionally, playback of the recordings was offered, giving participants the opportunity to detect any errors

or discrepancies in the data presentation. By involving participants in this verification process, the researcher ensured the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

The researcher of this study did not see value of participant validation of data, key findings, or specific interpretations post data analysis even though it allows participants to verify alignment between interpretations and their experiences enhancing accuracy, credibility and the overall trustworthiness of the study (Stahl & King, 2020; Lloyd et al., 2024). This was because the 'analysis synthesised of all the interviews, and the text was abstracted; therefore, it was highly unlikely that participants would recognise their own story in the combined text' – their views combined with literature discussions and the researchers' elaborations (Morse, 2015, p. 1216). Furthermore the potential drawbacks of member checking/ participant validation of data interpretations post analysis were that of potential participant bias which involves participants influencing the interpretations to fit their own views/imaginations and feelings which may have not informed the study. Member checking would have also required additional time and effort from participants to go through the study findings. Given that participants were academics who commonly have demanding schedules, member checking might have been impractical. Their multiple responsibilities, such as conducting studies and publishing papers, delivering lectures and supervising students meant time constraints and that member checking might not have been a feasible priority. In this context, the researcher's decision to forego member checking might have been pragmatic, but was necessary considering the participants busy schedules and multiple commitments.

5.16.3. Confirmability

One other trustworthiness concern in a study of a qualitative nature is that of confirmability which is about ensuring that the findings and interpretations are a true reflection of the participants' statements, and not the positions, biases, feelings, and propositions of the researcher (Nowell et al., 2017). Confirmability can be established in several ways but most commonly through an audit trial, reflexive journal, and triangulation (Forero et al., 2018; Ramsook, 2018). The study depended on an audit trail whereby an auditor who has no interest in the study, informed on the topic and understands' research methodologies and designs, inspects and confirms the data interpretations of this study (Amin et al., 2020). The study took this step to guarantee the factual accuracy and fidelity of the findings, ensuring that they faithfully represented the participants' voices and perspectives.

To facilitate the external audit, the researcher provided a comprehensive overview of the research project's inception, meticulously outlining each step of the data analysis process and the rationale behind the methodological decisions. The researcher also maintained a detailed record of the raw data, including summaries, transcribed recordings, and interview notes, which captured the participants' views. This transparency enabled the independent auditor to verify the interpreted data against the raw data, providing feedback that confirmed the legitimacy of the interpretations. This rigorous process ensured that the final research findings accurately reflected the participants' statements, rather than the researcher' own perspectives. Ultimately, it guaranteed that the data remained a faithful representation of the participants' original voices.

The researcher further employed data triangulation and integration to enhance confirmability. This involved comparing and contrasting data from semi-structured interviews and focus groups to identify inconsistencies, thereby increasing confidence in the findings. By integrating the data from both sources into a single dataset, the researcher gained a more comprehensive understanding of the data. This enabled the identification of cohesive themes and narratives, ultimately bolstering confidence in the data and strengthening the validity of the research conclusions.

5. 16.4. Dependability

Dependability is about explaining in great detail how data was generated and analysed to judge if the same conclusions would be reached should the study be repeated (Guba et al., 1985; Amin Choudhury et al., 2023). Interpreted differently, if a different researcher wanted to duplicate this current study, they should have sufficient information from the finalised report on how this study was conducted for them to reach similar conclusions as this study. One can use an external audit trail which requires an audit by an external individual, researcher, and uninterested expert to examine, assess, review and check if the study is consistent and repeatable (Nowell et al., 2017). An external auditor was invited to assess if dependability was achievable in this study.

The researcher provided comprehensive explanations of the research methods and data generation techniques employed in the study. Notably, the research questions, study design,

and analytical approach were clearly articulated and meticulously detailed. The researcher of this study took responsibility for ensuring that the findings directly addressed and answered the research questions. Furthermore, the voices of Black academics were presented in their original, unaltered words and reflections, maintaining the authenticity and integrity of their experiences and perspectives.

Of course, issues of research change over time and so does context. Dependability does not denote that findings will be consistent or alike if the research is done in other contexts (Gunawan, 2015; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). In this research project, the researcher was not convinced that there could be dependability of the findings. This was largely because Black academics are complex, contradictory, and nuanced beings since they live complex lives. Black academics at different institutions can have different voices on South African higher education transformation; therefore, the findings cannot be dependable.

5.16.5. Transferability

Transferability is another trustworthiness criterion that focuses on the likelihood of the results of one qualitative study being transferred to another study in a different context (Maxwell, 2021). Transferability means the reader of the study determines whether the results of one study can be transferred to another study in a different research context. By its nature, qualitative research is not designed for the reproduction of results but qualitative research experts believe that procedures and details followed in one context may be applicable in another context (Stahl & King, 2020). With quantitative research, there are concerns of transferability too. In quantitative research, the trick lies in proving that results from one study are probable, repeatable, and applicable to a larger population (Ngidi, 2020). Given that findings of qualitative research are context-driven and specific to a small-scale sample of participants, it is impossible to transfer and make conclusions about findings being applicable and repeatable to larger populations (Ngidi, 2020). In order to provide whether the findings of this study were transferable, thick descriptions were necessary as a common way of establishing transferability in qualitative studies.

Thick descriptions encompass a researcher describing and elucidating in great detail the procedures and processes followed while conducting the study including the context, subject of inquiry, selected sample, its size and even the direct quotes from participants (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985; Krefting, 1991; Houghton et al., 2013; Younas et al., 2023). Stahl and King (2020) concurred and highlighted that thick descriptions by researchers would cover in detail the context of the field site, key and significant participants, documenting any missed information during data generation, the data generation period, and the period of the study. The author of this study provided a rich, thorough, and detailed description of the research topic and its real-life context. A comprehensive account of the study's setting and the number of Black academics sampled was also presented. Furthermore, the researcher incorporated direct quotes from the fieldwork site into the findings and discussion chapters, adding depth and authenticity to the accounts of participants. This thick description enabled readers to gain a detailed understanding of the research context and findings.

The current chapter mentioned that eight (8) key participants were chosen for this study from semi-structured interviews to now join in the focus group discussions. This was for the purposes of gaining more information based on what was said in the semi-structured interviews during the data generation period. This was also done so that participating Black academics were able to remind one another of key points of which were then documented in the findings of the study. This study was conducted for three years however the field work of data generation took a maximum period of one month.

In this dissertation, the author maintained that he was not convinced of the likelihood of the dependability of the findings. He could not foresee any possibility of transferability of the findings either simply because Black academics are complex beings who are very subjective, so their voices are not expected to be monolithic and a microcosm of the sector. The design, method, participant data sources, phenomenon, number of participants, the South African context and findings however were evidently discussed in this study so that readers/other academics engaging with this study may judge the likely applicability/transferability of this study to other similar research contexts (Creswell & Poth 2018; Khoza & Mpungose, 2018). The study now proceeds to discuss the ethical considerations and limitations of the study culminating in the conclusion of the chapter.

5.16. Ethical Considerations

Researchers are expected to take into consideration ethical principles of doing research and follow the proposed guidelines. Researchers are thus, advised to pay attention to any

unexpected controversial circumstances that could transpire because of a study and such circumstances are to be reported to the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). Ethics is concerned with principles, customs, and habits that are expected to be exhibited by researchers to participants to offer them the most appropriate treatment (Bartneck et al., 2021). An appropriate treatment of study participants through the application of ethical principles is imperative in any research. There are few ethical principles that every researcher should adhere to and consider while doing their research. At the heart of these principles is the anonymity and confidentiality of participating individuals, informed consent and non-maleficence.

5.16.1. Confidentiality and Anonymity

Concerns about confidentiality and anonymity have been highly stressed in research, especially in research work involving 'vulnerable people' like children, drug users, individuals with psychosocial problems, mental ill health, and chronic health issues (Lancaster, 2017). The concept of confidentiality is closely connected with anonymity as anonymity ensures that the identity of the individuals who provided the data is hidden and not recognisable (Saunders et al., 2015 as cited in Surmiak, 2018). To clarify, confidentiality works in such a way that the identity of the providers of information is anonymous.

Anonymising the identity of the providers of information happens by hiding their names so that they may not be attached to the information they provided. This generally happens by giving participating individuals pseudonyms. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity in this study, and to protect the human dignity of participating individuals, pseudonyms were applied.

5.16.2. Informed Consent

Obtaining informed consent means that you respect potential participants of your research in such a way that you give them freedom of choosing to partake or not partake in your study (Arifin, 2018). This happens through the process of explaining to them what the study is about, the duration of the study, and that they are allowed to withdraw from the study even if it had already begun. This will then give them an idea of what your study is about and the participants' autonomy to voluntarily decide whether to be part of your study as a researcher or not (Bertram

& Christiansen, 2014). Under no circumstances, however, are potential participants required to join the research study by coercion.

Due to their academic commitments as academics, not all were reachable. After engaging with the possible participants through email for participation in the study the researcher was fortunately able to reach the 16 required participants for the study. In the email sent to them was the consent forms and letter of permission sought from the registrar's office of the institution which they were required to read and sign[6]. Providing the letter of permission to conduct the study was to show participants that this was legitimate research and that it had been approved by the registrar and the research ethics committee of the institution. The consent form and or letter informed participants what the study was all about, when it would take place, how long it would take, and what risks and benefits were involved in the study[7]. This was also meant to make them aware that partaking in the study was on a voluntary basis with no remuneration provided. They were also conscious that, should they wish to withdraw from the study even if they were halfway through with participation, they had the freedom of excusing themselves from the study without explaining to researcher of this study. Participants then granted the researcher of this study consent to interviews by signing the consent forms and voluntarily participated in the study.

5.16.3. Non-Maleficence

Another basic ethical principle in research is the need to do no harm to research participants, as non-maleficence means that research should not intentionally cause or do harm to participants (Motloba, 2019). This meant that participants should not be purposefully and negatively affected in any way for taking part in the research. This generally unfolds by that those involved in giving information for the research will be assured of confidentiality through not exposing any personal details and that the researcher will use the shared information for research purposes only (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). It also meant that any potential harm should be prevented be it physical, emotional, social, or even economic.

Black academics who took part in the study were given consent forms to read and sign. In the consent form, it was made clear in writing that the research holds no potential for harm unless

[6] See Appendix A for a copy of the email sending invitations to research participants.
[7] See Appendix B for a copy of the consent letters that the research participants signed.

there was any that was beyond the control of the researcher. Participating Black academics were however given knowledge which made them aware that should they wish for psychosocial counselling after sharing any traumatising experiences in the academy, they would be referred to the school's counselling department. Black academics were also assured that their confidentiality would be protected as any personal information about them from the interviews and focus group discussions that could negatively affect their human dignity would not be exposed. The researcher also explicitly informed participants, through the informed consent form, that every precaution would be taken to avoid causing any harm, whether physical, emotional, social, or economic.

The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the researcher had to conduct the study bearing in mind that safety measures had to be in place to protect the participants from contracting the virus. Necessary steps, protocols, and measures were therefore taken to keep the participants safe. To protect the participants from any potential chronic harms that might come from live face-to-face interactions, Zoom was capitalised on. The online video interview platform allowed safe data generation data with the convenience of using online semi-structured interviews and online focus group discussions amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.17. Data Protection and Storage

Data protection and storage is an essential part of research because people may share their experiences, challenges, struggles, traumas, and pain that they want to be protected. Data stored and computerised in repositories and management systems in the form of drawn, written text, audio, interview field notes and transcripts are personal and confidential. Data management systems and repositories are significant in this instance as they are mainly developed to assist in providing safer, more secure, accessible, and sharable qualitative data in a higher education institution (Antonio et al., 2020). To safeguard and guarantee data protection, in this study, I the institution's ethics and protocols in terms of sharing and accessing the data were leveraged. Accordingly, the data generated from this study was kept in the universities data management systems and repositories as personal legal data that could be stored more securely and accessed through the permission of the research ethics committee office, and thereafter, be destroyed after five years.

5.18. Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was that it was only participating Black academics from the university who were the focus of the study and who shared their views. This meant that their reflective views could not be assumed to be a reflective account of non-participating Black academics from other South African higher education institutions. The recruitment of Black academics for this study was facilitated through the university's emailing system, but it was not without challenges. Many potential participants faced constraints due to academic commitments, family obligations, emergencies, and mourning resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, some key individuals who could have provided valuable insights were unable to participate. Time constraints also posed a significant limitation, as in-depth interviews and follow-up explorations required substantial time commitments. To address this, the sample size was limited to 16 participants, allowing for more thorough engagement and analysis.

5.19. Conclusion

In this research methodology chapter, outlined were the research methods used in exploring the voices of Black academics on the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. The context of the study gave an idea to the reader the characteristics of the place where the study was conducted. The critical paradigm underpinned this study, and it was offered how it assisted in framing and exploring the voices of Black academics. Under the research design section, expounded was how the qualitative design applied in the study. In the research methodology, it was articulated what is research and methodology and thereafter, a definition that illuminated research methodology was provided. After that, the single case study approach was described with delineative detail on why it was opted for use in the study. The selection of participants was discussed through purposive sampling and how it aided in finding participants. Uncovered was also how a pilot test helped in selecting and confirming the appropriateness of the data generation methods that the study used to generate data. The data generation methods that were used in this study were semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions and they were expanded in this chapter.

The researcher reflected on the concept of data analysis, specifying the use of thematic analysis in this study. This reflection highlighted how thematic analysis facilitated the interpretation

and meaning-making of the generated data. The researcher also addressed the trustworthiness of the study, detailing measures taken to ensure credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability. Furthermore, the researcher discussed the ethical considerations observed during the study, including the maintenance of confidentiality and anonymity, respect for informed consent, and the assurance of non-maleficence. Additionally, the researcher outlined the data storage and protection procedures and acknowledged the study's limitations. The next chapter discusses the findings and analysis of the study.

Chapter Six

Findings and Analysis

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter, elaborated on the research methodology and design that the study used to explore the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. In this chapter, findings are presented through thematic analytical interpretation. The findings are showcased using 'verbatim' quotations from the participants conversations and responses, while drawing from supporting literature. The findings are interpretively thematised around the three roles of an academic; 1) research, 2) teaching and learning, and 3) community engagement as these KPA's were the analytical framework that underpinned the study.

This chapter, responded to the two research questions: 1) What are Black academics' voices in the struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution? 2) How do Black academics understand a decolonial university in a South African higher education institution? The generated data was significant and raised several issues confronting Black academics in South African higher education of which are presented as findings in Table 6.2 below through themes. The themes that emerged from Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI) and those from Focus Group Discussions (FGD) are presented.

6.2. Table on Key themes

Semi-Structured Interviews

	Key Perfomance Areas	**N. O**	**Core Themes**
6.3.	**On Teaching and Learning**	6.3.1.	Language Racism and Teaching Spaces (Individual Reflections-SSI)
		6.3.2.	Teaching as Engagement, Debate and Dialogue (Individual Reflections-SSI)
		6.3.3.	Transformative Pedagogies (Individual Reflections-SSI)
		6.3.4.	Teaching Large and Small Classes (Individual Reflections-SSI)
6.4.	**On Research (supervision)**	6.4.1.	Respect and Agency (Individual Reflections-SSI)

		6.4.2.	Busy Supervisors: Doing your Research by Yourself (Individual Reflections-SSI)
		6.4.3.	Postgraduate Student Wellbeing (Individual Reflections-SSI)
		6.4.4.	Scheduled and Structured Supervision (Individual Reflections-SSI)
6.5.	**On Research (publication)**	6.5.1.	Decolonise the Mind (Individual Reflections-SSI)
		6.5.2.	Localise the Language of Research (Individual Reflections-SSI)
6.6.	**On Community Engagement**	6.6.3	The University at the Forefront of Community Engagement (Individual Reflections-SSI)

Focus Group Discussions

	Key Perfomance Areas	**N. O**	Core Themes
6.3.	**On Teaching and Learning**	6.3.1.1.	Language Revitalisation (Group Reflection- FGD)
		6.3.3.1.	Transformative Power of Media Sites and Technology (Group Reflection- FGD).
6.4.	**On Research (supervision)**	6.4.1.1.	Academic Agency: Unravelling Barriers and Hierarchies (Group Reflections- FGD).
6.5.	**On Research (Publication)**	6.5.1.1.	Epistemic Justice in Research (Group reflections-FGD)
6.6.	**On Community Engagement**	6.6.1.	Community Engagement as not Data Mining (Group Reflection- FGD).
		6.6.2.	Undressing Community Engagement (Group Reflection- FGD).

Table 6:2. Table representing the key themes that emerged from the data.

6.3. On Teaching and Learning

Under teaching and learning as one of the KPA's of an academic that underpinned the decolonial analytical framework of the study, five major themes emerged. These were language racism and teaching space, teaching as engagement, debate and dialogue, transformative pedagogies, transformative power of media sites and technology, teaching large and small classes. These themes are now covered more broadly and in detail.

6.3.1. Language Racism and Teaching Spaces (Individual Reflections-SSI)

Although there are many issues confronting Black academics that require transformation in South African higher education, the issue of the language of teaching and learning stood out as a significant issue for them. This was evident from the words of Richard who shared that:

> *"I do not think the modules are neglected or racist because I am the one who is coordinating the module uhm in such a way that I also use international studies, I mean international studies as well as local studies. So, in other words I do not think they are neglected. They can be neglected in terms of the language that we use because even though the university says we must use IsiZulu and English, but on the implementation space in the lecture hall, you cannot use IsiZulu to unpack that content.....".*
> (Richard, Male Participant, Professor)

Racism can manifest subtly in universities, particularly for Black academics, who may be marginalised in their work assignments. For instance, they might be relegated to teaching modules perceived as less challenging. However, the above participants experiences deviated from this narrative, as he did not feel relegated to teaching modules stereotypically assigned to Black academics. Nevertheless, language racism remained a pressing concern. The mandatory use of English as the medium of instruction posed challenges, as it is not the home language of all students. This can hinder students' understanding of module content, creating an uneven learning environment.

To further emphasise the issue of language racism and teaching spaces, another participant shared her voice about the use of language in the university in a racist manner, as well as teaching spaces that limit their teaching, Thulile commented:

> *"First of all, it is about changing the physical structure at the universities in terms of the lecture hall. Our lecture halls are just confined to conduct learning using a lecturer just as a statue over there just giving information. Even if I want to group you in groups, I cannot divide.... group you in groups in a lecture hall. It is meant for you to listen to lecturers not to have a dialogue and you guys discuss amongst yourself. If the physical structure can change that would be a priority for me. And then number two would be on the basis of the language. I mean the*

> *module should be given in IsiZulu or else in English. Like other universities, they do give lectures in Afrikaans or English as well, so that students may choose which language they wish to use"* (Thulile, Female Participant, Lecturer).

Teaching is a dynamic and interactive process that requires flexibility and movement. However, when the physical structure of a lecture hall restricts mobility, it can hinder effective teaching. As highlighted by the participant, this limitation can lead to a didactic approach, where lecturers are perceived as mere dispensers of information, disconnected from students' learning experiences. This challenge underscores the need for inclusive infrastructure design that consults lecturers and aligns with their pedagogical approaches. Black academics in this study from their experiences were advocating for transformative changes in teaching infrastructure to facilitate efficient and effective teaching methods. Furthermore, they argued for decolonising the language of instruction, promoting a democratic and inclusive learning environment. They also argued that by allowing students to choose their preferred language for learning, the university can truly serve the public good and foster a culture of diversity and inclusivity.

Another participant's view further emphasised the importance of, not only using one language, but also other African languages to counter and disrupt language racism in the academy, Monterio explained that:

> *"You know, I am teaching English Education and people expect me to say well it is so important for the students to know English yes, it is. It is important to know English and it is important for them to know IsiZulu and it is important for them to know Sesotho whatever it is, it is important. But when you make one language superior to another you are saying something*". (Monterio, Female Participant, Professor).

Colonialism can perpetuate self-hatred through language and skin colour, reinforcing harmful hierarchies. The dominance of one language in academic settings can be a tool of oppression, implying that indigenous languages are inferior. Monteiro's critique of language superiority aligned with Manganyi's (2019) argument that the elevation of white European English perpetuates a superiority complex, while diminishing Black African languages and cultures. This study concurred with participants' concerns that the exclusive use of English in teaching reinforces colonial logic, glorifying the coloniser's language while undermining African languages. Literature supported this perspective, framing it as "symbolic castration" (Oodora-

Hoppers, 2001, p. 74), where African-indigenous cultures are devalued, and Western norms are imposed as superior. This perpetuates the coloniser's control and dominance over indigenous populations.

6.3.1.1. Language Revitalisation (Group Reflection- FGD)

The participating Black academics largely brought out the language racism challenge in the academy that was imposed by colonial powers through supplanting indigenous languages with English that has become the primary means of communicating when teaching. To decolonise language racism they garnered for language revitalisation by means of efforts that attempt to revitalise and promote indigenous languages. This revitalisation they believed can unfold through language education that incorporate indigenous languages into education systems and by developing language policies that recognise and support indigenous languages. These were evident from the below excerpts of participants:

> *"You would opt for English in order to accommodate the diversity of the students that are there in the lecture hall. So, on that note, it can be racial somehow. It can suit one race in terms of the language of teaching and learning".* (Richard, Male Participant, Professor)
>
> *"And you know what is happening, the coloniser who is long dead is saying yay, I have still got them. They are bowing to the idea, the coloniser came here and said your language is gibberish, I cannot understand it, it is rubbish"* (Monterio, Female Participant, Professor).
>
> .

The findings indicated that decolonial teaching for Black academics encompasses not only a shift in language policies, but also a restructuring of teaching spaces. Decolonial teaching involves moving beyond the dominance of English as the language of elitism (Wa Thiong'o, 1981/1986) and incorporating African languages into teaching practices. Furthermore, Black academics recognised that decolonised teaching requires a transformation of teaching spaces to accommodate their pedagogical approaches (Maringira & Gukurume, 2017). In multilingual societies, implementing multilingual education is crucial, not only in South African universities but also in other Global South institutions. This can help eradicate racist cultures and stereotypes associated with colonial languages (Knight, 2018; Bamgboṣe, 2019; Sah & Li, 2022). Allowing Black academics to use their local languages and diverse genres in teaching can foster a sense of accommodation and inclusivity in teaching spaces.

The findings that emerged from this theme were consistent with studies conducted by (Wa Thiong'o, 1981; 1998; Musitha, & Tshibalo, 2016; Musitha, & Mafukata, 2018, Hendricks, 2018; Fomunyam; 2017; Le Grange, 2020; Vandeyar, 2020 and others). For example, in his study on decolonising the engineering curriculum, Fomunyam (2017) found that academics in his study felt that English should be decolonised as it was not the home language of the students. Fomunyam (2017) further noted that participants believed that students were failing engineering simply because it was not offered in a language of their own. Similarly, Wa Thiong'o (1981) in decolonising the mind argued that colonial education imposed colonial languages, and made African languages foreign in books, teaching spaces, and in the ways Africans thought about knowledge. This occasioned the need to decolonise English as a language of teaching because in its historical upcoming into education, it was colonial and it became a fence against learning for Africans (Wa Thiong'o, 1981).

A critique of the value of decolonisation was absent from Black academics in this study yet a Black academic Olúfẹ́mi (2020) in *Against Decolonisation*, fiercely rejects the indiscriminate application of 'decolonisation' to everything from literature, language and philosophy to sociology, psychology and medicine. He critiqued the current state of the decolonial discourse as having lost its way and argued that the decolonisation industry, obsessed with cataloguing wrongs, is seriously harming scholarship on and in Africa. Like Zembylas (2018) cautioned on decolonial rhetoric, he vehemently critiqued how academics and institutions particularly universities have co-opted decolonisation rhetoric without making meaningful changes to their structures, policies or practices. Olufemi's critique encourages us to move beyond superficial, symbolic gestures towards decolonisation, such as renaming buildings, language, restructuring space or creating diversity committees, and instead focus on systemic, structural changes. By engaging with Olufemi's critique, we can revitalise the decolonisation movement and work towards a more nuanced, inclusive, and transformative understanding of decolonial practices.

The next theme discusses teaching as engagement, debate, discussions and dialogue, which featured predominantly in Black academics' views on transformation around teaching and learning in a South African higher education institution.

6.3.2. Teaching as Engagement, Debate and Dialogue (Individual Reflections-SSI)

Black academics overwhelmingly advocated for a transformation in teaching approaches at the university. They rejected traditional methods, where lecturers merely disseminate information, in favour of more inclusive and participatory strategies. According to the participants, effective teaching and learning should prioritise students' voices, fostering an environment where diverse perspectives are encouraged and valued. The participants particularly appreciated the diverse student population, which facilitated lively debates, engagement, and the sharing of multiple viewpoints. This approach not only enriched the learning experience but also acknowledged the importance of student agency and participation in the educational process. On the phenomenon of changing teaching and learning at university through student debates and dialogue, Sindi remarked:

> *"So, I think it kind of makes your class interesting when you let students flow and have arguments and debates in your class rather than just standing in front of them and talking to the slides that they can read on their own in their rooms or wherever they are staying. So, I think that is one thing that made me fall in love with lecturing especially big classes, you know when you get different ideas from different students from different ethnicities, you know we have diverse ethnicities in our classes. So, I think yah that is how I teach I let students engage, let students debate. I am not that kind of a lecturer who will be standing in front. I walk around the class so that I see who is concentrating and who is not concentrating. If the person is not listening, I can throw a question to them. A random question just to check whether they are in class doing what we are all doing. So, I think that is where the transformation needs to come in where we need to change the way we lecture as academics whereby we do not just go there and then deliver slides or content to students without knowing whether they understand or not"* (Sindi, Female Participant, Lecturer).

From Sindi's extract above, we learned that lecturers need to be innovative and go beyond teaching traditionally and use student debates and dialogues to make the class exciting and enthusiastic. In our teaching as lecturers we should thus see large classes as offering us pedagogical opportunities to experiment regarding how to reach and engage with students knowing the constrains of our large numbers. We need to transform lecturing by being creative and energetic through provoking students to push back against some of the theories and

concepts that we discuss in lectures to immerse them in the classroom and ensure that they concentrate.

Anande echoed the sentiment, emphasising the value of discussions as a student-centered teaching approach. She believed that fostering engaging and thought-provoking interactions with students was essential to effective teaching and learning at the university level. According to Anande, a lively and interactive classroom environment, where students freely exchange ideas, thoughts, and knowledge, was desirable – even if it meant a bit of noise. What mattered most was that the discussions were constructive and meaningful. She shared that such a class was an exciting class:

> *"I think an exciting class for me is a class where everyone raises up their hand. I do not care how much noise they raise in class as long as it is a constructive noise……. I am not that person who is going to stand in front of the students and want them not to speak, or debate or discuss issues".*
> (Anande, Male Participant, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow).

Anande envisioned a classroom where every student was engaged, enthusiastic, and motivated to learn. She valued an interactive class environment, where students were consistently stimulated to ask questions, seek clarification, and build upon previous learning experiences. While emphasising the importance of preparation for effective engagements and discussions, Anande noted that this approach enables lecturers to adopt diverse roles, particularly that of a facilitator. By posing questions and guiding students, lecturers can strengthen and refine students' understanding, steering their learning toward a productive path. This transformative teaching approach fosters a collaborative, student-centered learning environment.

Generally, the participating Black academics believed in teaching as a student-centred activity, where students can bring in their thoughts and critical views about a particular topic being taught. As literature suggested, indigenous knowledge is passed down in time from one generation to the next through folklore, storytelling or word of mouth (Seehawer, 2018; Munsaka & Dube, 2018; Netshifhefhe et al., 2018), so teaching using dialogue and discussion is effective. The strategy of dialogue and debates transforms teaching into an indigenous culture of practice, where the sharing of knowledge happens through engagement and word of mouth in teaching spaces.

For several academics who participated in this study, having actively engaged students in their lectures was important. This was evident in what they shared, like what Sdumiso shared:

> *"So, with me in my lectures it is not about lecturing mainly, it is mainly about teaching right. So, I become hands on, you will not see me standing in the front, I walk around because Mathematics is something that is more practical, it is more practical to see your students doing something, you need to get your students to participate, you need to get them uhhhh actively engaged throughout the lesson. So, standing there at the front and just talking about theorems, talking about theories of teaching and learning for me it does not work. And I think another thing is that I come from a constructivist, constructivism perspective way of teaching where I believe that teaching is not mainly about transferring knowledge to the students, it is mainly about making your students discover knowledge on their own. So, I structure my teaching in such a way that my students would actually be able to discover knowledge on their own even if in the knowledge of theorems, Mathematics theorems I would design a task for my lesson to say let us do this investigation"* (Sdumiso, Male Participant, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow).

Sdumiso's teaching philosophy emphasised dialogue and critical thinking, transcending the traditional lecturer-student dynamic. Rather than merely transmitting knowledge, he encouraged students to reflect on the purpose of education and the practical applications of mathematics in real-life situations. Through interactive class activities, Sdumiso empowered students to take ownership of their learning, constructing knowledge and exploring its functional implications. This approach resonates with the critical pedagogy theories of Freire (2018) and Walsh (2015), who critiqued the "banking education" model. This traditional model views students as passive recipients of knowledge, rather than active participants in the learning process. By using dialogue and interactive learning strategies, educators like Sdumiso can disrupt this depositing of knowledge, fostering a more collaborative and transformative learning environment.

From the above discussions with the various participants, there was an acknowledgment that active engagement during teaching was a key and effective approach. As a result, it kept on coming up as one of the major themes in the study. For instance, Anande acknowledged how he used active student engagement as part of his teaching philosophy, this is what he had to say:

> *"That is the whole idea of, of…behind my philosophy of teaching to say I need my students actively engaged throughout because if they are sitting there passively then according to my understanding, I do not think there*

> *is learning taking place, because teaching can take place and only to find out there is no learning taking place. For me it is to ensure that learning is taking place to help them actively engage right. So, with my students now which were 4th years in 2019 they were 1st years, they know that is my way of teaching, I know them by names, each and every one of them, I can just call somebody, they know this is the way I conduct teaching right. I even tell them I will have to stop if you are not responding right, so they know it, it is like kind of one on one sometimes and then sometimes it is collective as a class. But all the times in my lectures it is not only about me talking, it is about both of us the students, myself and mainly the students to hear the views about what it is that they are learning, are they getting it. If they ask questions that is where I get excited because it means they are sort of you know, there is this shift in their minds to say okay learning is actually taking place?"* (Anande, Male Participant, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow)

Anande's teaching philosophy emphasised student engagement as a crucial component of learning. Interactive lectures, he believed, were essential for effective learning, and lecturers should not be the sole communicators while students remain passive. Instead, lecturers should encourage student participation, fostering a dynamic where students' views and responses provide psychological feedback (Zhang & Hyland, 2018; To, 2022; Vattøy et al., 2021) that learning is occurring.

The study revealed that Black academics recognised the value of student dialogue, debates, and constructive engagements in teaching and learning. By adopting participatory and dialogic approaches, they could transcend traditional content delivery and instead stimulate students' critical thinking capabilities. This collaborative method allowed for shared idea generation, understanding, and knowledge construction.

These findings align with existing research on interactive teaching and learning methods (Mkonto, 2010; Mapuya & Rambuda, 2022; Mayaba et al., 2018; Motala & Menon, 2020). For instance, Motala and Menon (2020) noted the lack of educational engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the importance of dialogue and discussion in teaching. Similarly, Mapuya and Rambuda (2022) recommended co-creating learning content with students and establishing virtually engaging platforms for student expression and interaction.

Ultimately, effective teaching and learning environments, whether virtual or in-person, rely on communication, collaboration, and interaction. By prioritising student engagement and participatory approaches, educators can create a more dynamic, inclusive, and transformative

learning experience. The theme that follows discusses the transformative teaching ways that Black academics adopted when conducting their teaching at university.

6.3.3. Transformative Pedagogies (Individual Reflections-SSI)

Teaching is a complex and intellectually challenging activity, especially at university as students come from different backgrounds with different ideas. Students at university are maturing in intellectual thought and need to be taught in unique ways that can fulfil their needs, demands, and quest for knowledge. Many participating Black academics believed that to teach students effectively, transformative pedagogies should be applied where one does not rely only on one teaching approach but rather makes use of a variety of approaches. Regarding transformative pedagogies, Philip said:

> *"So, my teaching previously was mostly traditional in such a way that uhhhmmm I used to be in class teaching students in contact and then… ohhh in lecturer halls so to say this is a university not a school using an instructional pedagogy where I act as instructor because of the environment which allows teachers or lecturers to be instructors rather than being facilitators. But the eruption of COVID-19 taught me that teaching and learning can also be online not only on a traditional teaching. So as a result, I am currently conducting my teaching online using different platforms such as Learning Management Systems especially in my case I am using Moodle"* (Philip, Male Participant, Lecturer).

Philip, a traditionally inclined lecturer, found himself compelled to adapt to online teaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid shift from physical lectures to online learning posed significant challenges, as both lecturers and students lacked the necessary digital skills to effectively utilise online platforms. In hindsight, Philip emphasised the need for concurrent online learning training programs to support lecturers and students during this transition. Despite the pandemic's receding, the higher education sector continues to rely heavily on online platforms, making such training programs still highly relevant. Investing in these initiatives can facilitate a smoother transformation to online pedagogies, enhancing the overall teaching and learning experience.

Reinforcing the idea of transformative teaching was Mcebo who believed that, as a lecturer, he needed to take his teaching strategy to the students and ask them how it could be improved and

transformed. He believed that students should also help lecturers to enhance their pedagogies for quality teaching, he proposed that:

> *"Yah, I think we…… we learn every day that is one thing. I cannot say my strategy is perfect maybe if I were to ask the students that I teach because some of them might not like the strategy…. you know, they might want me to stand in front of the slides and see that is how they understand. But for me knowing you can read anything on your own in your own house, what is the use of me standing in front of you and talking to it. So, some people might want me to change to that, which I am not comfortable with but if they give me that critique to say here is what you will lack or here is what we do not understand when you teach the way you teach. You definitely have to change your approach. But so far, I have received positive feedback in the way we do things in class before COVID-19 let me say………"* (Mcebo, Male Participant, Lecturer)

Mcebo emphasised that lecturers, like students, are perpetual learners, continually refining their teaching strategies and understanding their roles. Transformative pedagogy involves reflective practice, self-introspection, and self-management, which can be facilitated by soliciting student feedback on one's teaching approach. This feedback can inform improvements or even transformations in pedagogy. However, Mcebo noted that having a pedagogical method is insufficient; it is equally important to consider whether the taught curriculum and underlying philosophies align with the educational needs of the students. This emphasis on contextual relevance is crucial in higher education.

Seipotlane expanded on this idea, discussing the importance of teaching philosophies that follow a needs-based curriculum in higher education.:

> *"So, yah I think the philosophies that we use and the techniques that we use in class should really talk to our everyday needs. And they should not just be in the book, I always say when I go to assess student teachers during teaching practice do not use the examples that are there in the text-book. Use an example…. yes, you can read that example and then use an example that your students in class can relate to".* (Seipotlane, Male Participant, Lecturer).

Seipotlane was of the view that teaching philosophies and techniques should be tailored to address the unique needs of students. Given the dynamic nature of knowledge, student characteristics, and needs, standardised approaches are insufficient. Instead, a "needs"-based

curriculum is essential for transformative pedagogy, enabling students to derive maximum benefit from their education and preparing them for future professional endeavours. The participating Black academics also highlighted the importance of provocative teaching and thinking as a key aspect of transformative pedagogy. However, they acknowledged the challenges of teaching, particularly when encountering students with reserved personalities who hesitate to participate in class discussions. For Marjyd, to persuade some reserved students, it is important to use provocative pedagogy, she indicated that:

> *"Some students are not comfortable with talking in class so if you randomly choose them to speak which I think it is a positive thing to do here in the varsity because this person is going to be a teacher, they are going to be a teacher for the rest of their lives. So, they need to have the confidence to speak things that are not conformable to them. Like when I say I provoke I do not mean in a negative way, what they know, just to challenge what they know. To say maybe a person will say this is red then I will say no this is green, you want them to say to you why did they say this is red. Issues like culture you just challenge culture. If you say to them, I think a certain culture promotes Gender Based Violence, you want to see how much the students understand about Gender Based Violence and how much they understand about their culture.... how can they bring the two together maybe to eradicate Gender Based Violence? That is the provocation I am talking about!"* (Marjyd, Female Participant, Professor).

Marjyd advocated for provocative pedagogy, convinced that it positively impacts student teachers by enhancing their teaching skills and communication knowledge. To transform pedagogy, Marjyd suggested that lecturers should challenge and encourage students to think critically about significant issues. This approach stimulates students to engage in thoughtful discussions, share their perspectives, and construct knowledge. By adopting transformational teaching approaches, educators can foster a collaborative learning environment where students feel empowered to share their understanding and insights, ultimately promoting deeper learning and engagement.

Focusing on transforming what students read and the material used for teaching at university, one of the participants offered what they did in her department at the university she worked at, this is what she offered:

> *"So, you know, in terms of the texts, we were teaching, in terms of the readings, we were given, giving students, and so while we were, you know, it was a predominantly Western curriculum, it had to have a very*

strong balance. So, we worked on the premise of making it a very strong South African curriculum, moving it into African, you know, so that we are giving it equal space to an African curriculum, and then moving it to the world. So, it is not you know, moving everything into South Africa or Africa, but, using the best of all but making it start from the ground in South Africa moving into Africa, and then the rest of the world, and all our modules are then designed that way to move into the three spaces. So, in that sense, it was one thing in English specifically, we are teaching texts so the so-called canon was where they say, you know, these are the texts that every student must read, we had to obviously disrupt that. And we had to think about, what is it that our students really need to read? What is it that they are doing, not necessarily what someone in Britain or France has told us, they should be reading? And so, the whole curriculum has been transformed? In that sense, do we need to do more? Absolutely. But in terms of opening up spaces, and opening up readings, and opening up the texts, now I think we've started the process, and it can only get, you know, it needs to be looked at consistently, in terms of the actual teaching pedagogy. The, you know, the old idea of, of a teacher standing in front and providing words of wisdom in inverted commas. I think, you know, everyone should know, it is long gone" (Thuluxolo, Female Participant, Lecturer).

Thuluxolo shared an example from her English department, where efforts have been made to Africanise the curriculum, transforming it from its predominantly Western orientation. This involved revising course readings to incorporate more diverse perspectives. Thuluxolo's experience resonates with the findings of Laing (2021), who described the development of a decolonised Geography module at a university. This initiative involved diversifying reading texts and course materials to provide a more inclusive and representative education. This suggested a disruption of colonial education by "going against what are constructed as western formal 'ways of doing things' as the West has for centuries, developed a body of knowledge that the rest of the universities (including those from former colonies) must copy in compliance with western standards" (Nyoni, 2019, p. 3). Diversifying the curriculum created a curriculum that sought to internationalise indigenous experiences (Le Grange, 2018) and decolonise teaching at the university.

On transformative pedagogy through the use of technology, Jacob remarked that technology should be integrated into teaching and learning, Jacob stated that:

"Not to say that I rely on technology, but I am saying that technology should be part of teaching and learning because technology is the future. Yes, we have those traditional methods of teaching and learning but now

> *we need to now move in with times, integrate technology in our teaching.".* (Jacob, Male Participant, Senior Lecturer).

Jacob's statements underscored the value of technology integration in teaching and learning, emphasising its continued relevance in the future. Technology has revolutionised personal lives, as evident in widespread online shopping and daily digital transactions. However, its adoption in higher education has been limited, despite the potential of educational technology to enhance teaching and learning opportunities. Research has highlighted several barriers to effective technology integration in higher education. These include inadequate rationale for integration (Tshuma, 2016), poor economic conditions (Grant, 2014), unstable internet access, insufficient technical support (Ssekakubo, Suleman, & Marsden, 2011), and the absence of a national policy governing technology use in universities (Czerniewicz, Ravjee, & Mlitwa, 2006). Integrating educational technology into teaching practices can have a profound impact on the education industry. To remain relevant and effective, universities must prioritise the introduction of technology-enhanced teaching methods, ultimately transforming the teaching and learning experience.

6.3.3.1. Transformative Power of Media Sites and Technology (Group Reflection- FGD).

Black academics discussed the transformative impact of social media and technology on their pedagogical strategies. Their discussions revolved around the transformative impact of online teaching and technology use on their pedagogical philosophies and practices. They examined how integrating online platforms with traditional teaching methods led to the development of blended approaches, which ultimately enhanced student learning outcomes as evident below:

> *"On the other hand, I also blend those LMS platforms with social media sites like WhatsApp, Facebook, if possible, to liaise and or contact students and send those resources such as assignments and projects. I think that is how I have implemented my transformative pedagogy at this point in time"* (Philip, Male Participant, Lecturer).

> *"In a nutshell I am saying let us use techniques and philosophies that will benefit our [students], not just us as lecturers!"* (Seipotlane, Male Participant, Lecturer).

> *"And my philosophy is to always say that technology makes teaching and learning easy because you know that there is this theory, I forget it is about……. who is behind it but to say that learners learn better if they are able to visualise things? Yes, so that is where like my teaching in terms of philosophy is actually biased that you need to visualise things, you need to see things in order for you to able to understand them".* (Jacob, Male Participant, Senior Lecturer).

Despite Black academics exposing that online teaching revolutionised their teaching philosophies and approaches which ultimately enhanced and benefited students learning experiences, challenges remain. The challenges erupt from that there is still reluctance from some academics to use technology and this resonated with the recent work of Mpungose (2021) on lecturers' reflections on using Zoom for e-learning in a South African university during the COVID-19, which revealed that they had developed frustrations, anxiety, trauma and fear for technology use. In their study on decolonising lecturers and students' capabilities of how to use technology, Khoza and Biyela (2019) found that critical and reflective thinking was absent among the participants. This was one of online learning challenges, of participants who were not well positioned to embrace the 4th industrial revolution. The lecturers who participated in that study feared using technology because they lacked the necessary training to use it. This shows that higher education institutions need to consider training lecturers and students and not merely provide technological learning resources and leave them to their devices.

The next theme focuses on addressing the issues of teaching large and small classes in South African higher education.

6.3.4. Teaching Large and Small Classes (Individual Reflections-SSI)

Large classes emerged as a new experience in South African higher education for most participating Black academics as they mentioned that they started experiencing large classes from 2017 after the 2015-2016 #FMF student campaign (Mokoena, 2021). In their study on lecturers' experiences of conducting assessment in the era of massification, Msiza et al. (2020) revealed that massification is not a new phenomenon in South African higher education as it has been experienced since the early 1990s. The findings revealed mixed feelings about

teaching large classes. While teaching large classes was exciting for some participants, for other participants, large classes were a little frustrating because there were challenges in terms of assessment, teaching, and engagement. The participants pointed out that they had to use other coping strategies to conduct and administer their teaching in large classes. Sharing how she conducted her teaching and what coping strategies she used, Mariet remarked:

> *"With engaging students in a much more real way, you know, we getting them to do things in pairs. And you know, in English, we have 1500 students in the class. Also, it is broken down into smaller classes, but never a small group. So, you cannot have group work, for instance, it becomes quite difficult unless they turn around. But they do things in pairs, they do things in threes. And we will be doing a lot of interactive activities. I have a strong drama background, I have been using a lot of role-play teaching you know, talking back the concept of talking back and we do a lot of that, talking back to issues, it is basically challenging, but also ensuring that what is being taught in class is of absolute relevance to the students"* (Mariet, Female Participant, Lecturer).

Mariet discussed how her department addressed the challenge of large student numbers by implementing a pairing system. This approach acknowledges the difficulties of teaching big groups, a common issue in South African higher education due to the legacy of apartheid and colonialism. Massification, where universities admit students beyond their capacity, compromises quality teaching and student success (du Plessis, 2020). To overcome these systemic challenges, academics must innovate, drawing on their experience, contextual understanding, and diverse learning theories (Pillay, 2020). While promoting inclusivity is crucial for South Africa's diverse student population, university management must provide a strategic and transformative response to support academics in addressing the challenges of teaching large classes, ultimately ensuring high-quality learning experiences.

Sbongi shared that, in his discipline, they taught large classes and resorted to pairing students as well to attend different sessions, he said:

> *"For us, we usually say that a group must at least have 30 students you know per session which is basically a reasonable number to handle especially if you are dealing with people who are within the university. 30- 35 is a reasonable number, so usually for us per semester we would have like 800-1000 students registered for computer literacy. So, we just group them into 21-24 groups then each group would have like 30-33 student so that we can be able to accommodate them in LANs. But during*

COVID of course because everything was online, we could go up to 35 students per group. Because I do believe that the moment we have all registered [students] in one class then some of the [students] might be left behind and you might not even be able to pick that up. So, you need to have a reasonable number of students in one class so that you can keep a close eye to everyone to intervene or devise strategies to help them cope with the task" (Sbongi, Male Participant, Lecturer).

Sbongi revealed that, for effective teaching to take place, they grouped students into reasonable numbers that they could accommodate in the LANs that they used for their lessons. The difficulties experienced by academics showcases that large number of students are not seamlessly manageable. To overcome and transform their difficulties in creating meaningful and enabling learning environments for students, they become hands on by making sure that the needed resources are accessible to students.

On the same note, Mary indicated that teaching a large class was not ideal for her because it did not connect with her teaching philosophy:

> *"Well, in my case I would say a large class is not for me especially, with this philosophy that I employ in my teaching because it is a big class, it is very hard to engage with each and every student in your lecture. But if you have like a small number say about, I would say 50-60 less than that because I would have 120 students in one class so I am comparing to that, those two scenarios. Less than 40 then I am able to manage that because even at school I use to teach about 38-40 right so that ratio for me is manageable but even better if it is less students say 25 that is great. I mean for my PGCE students I normally get about 15 students, 10 students a year, a semester, both in (Name of Campus Mentioned) and in (Name of Campus Mentioned) sometimes I also teach that side. So, I find those classes very interesting cause it is easy to engage with them but not online of course, face to face. Even the tasks, the work that I would give them, I would give them investigations and I would check each and every one of them and then we start to discuss things. But in a bigger class, you cannot really do that, you cannot check all students as to what they are writing whether they are with you whether it is just a small number of students who normally participate in class that you are working with maybe about 20%. you know. so, it is better if the class is smaller and then that way it is manageable and in terms of engaging them you know; engagement is superb"* (Mary, Female Participant, Ms).

Mary's sentiment highlights the challenges of teaching large classes, where engaging with each student individually becomes unfeasible. This constraint limits the level of engagement,

making it difficult for lecturers to provide personalised attention. Moreover, large and diverse student groups can be difficult to manage in terms of discipline and behaviour, and lecturers may struggle to efficiently monitor student learning. The immense effort required to ensure student learning in a large class, while maintaining classroom management, can be overwhelming and may diminish a lecturer's passion for teaching at the university level.

Surprisingly, teaching a bigger class for one participant was exciting despite the little frustration that came from the administrative tasks, Richard said:

> *"It is…it is…For most people it is frustrating because I do not know…. I do not know why it is frustrating to teach a big class …. But for me it is exciting to teach a bigger class except these administrative issues but for me teaching a bigger class because I get to understand different things from different people from different backgrounds. As a lecturer you are there to learn, you are there to understand your students. You are not just there to deliver your knowledge. You also want to learn from your students. Yes, it is challenging because some would arrive late, some would want to leave early because they are rushing to another class because it takes time for them to exit in the venue…. There are those small things that are frustrating"* (Richard, Male Participant, Professor).

While participants at large found teaching large classes frustrating, Richard found it exciting because he learnt how people understand from their own background and did not only become a lecturer but also a student who learnt from the perspective of his students. Large classes do therefore present Plato's allegory of the cave in which Plato argued, that the role of education is to take people out of the cave of ignorance and into the light of enlightenment thinking (Peterson, 2017). In essence, teaching large classes presents an abundance of opportunities for lecturers to learn and think from the conceptions of the multiverse students they teach.

Highlighting his frustration with teaching a large class, Philip said that a large class was overwhelming because there was no regulation governing the number of students that can be enrolled at the university, he stated:

> *"Yah, it is just there is no policy stipulating that in terms of the ratio unlike in basic education where one is expected to teach a maximum of thirty-five learners. At a tertiary level there is no limit on the number of students a lecturer can teach. But it is really overwhelming because you cannot teach one thousand three hundred students alone in such a way*

> *that we end up hiring contract lecturers"* (Philip, Male Participant, Lecturer).

Philip expressed concerns that academics often feel powerless regarding the large number of students they are expected to teach. Being assigned an overwhelming class size can evoke fear, stress, and anxiety in lecturers, exceeding their individual capabilities. Large classes pose significant challenges for lecturers, necessitating the recruitment of qualified teams of contract lecturers to assist with teaching and assessment responsibilities. The strategic response to teaching large classes however works for those who strongly believe in working as a team and involving the contract lecturers from planning and designing the curriculum, including asking for their input in the prescribed readings, the teaching and learning strategies adopted in the lecture rooms as well as asking for their contributions to the assessment practices that are adopted. This transformative and collaborative pedagogic approach reflects what Bernstein (2000) referred to as the weakening of the classifications and framing of educational knowledge in that it shifts curriculum decisions from being controlled and dominated by the module coordinator to now being a collaborative and socially just effort that allows contract lecturers to contribute, share, argue and possible suggest alternative themes, teaching approaches and assessment that could work well for teaching large classes.

This theme revealed participants' experiences of teaching large and small classes. Teaching a large class was overwhelming, challenging and brought anxiety to many of the Black academics who participated in the study as were also the findings of (Msiza et al., 2020). South African universities have experienced massification as a result of efforts to address historical imbalances and promote social transformation by expanding access to higher education. The 2015-2016 student protests further accelerated this trend, as students demanded not only fee-free and decolonised education but also increased access to universities (Mabuza, 2020).

The social justice agenda of opening university access resulted in limited human resources (Mohamedbhai, 2014). Marongwe et al. (2019, p. 1080) argued that "SA universities have considerably expanded in terms of student admission whereas infrastructure is not growing but dwindling and has negative effects on teaching and learning". This implied that although South African universities have made progress in expanding access to education, this increased access is being hindered by a resource crisis, which in turn negatively affects the quality of teaching and learning.

The focus now switches to research (supervision) as one of the three KPA's of academics that underpinned the decolonial analytical framework of the study. On research (supervision), focus is specifically dedicated to the voices of Black academics about supervision and how they believe it should be conducted, and what could be transformed in the way it is conducted.

6.4. On Research (Supervision)

Under research supervision as one of the KPA's of an academic that underpinned the decolonial analytical framework of the study, five major themes emerged. These were respect and agency, academic agency: unravelling barriers and hierarchies, busy supervisor: doing your research by yourself, postgraduate student wellbeing, scheduled and structured supervision. These themes are now thoroughly discussed below.

6.4.1. Respect and Agency (Individual Reflections-SSI).

With regards to research (supervision), the participants revealed that there should be respect and agency between the supervisor and student in the supervision relationship. The participants indicated that students should be allowed to take ownership of their post-graduate journey, and should be able to lead normal social lives with their families outside their studies. Moreover, participants suggested that supervisors should not impose themselves on post-graduate students' work but introduce them to the world of academia.

One of the participants reflected on respect and agency when she was supervised as a post-graduate student, she said:

> *"But what I liked about him was that he was so respectful of me and my ideas, no matter how stupid they were at the time. And when I looked back at him, they were like some really ridiculous things that I was writing or saying and he never wrote, you are an idiot, even if he wanted to. He was so respectful. But he took me very slowly through the process until I got things right, without demoralising me."* (Seipotlane, Male, Lecturer).

Seipotlane's postgraduate experience was marked by respect, patience, and guidance as she navigated the academic world. Her supervisors afforded her the opportunity to learn, fail, and grow without fear of discouragement or shame. This experience highlighted the importance of

supervisors embracing patience and adopting a gradual approach to mentoring students. When supervisors foster a supportive environment, students not only learn but also develop strong relationships with their supervisors. Effective research supervision requires respecting students' autonomy to learn and providing them with the time and space to grow at their own pace. Decolonial and socially just approaches to postgraduate supervision involve empowering students to realise their potential by holding high expectations and beliefs in their abilities. Collegial attitudes, mutual respect, and empowering principles are essential for fostering transformative learning in student-supervisor relationships.

For other participants, student-supervisor relationships were a matter of leaving students to own their studies, and to write in their own style, in their voices, and from subjective experiences. Commenting on this, Marjyd disclosed efforts made to stop her from inserting herself in her PhD study:

> *"So, I think with inclusion, its inclusion of voices because I know from personal experience that my voice in my PhD was, there was a strong attempt in the formal space to shut it down and I was just grateful I had other people who gave me the voice to write differently. And in fact, my final PhD was so much my own than other people or rather than the person who was imposing it. So, the inclusion of voices you know every person is different and when people do not want to speak because they feel they are revealing their ignorance or inadequacies or whatever it is that has to be shattered very quickly"* (Marjyd, Female Participant, Professor).

Marjyd's PhD experiences revealed the constraints of traditional research writing styles, which made her feel disconnected from her own study. She emphasised the importance of supervisors avoiding imposition and instead embracing students' unique experiences and perspectives, recognising that these are integral to the research process. This perspective aligned with literature on research supervision and student voice, highlighting the need to centre students' voices in postgraduate research and decentralise the dominant supervisor voice (Rispel, 2023). Marjyd's approach advocates for epistemic disobedience, resisting the imposition of a single, universal knowledge boundary (Mignolo, 2009). The implications of conducting research within colonial logics are evident, as scholars like Smith (1999; 2021), Mbembe (2016), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017), and Antoine (2017) argued that universalist thinking stifles knowledge creation by closing off epistemic diversity in universities.

6.4.1.1. Academic Agency: Unravelling Barriers and Hierarchies (Group Reflections-FGD).

A Black academic participant underscored the importance of senior academics' agency in facilitating the success of postgraduate students. She contended that supervisors have a critical responsibility to harness their academic capital to remove barriers and socialise students into the academic community by saying:

> *"So, the inclusion of voices but also the inclusion of people into academia and so if you know the student, letting students know about calls for papers and writing with them in the field. Letting students know about conferences and enabling attendance at the conference through funds and you say helping with abstracts and helping with presentations. And I never ever present with my students although I always attended because there is a difference when people are looking at Prof and Mr or Miss. It needs to be and I say take ownership, I think it needs to be, they need to be included in the ways of academic cause they are doing a PhD right, the ways of academic, what is, what is it that is available. So, I cannot relate to it, I do not know how to even start writing this paper, I do not even know how to do a presentation at a conference. How will you know unless someone opens the door for you, so it is the inclusion, it is being the gatekeeper who opens the door rather than keeping the door closed. I have been very, very lucky and I said it in many forums, I have been very lucky and maybe it is because I just go to people all the time, I am maybe- I am shameless or fearless but I will ask for help anywhere and everywhere you know. And I found so many people who are willing to open doors, willing to give me opportunities who say hey you know you spoke to me about, there is this. So, people had open doors so I just feel I have to be that gatekeeper as well who opens the gate not who closes the gate"* (Marjyd, Female Participant, Professor).

Postgraduate students, being mature and capable individuals, can take charge of their research projects to some extent. However, due to their limited experience, they require guidance from experienced supervisors. The participant above highlighted the need for transformation in postgraduate research supervision, emphasising that supervisors' roles extend beyond guidance to creating equitable learning opportunities. Supervisors should consider this perspective crucial, as it can significantly impact their students' research experience. By co-authoring publications and introducing students to academic conferences, supervisors can not only

broaden their students' exposure but also amplify the impact of their research, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and supportive academic environments.

For one of the participants, postgraduate student-supervisor relationships meant growing together with the student through co-designing the study. He shared that there should be an alignment between the supervisor and the student's ideas in terms of how a thesis or dissertation is written:

> *"You know- for me; I always say the best way to supervise students is as a supervisor is to see yourself as a co-author of that research or thesis or that dissertation of the student that you are supervising. To be able to see the vision of the student, to be able to present your vision towards the student that you are supervising because immediately if the two visions between the student and the supervisor are not aligned then there is going to be a problem. So, I always say that if you are a supervisor then you see yourself as a co-author of that research, then it is easy for you to align your vision with the student's vision in terms of supervision. In terms of how we go about doing things because we also share the same thing with the student, you also share the same vision with the student in terms of how you want the final product to be, how you want the dissertation, how you want that research paper to be at the end of the day. So, you know, I do believe if supervisors can adopt that philosophy then I think life would somehow be easy for students and also supervisors in terms of supervision"* (Sbongi, Male Participant, Lecturer).

For Sbongi, transformed postgraduate student-supervisor relationships involve a collaborative research partnership where supervisors position themselves as co-constructors of knowledge, rather than sole authorities. This approach entails supervisors and students co-designing research from diverse perspectives (Pithouse-Morgan, et al., 2018), fostering a mutually respectful and cooperative environment. Effective research supervision relies on a deep understanding between student and supervisor. When their visions, aims, and objectives misalign, the research process can become problematic. While this study did not exhaustively explore the factors influencing student-supervisor relationships, it highlighted the importance of accommodating and transformative approaches.

Participants emphasised that effective student-supervisor relationships should be characterised by mutual respect, academic agency, cooperation, and understanding, ultimately facilitating a

transformative research experience. The focus in the next theme is on the supervisor's availability despite their other roles in the university.

6.4.2. Busy Supervisors: Doing your Research by Yourself (Individual Reflections-SSI)

Literature shows that effective supervision is an essential part of a student in an institution, and that keeping a consistently balanced relationship is important for the postgraduate student and the supervisor (Yende, 2021; Hamid et al., 2021). The participants primarily raised concerns about busy supervisors in supervision relationships. This was a predominant concern. The heavy workload that comes with being an academic often gets felt by post-graduate students who get neglected to doing their research studies on their own.

Lindelani had a busy supervisor who delayed the progress of his study, he reported that:

> *"For me, I would say that I have a mixed fare if I can put it out that way in terms of supervision because I have changed the supervisor for my study because I always felt no the guy is just wasting my time if I can put it that way you know. I always say that uhhhmmm in most of my studies you know I have basically supervised myself because the guy would be absent you know just vanish into thin air, I cannot find him. Then when I find him, then you will submit something he will mark it return it, mark it return it up until…so now the issue is with that……I ended up telling him that you know my supervisor I feel like you have held me back in terms of my progress. It has been almost two years now, me and you. We are planning my submission but every time when I am getting closer to submission you are taking me back to the first chapters, you want to change this, you want to change that, something that you and I have already agreed that it is correct and now we have to do this. For example, I spent almost like the entire 2021 and part of 2020 applying for my permission to conduct study, my ethical clearance you know. Something that I felt I spent so much time because the guy it is like he will lose track of where we were and then when we started eventually, he would want to drag me back all the way to where we started so eventually, we decided to go our separate ways"* (Lindelani, Male Participant, Lecturer).

Lindelani's postgraduate experience was marred by uncertainty and frustration due to his supervisor's unavailability, leading him to feel that his time was being wasted. Research supports this concern, highlighting that poor supervision and busy supervisors can result in

delays and increased dropout rates among postgraduate students (Yende, 2021, p. 136). The lack of organisational management skills among some supervisors, including inadequate preparation, prioritisation, commitment to research, and time management, can have devastating consequences for postgraduate students. This can lead to student exhaustion, suspension, discontinuation, or withdrawal from their studies. When supervisors fail to meet students' needs in a timely manner, the student-supervisor relationship can deteriorate. The postgraduate journey, already inherently isolating, can become even more frustrating when students feel deserted, isolated, and unattended, effectively rendering them "academic orphans". Furthermore, delayed or absent feedback from supervisors can compromise students' academic standing (Ali, Ullah, & Sanauddin, 2019). Effective supervision and regular communication are essential to mitigate these risks and ensure a successful postgraduate experience.

In the same way that Lindelani had a busy supervisor another participant similarly shared that he had a busy supervisor who was pre-occupied with more than the supervision role and he had to therefore do his research by himself. Highlighting how things were in his supervision with his supervisor, he commented:

> *"So, my masters, I was uhhhmmm- I looked at sports and students how does it promote inclusivity. So, it was something I was passionate about and I think I enjoyed the study just that my supervisor was busy. She was busy……. She was Dean at that time, so most of the time you would submit something and you do not get feedback on time when you…. You have to continue by yourself and it is like you are doing your research by yourself because you would get feedback when you have already done work somewhere only to find that the feedback talks to the work you have done already. It was draining in a way but it was done. But I do not think it was done in a way I got my supervisor in my PhD that is where I enjoyed research than in Masters because basically in Masters it was like I was doing it by myself. I understand she was busy and there were lots of strikes at that time, lots of issues…you know it was…what is this thing free education wara wara wara…Fees Must Fall yes students wanted…. They were striking left, right and centre and she had to attend all those issues. And I was not the only Masters student she was supervising"* (Philip, Male Participant, Lecturer).

Philip had a positive experience in his study, however it was marred by his supervisor's unavailability due to multiple commitments, including a Deanship role. This echoed Lindelani's experience, highlighting the challenges posed by busy supervisors. Research

suggests that supervisors' casual attitudes and delayed feedback can erode students' trust and lead to impersonal acceptance of feedback (Chugh, Macht, & Harreveld, 2020). In response to absent supervisors, students may adopt strategic coping mechanisms, such as working independently or forming peer learning communities. While these coping strategies enable students to progress, they often miss out on the valuable experience, skills, expertise, and guidance that supervisors can provide. This, in turn, may compromise the quality and contribution of their research to the field.

Another participant had strategies to divert the attention of the busy supervisor to him, he said:

> *"Like maybe the issue of funding, if you can talk about funding that my funding is only limited for this period so could you please, if I fail maybe to make it within this stipulated time, I will have challenges maybe I may fail to continue with my studies that is when you can win maybe. That is one of my strategies that I used to do like to bring in the issues of funding. Like that you see that lecturer I can say look this is the challenge if I do not do this within this time I may fail to continue for good, that is how I won the supervisors, that was my strategy. But generally, hey there is a serious challenge of supervision, I do not know how maybe institutions, universities. That thing is across not maybe in only one department because even when you engage other colleagues from other departments, they will tell you that it is not easy to get the supervisor"* (Monterio, Female Participant, Professor).

Monterio acknowledged the demanding nature of supervisors' roles, who must balance lecturing, assessing undergraduate students, and supervising postgraduate students. The experiences of academic employees in universities are marked by overwhelming workloads, competing time demands, and insufficient time to support supervised students (Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021). The excessive workloads faced by academic staff highlight the structural transformation challenges posed by inadequate funding, fragile resources, and shortages of academic and support staff. Addressing these challenges by hiring additional staff to manage intellectual academic labor, thereby allowing supervisors dedicated time for student supervision, is a crucial step toward transforming postgraduate research supervision and mitigating its associated challenges.

The voices of Black academics indicated that their postgraduate journeys needed to be transformed as they were riddled with challenges, frustrations, delays, and absence of supervisors. The findings of busy, absent postgraduate student supervisors are widely

recognised in literature (Bireda, 2015; Neupane Bastola, & Hu, 2021; Yende, 2021; Hamid et al., 2021; Daramola, 2021). The work of Hamid et al. (2021) recommended that supervisors should be committed, professional, regularly available, and mindful of time, give and be willing to receive feedback continually and regularly, to and from postgraduate students. Contrary to this, supervisors appeared loaded and engaged in other demanding academic activities with little commitment, time, and attention for their postgraduate students. Black academics came to challenge this and argued that the transformation of ever-busy supervisors is pivotal for reimagining a decolonial university under research supervision, so that students do not have to negotiate for feedback from their supervisors and find themselves supervising their own studies when they are provided with supervisors by the university.

Non-intellectual labour, the tasks that are essential to the functioning of universities but do not directly contribute to teaching, research or intellectual pursuits such as perfomance evaluations and metrics, committee and administrative tasks, research reports and grant writing that supervisors cannot faulted for were not evidently considered by Black academics in this study. Amidst these limitations, studies however have critiqued the impact of non-intellectual labour on its impacts on supervisors ability to provide feedback to postgraduate students. To illustrate, a study by Amoo and Adam (2022) on the impact of supervisor support, perfomance feedback and workload on the engagement of TVET college lecturers in Gauteng, South Africa found that supervisors workload and perfomance pressures can lead to delayed feedback. Moreover, the study uncovered that a supervisors support is positively related to job engagement but the lack of evidence between supervisor support and institutional support suggested that lecturers received no support from their supervisors when it came to initiatives and activities that may help them engage more in the institution and on students work. Supervisors' administrative duties and committee commitments can divert time and attention away from providing timely feedback as well as we know it. Another study by Duncanson, Schmidt, and Webster (2020) explored supervisor and novice researcher perspectives on providing written feedback on research reports, highlighting the pressures to secure grants contributing to supervisor delays on providing timely feedback to postgraduate students.

The next theme focuses on nursing postgraduate students' well-being. Focus is on both the academic and personal well-being of postgraduate students.

6.4.3. Postgraduate Student Wellbeing (Individual Reflections-SSI)

Participants indicated that postgraduate students' academic and personal lives should not be neglected as part of supervision. They mentioned that supervisors should have an active sense of well-being and belonging in the academic space (Anderson et al., 2018). One of the participants proposed how postgraduate student well-being should be catered for by supervisors, he stated:

> *"For me, I would say that this is what I call more like total supervision, someone who knows that for you to do something, for you to be productive your mental health should be in a good state. In terms of things that you might need, you just need to be there for your student because I will make an example. One of my friends graduated from (University Name Mentioned) then he got a bursary to go and study in (University Name Mentioned) then there he had a supervisor who was more like a parent to him who was able to say that you know when you are going home, I will be able to buy a bus ticket for you so that the little money that you have from your stipend form the bursary. You know that you can focus in doing things that you need as a person, what is being needed at home you know. Such supervisors, they make your life easy as a student you know. You know that you don not only see that person as your supervisor but you see that person as someone who you can relate to, someone who can be a pillar of your strength, someone who you can draw inspiration from them you know. Someone that you know he or she does not only care about your submission at the end of the day and him or her getting those credit that I was able to supervise student so and so to completion but you know that that person basically cares about your entire wellbeing. For me if I can have or if supervisors can be like that then that would be the best"* (Sdumiso, Male Participant, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow).

Sdumiso envisioned inclusive postgraduate supervision as a holistic approach that encompasses not only academic guidance but also the overall well-being of the student. This includes ensuring students' mental health and financial needs are addressed, thereby creating a supportive environment conducive to academic success. As Manyike (2017) noted, supervisors' roles extend far beyond academic guidance. They are also expected to serve as counsellors, mentors, peers, career advisors, and financial advisors, providing students with valuable insights into available financial opportunities and supporting their overall development.

Mary shared her experiences of being supervised and what happened when focusing on her well-being. Her supervisor was accommodating, she said:

> *"Well, my supervisor I would say he was very accommodating because it was not just about the study that we talk only about PhD or the Masters that I was doing. For him he also checks about my well-being, hey how are you doing out of nowhere. (Participant Mentioned his own Name) how are things, the study going well, I get that kind of relationship with him. He comes sometimes and says no today we are not talking about PhD I mean a couple of weeks ago I sent him a chapter and then he said no for now I am not going to look at it. Let us just focus on teaching, let us just focus on something else, but definitely I will respond. And I was fine with that because I know his response rate as well, I was like it is fine we will talk about other things. We talk about conferences sometimes, he will pay, and he would ask about well-being at home, about the teaching am I managing because I sometimes teach with him some modules. So, if he sees that it is too much, he would take my teaching and sometimes say focus on your study right so he understands that…… he is that kind of a person who is okay with everything. So, I would say my relationship with him has been great, I would not ask for any other supervisor"* (Mary, Female Participant, Ms).

Mary's supervision experience was characterised by her supervisor's genuine interest in her overall well-being, encompassing academic progress, personal life, and family. This holistic approach not only monitored her study progress but also acknowledged the importance of balancing academic responsibilities with personal well-being. Given the demanding workload of postgraduate studies, supervisors play a vital role in helping students strike this balance. Moreover, effective supervision should also prioritise preparing students for their future careers as academics, equipping them with the necessary skills and expertise to succeed in the academic world (Hamid et al., 2021).

Student well-being appeared very crucial for the participating academics in their postgraduate student supervision role. The participants noted that there should be social life support offered to postgraduate students. Another participant shared his thoughts on postgraduate students' well- being:

> *"Another thing I was thinking institutions need to understand their students. I think it should be mandatory for a student to go and talk to someone where they will talk about everything. Because you can start your research excited, two years down the line you are tired. The university needs to track back this is what he said in his first meeting with the department, first meeting this is what he said, second meeting in 2021*

this is what he said…why is he not submitting anymore, what is happening and then they can track and then they can know what is the solution. Because now, there was a paper that I was reading they say student are cash-cows to institutions. What does that mean? Students are just there as money to the university, they do not care about the student's well-being" (Seipotlane, Male Participant, Lecturer).

Seipotlane emphasised the importance of prioritising student well-being alongside research focus. In postgraduate research, supervisors assume multiple roles, including coach, mentor, and guide, providing expertise and support throughout the thesis or dissertation process (Manathunga, 2007; Keane, 2016). Effective coaching and mentoring involve regular performance checks, progress reports, and informal guidance on navigating academic and personal challenges. However, supervisors are not equipped to diagnose mental or emotional health issues. Instead, they can offer referral advice, directing students to appropriate counselling or therapy channels for professional support.

Black academics reckoned that inclusive and transformed research supervision must prioritise students' personal well-being, in addition to their academic success. This approach recognises that postgraduate students' mental health and well-being are essential for their academic performance and productivity. Research has consistently shown that postgraduate students face significant mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, suicidal ideation, and self-harm (Li et al., 2022; Carr, 2022). When students struggle with mental health issues, they cannot reach their full academic potential. Therefore, supervisors must acknowledge the interconnectedness of students' well-being and academic success, and provide supportive environments that foster both.

The last theme under research (supervision) covers planning, scheduling and structuring of research supervision between supervisors and students to evaluate academic progress, challenges and successes.

6.4.4. Scheduled and Structured Supervision (Individual Reflections-SSI)

Supervisors often take the supervision process as a structured internship for knowledge and have been cautioned that they need to consider alternative supervision strategies, and adopt

structured plans for their postgraduate supervisory role (Bitzer & Albertyn, 2011) Concerning the scheduling and structuring of postgraduate student supervision one participant noted:

> *"In terms of being supervised, well with my current supervisor because he has been supervising from my honours, so at first he was very like his supervision strategy were very structured right. For the first meeting we would sit in and he would give us like the dates because there were three of us at that time doing honours. So, he would give us the date of the submission of the proposal, the date of the submission of the literature review chapter and all the other chapters that you do for your mini-dissertation right. So, he was very strict with that and I would say for me that definitely helped me because research is something which is different from doing a module right. So, it depends on your pace but if you have somebody who is supervising you saying I want you to send this on this date on this particular chapter, I want you to be done with data collection on this date right, I want you to do analysis for the entire month you know and then we can look at the chapter together. Then that thing keeps you going, so at firstly it was like that for the first time being supervised by my supervisor"* (Mariet, Female Participant, Lecturer).

Mariet's postgraduate supervision experience, and that of her student colleagues, was characterised by meticulous planning and organisation. Regular preparation meetings and scheduled deadlines for proposal development, chapter submissions, and thesis submissions ensured a structured approach. This phased supervision approach fostered discipline among participants and clarity in expectations. Notably, the student-supervisor relationship was built on clear roles and responsibilities, established from the outset (Molefe & Magubane, 2022). This mutual understanding of duties and roles facilitated a productive and effective supervision experience.

Still on the theme of scheduled and structured supervision, one participant indicated that it should happen rotationally through the days of the week in the case of a supervisor supervising more than one student. Discussing strategies supervisors can use to supervise students, Anande stated the following:

> *"I would say, I would have maybe five students then I have to know that If I say I am going to see student number one on my Monday, Tuesday I will see student number two, Wednesday student number three, Thursday student number four, Friday I will see student number five for that week. I know I have seen you; you have presented your work in progress. Then after two weeks again I know that there is a schedule for me to come see my students. So, I think it makes it easier to follow what to your learners*

> *are doing and where they are and what they need to do. That is the strategy I would use and you make sure that this person is doing something. As we said a supervisor is there to guide you"* (Anande, Male Participant, Post- Doctoral Research Fellow).

Anande believed that postgraduate supervision should happen through a weekly scheduled approach covering student progress reports, he explained the strategy as follows:

> *"I think in my PhD it was a perfect supervision strategy where each and every week I would go and present what I have done. What is it…? Where am I? So, …it builds that relationship with your supervisors. I had a main supervisor and a co-supervisor by the way. ….it builds the relationship where you know that I have to prepare myself so that you know I have something to say when I get to the presentation stage because we do our weekly or fourth nightly meetings. I go and present my work in progress. So, I think supervisors need to have such a strategy, I do not know how much of the commitments some have. But maybe if you met maybe twice a month with all your students, I need to know where Zamo is, twice in a month"* (Anande, Male Participant, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow).

For Anande, transformed postgraduate supervision should occur in the same way he experienced supervision when he was doing his PhD. He recommended that supervision should happen in a staggered approach of checking the progress of each student on different weekdays. This stabilises and reinforces the student-supervisor relationship. Cohort meetings, group seminars, and individual one-on-one meetings in the postgraduate student phase usually happen in pre-planned and pre-scheduled ways as students collectively or as individuals and supervisors organise and schedule meetings for student supervision and progress (Samaras & Roberts, 2011; McKenna, 2017; Heyns et al., 2019; Molefe & Magubane, 2022). The pre-planning of supervision meant that supervisors should be prepared to ask questions, respond and should be allowed to state where they are challenged and push back where needed. The next section transitions into research (publications) as another KPA that underpinned the decolonial analytical framework of the study.

6.5. On Research (Publication)

Under research publications as one of the KPA's of an academic that underpinned the decolonial analytical framework of the study, three central themes appeared. These were decolonise the mind, epistemic justice in research and localise the language of research. These themes are examined below more widely.

6.5.1. Decolonise the Mind (Individual Reflections-SSI)

For the most part participants shared that there was serious need to deal with the yoke of colonialism by first dealing with the decolonisation of the mind of academics as part of the decolonial research project. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) posited that the most crucial form of decolonisation is the decolonisation of the mind. He argued that during the 19th century, Europeans plundered Africa's material treasures to construct their own architecture, homes, and museums. In the 20th century, they sought to appropriate Africa's intellectual treasures, exploiting the continent's knowledge and cultural heritage to enrich their own. Describing the decolonisation of the mind, Thuluxolo stated:

> *"I can write fantastic papers with a decolonial slant if I am not practising it in my life, in my way of being, in my language, in my whatever I am still colonised. I think the most dangerous colonisation is of the mind that has to change it means giving people back themselves, their authentic selves that are real, honest and true. You know people talk to me we did this prayer, academics, we did this prayer at home you know and we could not invite so and so because we are Christians and they are not. And I think it is such…that, that tension in your soul. Your tension in your soul can never be good for you and you know it is a long process, I mean look apartheid is only over so many years, right? Colonisation is carrying on in every sphere, apartheid is merely a law, colonisation and decoloniality is a completely different thing. And until that is done, until that works itself out and yet we could perpetuate it forever, we can perpetuate the colonised mind forever, the colonised practice forever, we can, it is the easiest thing to do, to do what is already been done. And it is the academics like you and others like you who will need to be challenging it in more than just words".* (Thuluxolo, Female Participant, Lecturer).

Thuluxolo showed that decolonial scholars and academics must embody decolonial principles in both their personal and professional lives. Merely employing decolonial approaches in research and writing is insufficient; true decolonisation requires a fundamental transformation of one's mindset, daily life, and family dynamics, involving a deliberate disconnection from colonial practices. Decolonisation begins with the individual academic, extending into their professional sphere where they can leverage research and education as tools to challenge the dominant Eurocentric epistemic canon in academic institutions.

6.5.1.1. Epistemic Justice in Research (Group reflections-FGD)

Participants not only shared the need for the decolonisation of the mind and writing research articles from a decolonial stance, but also the transformation and decolonisation of the research methodologies, theoretical frames, language, and publishing agendas as part of ascertaining epistemic justice in research. Talking about the decolonisation of the methodological practices of research, Marry and Sdumiso noted that:

> *"For me, I would say you know I am just happy with everything but now I am saying we need to develop new research methodologies that are African inspired you know. Research methodologies where for example you can be able to use story telling you know uhhhmmm…you can be able to use knowledge that has been passed generation, through generation verbally and that research is accepted you know. Then if we can develop such research methodologies then I can say we are in a right track of now doing research how it is supposed to be done you know in terms of culture and our languages everything involved"* (Marry, Female Participant, Senior Lecturer).
>
> *"We need to speak about the theories that were developed by African academics and scholars to speak about those as well because those are more relevant to the research that we do here in Africa. Right now, I am not doing research in Michigan, research in Europe, I am doing it here in Africa. We need to speak about developing the theories that were developed here for Africans. Those theories again do not need to only be relevant for our context even Europeans, Westerns should also be able to say there is this theory used by Africans of which we can also apply. It is like how we adopt their theories all the time. All the time our studies are framed with their theories, how about our theories, how about them using ours in their context where they are relevant you know. So, I would say yes, the idea of decolonising research is very important"* (Sdumiso, Male Participant, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow).

Decolonising research methodologies is essential, and Black academics recommend incorporating African indigenous research paradigms. This involves employing culturally grounded methodologies, such as storytelling and folklore, which have been integral to African communities for centuries. Despite calls to decolonise research approaches (Chilisa, 2012), indigenous knowledge-based research methods in South Africa remain underexplored (Khupe & Keane, 2017).

To achieve decolonisation, researchers should draw on African theories and scholars, ensuring relevance in the African context. Sdumiso's views aligned with Nhemachena and Kaundjua's (2016) argument that African scholars should develop contextual research theories.

Participants emphasised that decolonising the mind is crucial for Black academics, given the deeply ingrained nature of coloniality. Decolonial research begins with African researchers using indigenous theoretical methods suited to African research, rather than imposed Western methodologies. Ultimately, a decolonial university is possible if Black academics transform their thinking approaches in research article writing, theory selection, and methodology use. By doing so, they can reclaim their intellectual sovereignty and produce research that truly reflects African contexts and perspectives.

While Black academics in this study and proponents of decolonisation such as wa Thiong'o (1986) and Oyěwùmí (1997) underscored the decolonisation of the mind as necessary for African self-determination due to that Western knowledge and values have been imposed on Africa, suppressing indigenous knowledge and cultures. Santos (2014) also brought out the decolonisation of the mind as centrally fundamental for promoting African perspectives and epistemologies, enriching global knowledge and understanding. A critique and problematisation of the decolonisation of the mind was however absent from Black academics in this study even though Appiah, (1992) demonstrated that decolonisation of the mind may perpetuate particularism, leading to a fragmentation of African identities and cultures. Apart from the challenge of particularism, Black academics could have levied a discourse of contrasting critique on the decolonisation of the mind by focusing on its underlying implications for modernity and progress. Perhaps an important discussion could have emerged from this critical analysis especially considering that Chakrabarty, (2000) indicated that decolonisation of the mind may lead to a rejection of Enlightenment values, such as reason and science, which are essential for modernity and progress. The discussions also needed to tap into practical considerations of decolonising the mind as Nkrumah (1964) revealed that decolonisation of the mind may be impractical, as African countries need to engage with the global economy and adopt Western technologies to develop.

The following section discusses a theme that appeared in what participants were sharing on localising the language of research under research publications.

6.5.2. Localise the Language of Research (Individual Reflections-SSI)

The issue of language recurred even in research as it appeared under the findings on teaching and learning. Some participants spoke about localising research through using local languages and local scholars and not only international scholars as is predominantly the case. Focusing on localising the language of research, Jacob mentioned that:

> *"I think we are confined in writing in one language of which is English so that the international community can understand what you are saying. I think this is one way or the other, if maybe we can be allowed to write and express ourselves in our own language maybe that one can work more prolific than the others as well. But that as it may, maybe another way of decolonising it is to have local scholars being known around the world, remember when you are doing research the only thing that you need to quote are the gurus in that particular filed of which you cannot find (Participant Used his Name to Give an Example) as the Guru there but you find Smith you see from Australia, from US, from UK. So that one on its own, the people who are experts in the filed they are from other developed countries than developing countries like South Africa and other countries as well. So, if we can have the local authors being the gurus in the field of that research, I think that what we can decolonise in the research space, look at Spain, the Spanish can write in their own Spanish languages and then their articles can be translated into English. So, the Spanions can read their articles using their own Spanish and at the same time we as international academics can also read using English and whatever language. So, if that can be done in our context, I think that ca be fine"* (Jacob, Male Participant, Senior Lecturer).

Jacob advocated for the freedom of researchers to express their work in their native languages, arguing that this would enhance their efficiency. He challenged the colonial legacy of solely using English as the medium of communicating research. Localising the language of research would allow academics to draw from their own contexts and cultures. For instance, Spanish higher education institutions have successfully implemented bilingual and multilingual policies, permitting academics to use Spanish, English, or multiple languages in teaching and research (Caruso, 2018; Mazak et al., 2017; Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021). However, practical challenges arise when localising language, including limited resources for interpretation and translation (Burgess & Martin, 2017). Moreover, finding peer reviewers familiar with local languages can be difficult, and miscommunication or misinterpretation may occur (Hanauer & Englander, 2013).

Participants mostly agreed that research in their institution needs to be decolonised. One participant shifted focus to the scope of decolonising journals:

> *"Yes, publishing standards and criteria should be decolonised. Because you find that the criteria and content that is relevant to us and African communities that may be publishable in a paper or worth publishing get rejected because of the western structure we are following. A journal can ask for changes but you know those changes that they need, the science part of it to meet the criteria, the paper can be rejected and so forth at the end, the end product when it comes to the community it is no longer meaningful because you promised them something, benefits. So maybe that's what can be changed, like we use local standards because when I publish and a paper cannot document something about the history of a particular community and someone tells me it is not worth it what should I do you see. If you are talking about decolonisation in writing, language and so forth then there should be journals that are for decolonisation so that they accept the papers that you are doing. Because you can say we are decolonising in our writing and our papers are rejected at the end there will be no original work"* (Sindi, Female Participant, Lecturer).

Sindi broadened her perspective on decolonising publishing traditions, viewing publishing as a complex interplay of politics, economics, and power dynamics. She highlighted how publishing involves business negotiations that dictate what is deemed worthy of publication, often perpetuating a Eurocentric bias. Sindi noted that even research written locally can remain beholden to European standards, essentially becoming a "satellite" of European intellectual dominance. If local research fails to conform to these European standards, it risks rejection, reinforcing the existing power imbalance in academic publishing. She saw this as a mandatory colonial obligation, she thus argued:

> *"But obviously I feel like there is a need for decolonisation because writing today is like more a business and also again their politics you know. Like something, you know you write something here it has to be matched with something in Europe and then they say this paper is not worth it. At the end we are forced to use their criteria, their standard when we are writing about our issues and then at the end you see"* (Sindi, Female Participant, Lecturer).

Sindi's remarks underscored the imperative to decolonise journal standards and acceptance criteria, as African journals often replicate Western norms. She contended that a manuscript grounded in an African perspective may face rejection due to its failure to conform to Western journal agencies' standards regarding criteria, indexing, rigor, content, structure, and design. This perpetuates a bias towards Western epistemologies, marginalising African voices and knowledge systems. This underscored Baloyi's (2020) critical engagement with Black Self-hatred who argued that a number of journals where Black academics could express their work

are owned by white elites and the decision on what gets published or unpublished lies in their hands. He argued that the knowledge of several Black scholars is disregarded when their papers are rejected and therefore, Black academics find themselves writing what is only accepted by their white academic gatekeepers so that their work is publishable. Decolonising research journals is thus another important area for Black academics so that they can have the epistemic freedom to re-examine a decolonial university and write about their struggles for transformation in the university about being Black without being held back by white academic gatekeepers of journals.

The theme pointed to the enduring colonialism in research where academics find themselves restricted to one language. The theme also uncovered the colonial publishing criteria and standards that often compromise Black academics' thinking as they are obliged to write and think according to what White European journal academic publishing houses specify as their criteria for acceptable and publishable research articles. The participants recommended that research be translated from their own languages into globally accessible languages to facilitate broader understanding and dissemination. They also proposed that their standards for publishing in a paper journal should be locally appropriate and relatable to the problems of African communities and not drawn from the metropoles of Europe.

The Black academics in this study uniformly advocated for localising the language of research, but their proposals lacked nuanced consideration of the potential implications and complexities involved. One of the considerations could have perhaps been around the universality of knowledge as Kaplan (2017) implicated that the use of English as a global language facilitates the dissemination of knowledge across borders and disciplines. Similarly, Mauranen (2018) suggested that the dominance of English in academic publishing ensures that research findings reach a broad audience. Besides the universality of knowledge, considerations from Black academics needed to position that the academy transcends locality seeing that the academy is made up of a global academic community. This was a highlight from the work of Ammon (2012) which emphasised the importance of a shared language for international academic collaboration and knowledge sharing. Hamel (2013) also argued that the use of English as a lingua franca facilitates communication among scholars from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Linguistic and cultural homogenisation was another issue that was not conceived by Black academics in this study yet Canagarajah, (2013) warned that the promotion of local languages may lead to linguistic and cultural homogenisation, potentially marginalising minority

languages and cultures. Pennycook (2016) likewise suggested and emphasised on that local languages may overlook the complex linguistic and cultural realities of multilingual societies.

The study now proceeds to the final KPA that anchored the decolonial analytical framework of this study: community engagement.

6.6. On Community Engagement

Under community engagement as one of the KPA's of an academic that underpinned the decolonial analytical framework of the study, three dominant themes developed. These were community engagement as not data mining, undressing community engagement and the university at the forefront of community engagement. These themes are now evaluated more closely.

6.6.1. Community Engagement as not Data Mining (Group Reflection- FGD).

In chapter 3, the work of Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Chilisa, et al., (2017), Damons and Cherrington (2020) was consulted to highlight that community engagement in the higher education sector is usually conducted under a traditional colonial logic, where some academics go to the field as ethnographers, researchers, and fieldworkers to mine, extract and generate data. Surprisingly, the participants of this research were against this logic. Discussing how community engagement unfolds as a customarily colonial activity of data mining, Monterio said:

> *"And that is the most unethical thing.... You know, so in my PhD I used participatory action research a highly useful thing, the day you go to sit in and watch, the day you go in and video record like you are doing right now. It is in a community, and you know we always go to the highly vulnerable communities right, highly unethical. It has to be research for their good, not for your good that you got a PhD or you will publish a paper it has to be for the participants good and by the end it has to be in what way has the participants' lives become well. And if it was just that you have got your data and maybe you gave them a meal, you have failed them because you have come back and you have written your PhD and that community is as exactly as you left it. So, you have actually exploited them, you have exploited them for your own good... that is the way*

> *research is done in the main and it is wrong"* (Monterio, Female Participant, Professor).

Expanding and explaining how community engagement should unfold in the higher education sector was again Monterio who indicated:

> *"So, participatory action research is what I was saying is where the participants largely decide how the study will go but were they always alerted to what they are uncomfortable with, what they do not want where you think and you have got to be upfront with them about what is being exploitative. In my participatory action research, I had people tell me but that is not right, you cannot but you cannot ask us that and it is something I had to take on board and stop. They decide what data is used, what data is analysed and how you analyse it".* (Monterio, Female Participant, Professor).

Monterio believed academics often target vulnerable communities to generate data while community engagement is expected to be pursued through participatory action research, a collaborative approach where researchers and participants work together to co-create knowledge and drive positive change in communities. In doing this kind of research, colonial power dynamics are dismantled and the researcher is seen as equal with the participating community members. Communities are given the power to decide on how the study is addressed. The participating community members are not taken as mere objects of research but much as co-researchers and expressive partners with the same capability as the expert researcher (Bergold & Thomas, 2012; McMenamin et al., 2018; Goessling, 2024; Hawkins, 2015). Decolonising community engagement thus requires a paradigm shift from extractive research methods, where academics collect data without reciprocal benefit, to a collaborative approach that prioritises mutual benefit, empowerment, and transformative impact within the community.

Sbongi expressed similar views to those of Monterio, that the focus of community engagement should be the researched community and not the researcher and his or her project. Expressing his thoughts on community engagement, Sbongi said:

> *"For me, I always say that if you are talking about community engagement then you need to be part of that community so that you understand how they work, how they function, how the entire community is structured. Reason being, you have pointed something we are saying that usually when we are involved with community engagement it is because we want to gain something from that community you know. So,*

for us to change that we need to be involved in those communities meaning that if I forge in a community engagement with Clermont community, I need to be part of Clermont. I need to be part of the daily living of Clermont so that I will understand what is happening in Clermont in day to day you know, what are the current struggles of Clermont. Because if for example I am in a university sector it means that I am exposed to so many things then I need to able to go back to that community, share information, make sure that they have access to information, they have access to books, they have access to internet. They have access to basic things like water that is community engagement. That is me using my connection to people in high places to make sure that the community I have engaged with you know they are being helped" (Sbongi, Male Participant, Lecturer).

Sbongi expressed that genuine community engagement entails immersive participation in the daily life of the community, deep understanding of its challenges, and collaborative development of solutions. This perspective transforms community engagement into a reciprocal process where researchers, leveraging their access to knowledge and resources, serve the community's needs. Moreover, Sbongi's view implied that Black academics should adopt decolonial approaches to community research, characterized by horizontally shared conceptions of power and mutually shared thinking capabilities between researchers and community members. This paradigm shift fosters equitable collaboration, dismantling traditional power imbalances and promoting co-created solutions.

The participants saw community engagement as not about manipulating and exploiting communities to give researchers easy access to the golden data they seek. It was evident that community engagement is about communities being able to work alongside a researcher who becomes a researcher-participant. In this way communities are able to define how their pressing struggles should be studied, addressed, challenged, and solved.

Community engagement was also viewed as constant engagement for breaking power dynamics between academics and communities. Speaking about community engagement as constant engagement, Marjyd said:

"I think I was battling with this word you know 'engagement' you know because if you are engaging someone, you are in a constant communication with someone. Now the question is how we engage the communities, that is a major question. Because we come as intelligent, now already there is power dynamics you know when I go to speak to parents, parents always have this fear 'I cannot question this because he

knows'. It is hard now to engage people when they feel like you know better. I think we should ask the people who go to the communities, that how can we involve the community more in what we do, how can we leave a legacy in what we do, how can we make sure that there is no fear man, there is no fear, you know I am a human being, I am a human being there is no fear and how can they be part of it or do they even understand what we want to achieve. Are we sharing what we want to achieve with them or are we sharing it amongst ourselves in the boardroom? Are we sharing with them that look in five years, ten years this is what we want to achieve? This is what we are seeing this programme owing or we what these are the kinds of results we would like to do" (Marjyd, Female Participant, Professor).

Marjyd evaluated decolonial community engagement as continuous engagement with the community but had a major concern about doing this engagement. She was primarily concerned with the colonial intellectual capacities that researchers brought into the communities in unsettling ways, and how researchers are seen as power holders in communities. This power-holder disorder suffocates engagement with communities as they may not want to talk, question, or raise their concerns with the researcher out of the fear of being judged by the very powerful intellectual researcher. The dynamics of a power-holding researcher and a powerless community is colonial and needs to be disrupted as it interferes with communities from engaging their issues and trying to solve them.

In the theme, it emerged that transformed community engagement should happen with communities working together with academics to solve community problems and not as a data generation approach. This is why several studies recommend collaborative community engagement approaches (see Preece, 2013; Marks et al., 2015; Mudau, 2020; Chandramohan & Bhagwan, 2022). Critical insight emerged regarding the colonial power dynamics inherent in community engagement. It is essential to recognise that communities should not be subjected to feelings of imposition or powerlessness due to the perceived intellectual superiority of academics. Rather, communities possess their own agency and power, which must be acknowledged and respected.

6.6.2. Undressing Community Engagement (Group Reflection-FGD).

Participants indicated that community engagement should be about people owning and addressing their problems, being constant, and involving communities in making decisions about their problems. Deliberating on people owning and addressing their problems, Marry argued that:

> *"You know, I always say people take this thing maybe at times it comes as if we are being racist. Like for instance let Black people address their own issues, so let people address their own issues. When I came to Durban with an idea, I involved the people of Durban in what I wanted to achieve so that they felt included. I am not from those communities, I do not know their struggles, I do not know what they are facing but for me as an outsider, I need to firstly understand their problems. Make them feel like this is ours. Like for now (Name of the Organisation Mentioned), just if you go back, I will speak about (Name of the Organisation Mentioned) because I know it better. Like we ask Kids to apply to be part of (Name of the Organisation Mentioned) that is 2019. But like now we are in a position whereby parents know about (Name of the Organisation Mentioned). They feel like now it is their thing, before we started (Organisation name mentioned), parents be like I want my child to be part of this because they belong to them. You see we made it to be we are here to develop the community, we engage the community. So, I think we need to engage the people. You know we should not come to these places and be academics. We should, I do not know, undress these academic mentalities, undress it you know the theory of it but let the people drive you. Understand what people want, how they want to say it. How do they want to grow and develop and from there I think it would be better?"* (Marry, Female Participant, Senior Lecturer).

To Marry, a transformative approach to community engagement, is one where communities take ownership of addressing their own problems and struggles. Given their firsthand experience of the challenges, communities are best positioned to develop effective solutions. By empowering communities to drive their own problem-solving, community engagement can have a profound impact. When communities are invested in finding solutions, they feel a sense of ownership and agency, rather than relying on external "experts". This shift in approach fosters autonomy, self-determination, and sustainable change.

In the theme, it emerged that transformed community engagement should happen with communities working together with academics to solve community problems. This is why several studies recommended collaborative community engagement approaches (see Preece, 2013; Marks et al., 2015; Mudau, 2020; Chandramohan & Bhagwan, 2022). A critical observation prevailed on the colonial power dynamics that come with doing community

engagement which directed to that communities should not feel imposed upon, or powerless because of the intellectual powers figure of academics as communities also have power.

6.6.3. The University at the Forefront of Community Engagement (Individual Reflections-SSI)

Participants emphasised that community engagement is often overlooked and undervalued, recommending that universities should actively promote and support this critical role, recognising it as equally integral as the academic responsibilities of teaching, learning, and research. The following is an example of how participants imagined the university being at the forefront of community engagement:

> *"I think the university should provide us with funds in doing that, because all of the sudden in the meantime we are told to do that but there are no funds to do that, and it is taken as a hobby but it is a university requirement. So, if the university can provide funds and also suggest the necessary community engagement according to the needs of the community. Because I would say let me create a soccer tournament whereas there is no need for us to organise that tournament, maybe I should create a drug awareness campaign do you see. So, if the university can do the research first as to find out what are these activities that need to be done in the community so that we as lecturers we can choose according to our own needs as to what activities can I go to the community to do"* (Mariet, Female Participant, Lecturer).

Mariet highlighted the paradox that despite community engagement being a mandatory role for academics, it is often underfunded. Even when universities prioritise community engagement through research, academics are ultimately responsible for executing these initiatives. To address this challenge, Mariet proposed the development of dedicated training courses and programs focused on community engagement. By equipping academics with the necessary knowledge, skills, and procedures, they can effectively engage with communities, fostering meaningful partnerships and socially relevant research.

To mitigate the neglect of community engagement, one participant suggested that the university should be at the forefront of giving incentives to academics doing research projects focused on communities so that academics can begin to do more of community engagement, Sdumiso revealed:

> *"So, if maybe the university would be like we would put higher PU's for those kinds of publications which are focusing on community engagement then I think we would get more academics focusing on that kind of research because of that thing PU's. Also, I think it like has an impact towards your cost centre which is something like very important for academics, for a bigger cost centre maybe if they could be like more PU's for this kind of research right then more academics would do community engagement"* (Sdumiso, Male Participant, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow).

Sdumiso proposed that to incentivise academics to prioritise community engagement, universities should offer rewards, such as allocating additional Productivity Units (PUs) for published research that focuses on community engagement. This strategy would motivate academics to engage in community-centered research, ultimately fostering a culture of social responsibility and relevance within the institution. The suggestion by Sdumiso aligned with what was covered in chapter two on community engagement that the university ought create a community engagement institutional culture and should reward engagement (Bhagwan, 2020). Such incentives would inspire and motivate academics to purse community engagement more and accept it as their third KPA.

Sdumiso further suggested that the university needs to rework and restructure the performance norms of an academic so that more focus can also be on community engagement as one of the three KPA's that define an academic, Sdumiso said:

> *"The university has something like performance management, that is like you put a component of teaching right at a certain percentage, the teaching I think it is at about 40% and then you get another component for research which is at 40% but it depended on where you are as an academic. And then you get the last 20% going to community engagement so you can see that community engagement has this 20% which is very small but they get them too, they get the academics who do community engagement but now they are contributing 20% so if someone would get 40% in the side of research and their teaching then they are fine, they won't focus on community engagement. Yah it is there but maybe if they increase the percentage to say you must do so much community engagement say even 30% or 35% then decrease teaching and research. So, they are doing it but I would say it is not very effective because of that percentage that is allocated to that performance management thing yah that is one way"* (Sdumiso, Male Participant, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow).

Sdumiso stated that the performance norms of an academic largely focus on teaching and learning and research as their percentages are much greater than community engagement. The university prioritises teaching and research over community engagement as there is considerable hostility towards accepting community engagement in universities even though it is one of the KPA's of an academic (Dube & Hendricks, 2023; Mohale, 2023). The university needs to seriously consider transformation measures on accepting community engagement as a true third mission of the university and the kinds of implications it has on the holistic development of academics.

Community engagement was also viewed as an opportunity for institutions to be visible to the people through community initiatives:

> *"We can, let us say department of sports. We should have projects where sports provide scholarships to learners in the communities. The university goes there and checks or identifies people who are good in sports and encourage those people at a young age that these are the requirements of the university. We see you are good in football, or you are good in basketball or swimming…if you come to the university you will study for free, we will pay for everything until you finish your studies. So, what I am saying the institutions should not be that scary thing in the community. The more we go out to there, you know that is what the university needs to do. There are good learners who drop out of school because of lack of career guidance. Are we doing much, do we go to the school to develop the careers or expose the careers that are there?"* (Seipotlane, Male Participant, Lecturer).

Seipotlane emphasised that community engagement can be facilitated through institutional initiatives and outreach programs designed to support and empower local communities. By uplifting and investing in surrounding communities, universities can foster a sense of belonging and connection among community members, making them feel integral to the institution. This collaborative approach would dissolve the "us and them" dichotomy, demonstrating that universities are invested in and intertwined with their local communities, rather than existing in isolation.

The findings in the theme showed that community engagement is one of the central purposes of the university (Wood & Zuber-Skerrit, 2013; Fitzgerald et al., 2012). Community engagement is a relatively recent development in South African higher education, contributing to its low priority due to limited understanding. Nevertheless, it still faces numerous challenges

(Bhagwan, 2017; van Eeden et al., 2021; Johnson, 2020; Sathorar & Geduld, 2021; Bidandi et al., 2021). Despite these barriers, the integration of community engagement into teaching, learning, and research as KPA's for academics underscores its growing importance within the academy (Bidandi et al., 2021).

6.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, the discussion of findings progressed according to the two major research questions of the study: 1) What are Black academics voices in the struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution? 2) How do Black academics understand a decolonial university in a South African higher education institution? The findings were discussed and analysed according to the themes that emerged from the data. The findings were discussed and analysed in line with the three KPA's of an academic which are: 1) teaching and learning, 2) research, and 3) community engagement, which were used as analytical frameworks that underpinned the decolonial aims of the study.

The findings showed that Black academics had many struggles for transformation in the institution and challenges that hindered the development of a decolonial university. The findings on teaching and learning indicated the need for transformation of teaching languages, teaching spaces, approaches to pedagogy, and teaching large classes. Research (supervision) findings indicated that there should be respect for student agency, academic agency and the transformation of supervisors' attitudes towards postgraduate students and supervision. Participants called for transformation around busy 'ghosting' supervisors which left postgraduate students doing their studies by themselves. Supporting postgraduate students' well-being- both personally and academically, and having structured supervision were mentioned as critical issues of transformation by the participating academics.

Under the research publications the theme decolonising the mind was a key finding and it was demanded that decolonial advocates, practise decolonial lives in their research and should use African indigenous research methodologies and theorise from African scholars and African languages. The findings on community engagement were around the decolonisation of community engagement because it was mainly approached as a colonial activity of data mining. Undressing community engagement also came up as another decolonial theme where

communities should be allowed to take ownership of their problems and be involved in decision-making towards solving those problems. The university was called upon to be at the forefront of community engagement by funding, creating initiatives and programmes for community engagement, and by rewarding engagement.

The below chapter theorises the findings using the social justice theory that framed the study. The discussion drew on the findings, elaborating on their implications for the study, the broader research field, and notably, their resonance with Nancy Fraser's theory of social justice.

Chapter Seven

Theorising the Findings

7.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the author discussed the findings and analysed them using thematic analysis, aligning with the study's research questions. In this chapter, the author undertakes a theoretical analysis of the findings, providing an in-depth examination of their significance. The analysis is framed within Nancy Fraser's three-dimensional framework of social justice, which encompasses economic, cultural, and political dimensions. Noting a theoretical gap in Fraser's framework, the author developed a fourth dimension, the epistemic dimension, and further theorised the findings that belonged under this dimension. This theoretical lens is applied to contextualise the findings within the specific setting of a South African higher education institution.

7.2. Social Justice Education

Social science education research with a social justice ethic agenda aims to promote more inclusive and equitable societies. Another aim of social science education research is to provide perspectives on the progress of social justice (Karampelas, 2021). South Africa has had little progress in achieving social justice through education. With apartheid coming to an end a reformed, democratic society and social justice were expected to emerge in and through education (Badat & Sayed, 2014). These scholars Badat & Sayed, 2014 noted that, years later, under a democratically elected government, formally merged institutions are still based on social class and hierarchy. They continue to be characterised by great differences of inequality, poor and low academic accomplishment, and little promotion of diversity.

Social justice in South Africa is, not only focused on education, but also on the broader society since South Africa is one of the world's most unequal nations (Govender, 2016). It is for this reason that social science researchers need to seriously consider social justice manifestations in education and the broader South African society. It is also for this reason that we have to come to foreground and theorise about social justice in our social science education research (Hytten & Bettez, 2011). Some studies in international contexts and the South African local context on social science research have attempted to theorise and contribute to social justice

(Pendlebury, & Enslin, 2004; Mafumo, 2011; Mwaniki, 2012; Hölscher, 2014, 2016; Garnett, & Huber, 2018; Rodriguez & Morrison, 2019). Theorised in the sections underneath are the findings on the three KPA's of an academic; research, teaching and learning, and community engagement as analytical frameworks that the study employed to underpinned its decolonial intention. To theorise the findings from this study, the author first elucidates the meanings of Nancy Fraser's three dimensions of social justice (economic, cultural, and political) and the additional dimension developed in this research, the epistemic dimension. The author then proceeded to elucidate how each dimension manifested in the study's findings, and scrutinised the interconnections between the findings and corresponding dimensions.

7.3. Social Justice Based on Economic struggles.

Social justice is justice that allows individuals the freedom to participate in society equally and aims to dismantle inequalities (Fraser, 2005). Fraser came up with the notion of participatory parity which meant peers in social life participating in society on an equal basis (Fraser, 1999). She posited that justice for every individual becomes a tangible possibility when the economy considers equitable distribution and delivery of resources (Shay, 2017). According to Fraser (2005), economic injustices manifest as maldistribution, where unequal access to economic resources prevents individuals and groups from fully participating in society, thereby undermining their economic parity and social status. Black academics in South African higher education are hindered from full participation in academia when they lack access to essential educational resources, facilities, functional technological devices, and funding for research. This maldistribution inherent in higher education institutions of society demands economic redistribution of resources, that Fraser termed "transformative remedies", which are corrective measures aimed at rearranging the inequitable allocation of resources (Fraser, 2013).

Transformative remedies for Black academics in this study involved purchasing technological resources for teaching, and providing more funding for their research and community engagement activities. More public funding for South African higher education institutions can be done through more government subsidies and the provision of significant research budgets. The participants indicated that they had economic challenges in their teaching and learning. This was evident in the words of the participants when they were asked about their thoughts on teaching and learning. One participant shared that funding needed to be allocated for the purposes of rearranging their teaching spaces that did not allow them to teach from a social

justice perspective characterised by critical dialogue and real engagement in class. As much as teaching in traditional lecture might be all too familiar and suitable for some academics, some participants expressed that the purchasing of technology for current and future use in university teaching and learning was necessary.

Participants also indicated some economic struggles in research (supervision). The participants informed on the need to assist financially needy and deserving students by their supervisors in research supervision of which it was believed can be done through research subsidies, grants and seat funding provided by the government and institutions. Economic struggles around the maldistribution of economic material and financial or resources to conduct community engagement emerged from participants too. Participants indicated that the university allocated limited funding for the execution of community engagement activities. Community engagement appeared to be neglected and thus participants proposed some economic incentives for community engagement.

7.4. Social Justice as Cultural Understanding

Culturally receptive and culturally affirming learning settings that foster social justice are an integral part of social justice education, and are much aligned with equity (Keddie, 2012). Gredley (2022), Zembylas and Bozalek (2017) drew on Nancy Fraser's three dimensions, and argued that learning environments appear culturally hostile because of the cultural recognition and misrecognition of particular groups in society. For the groups whose cultural values are misrecognised in institutions because of their colour, language, or race, this brings in cultural alienation and denies them a chance to equally participate in social institutions (Clowes et al., 2017).

The Black academics in this study mentioned that they were being denied participation in the academy due to the traditional dominance and exclusive use of the English language. This situation could only be disrupted through the formation, localisation, and redistribution of knowledge in local languages (Hodgkinson-Williams & Trotter, 2018). Disrupting this cultural inequality or misrecognition through using and valuing their local languages in the academy meant what Fraser called recognition (Fraser, 2005). Fraser proposed that appreciating and attributing importance to disregarded cultures of oppressed people in the curricula echoes

recognition, and has the potential of dismantling prevailing societal inequalities (Mulvey, 2022).

Participants were also aware that in their research publications they were narrowly limited to theorising, writing, and making sense of the research world through one cultural lens; the English language lens. This for participants reflected misrecognition of their cultural understanding and cultural awareness of researched knowledge. In order to not feel culturally misrecognised, participants proposed recognition that stems from them being allowed to use their local languages and African scholarship which are locally relevant and culturally applicable to their research work.

Other participants further added that using their local languages in their research as Black academics was socially just because it broke the cycle of cultural inequality. An example that was given was that when Black academics are allowed to write their research from the language of their background, they then feel that they are being culturally recognised. In simpler terms, Black academics saw themselves being allowed to fully participate on equal terms with their social peers in the research life of the academy when they utilised languages of their social backgrounds. Other groups outside the cultural background of Black academics would however still be recognised and accommodated when written work is translated back into the universal English language.

Black academics in higher education institutions benefit from teaching, learning, and researching in their native languages and familiar knowledge systems (Klaasen, 2020). However, English dominates academic communication, limiting opportunities for culturally diverse expression (Mwaniki, 2012). This study’s findings align with Nancy Fraser's (1997, 2000) assertion that equal cultural recognition is essential for inclusive participation in social institutions. Participants proposed culturally transformative approaches to teaching, learning, and research, including the use of local languages (Kasinathan & Ranganathan, 2017; Oates et al., 2017) and alternative epistemic orientations (Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2017; Wolfenden et al., 2017). They emphasised that teaching and researching in their native languages and knowledge systems would foster cultural recognition and social justice, enabling them to participate as equals in the academy.

7.5. Political Struggles from a Social Justice Perspective

After a thorough and thoughtful review of her theory, Fraser came up with the last dimension, the political dimension and came to argue that misrepresentation and mis-framing happened when certain social groups' voices are politically excluded and denied decision-making in higher education (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2015). This showed that political representation and framing of voices aligns with who has the power to decide on what counts as true knowledge and who does not (Hölscher & Bozalek, 2012). The participants of this study observed misrecognition and misrepresentation of their voices around their research for publication purposes and in research (supervision) work. Black academics felt that they were not given enough power to frame, represent, and decide on what counts as knowledge that is worthy in their research a finding that was consistent with work done by (Weber & Vandeyar, 2004; Mothlamme, 2023).

Participants indicated that there were attempts to misrecognise and mis- frame their work in research (supervision) as there were attempts to shut down their voices in their research work when they were still students themselves engaged in postgraduate studies. They also exposed the challenge of supervisors imposing on students work, inserting too much power and taking control of postgraduate studies with students having little input in their supervised research studies. Fraser opined that decision-making needs to be reframed so that opportunities can be created for underrepresented groups to participate in deciding on educationally worthwhile knowledge (Fraser, 2007, 2008). Hölscher (2018, p. 34) also argued that "such transformative politics would be directed at bringing about more just distributions of rights, opportunities and resources, as well as an increasing recognition of difference, and the legitimacy of differential needs and claims." To rephrase, political reframing involves creating more equitable opportunities by redistributing rights and resources, while also acknowledging and valuing diverse perspectives on knowledge. This approach recognises that individuals have varying ways of constructing and interpreting knowledge, and seeks to empower them to define, claim, and validate their own knowledge systems.

Black academics argued that they should be allowed to write and present publications through their own epistemic beliefs. To reverse the misrecognition of their voices from their supervisors when they were postgraduate students themselves, Black academics commended mentoring and peer support from their fellow senior colleagues. To ameliorate the exercise of too much

power and control in postgraduate students' studies, they brought in that students should be given the agency to own their work. Black academics saw that when students are introduced into the way the academy works, are funded and allowed the space to present alone at academic conferences, they can best produce knowledge through their own voices outside of the supervisors control.

7.6. Engaging Knowledge via Transformative Pedagogies as Social Justice

In South African higher education, the curriculum is taught from a Euro-Western centric dimension. This is seen as epistemic violence when the curriculum largely remains Euro-Western, where indigenous pedagogies are consistently silenced due to the unreformed nature of higher education environments and curricula offerings (Ngubane & Makua, 2021). Black academics in this study spoke of several ways they deliberately sought to use indigenous pedagogies in their academic teaching roles so that they could teach from a social justice position, which was using other pedagogies that do not only draw from the Western world. Black academics appeared committed to using transformative teaching approaches in their teaching and learning, seen in the combination of critical, reformist, constructivist, and socially just pedagogies that informed their classrooms (Asakura et al., 2020). These pedagogies were aimed at challenging how academics believed knowledge should be produced or delivered in their teaching and learning perfomance area.

Some participants mentioned that their love for teaching large classes was because they were able to suitably apply dialogue and debate as students from diverse social backgrounds were able to learn from multiple perspectives. The aim of this approach was to help students learn from a reflective body of knowledge with an appreciation of multiple views and a critical awareness of that knowledge is debatable and they therefore do not have to accept what they are taught in class as ultimate and correct (Omiunota, 2009 cited by Asakura et al., 2020). This pedagogy could also be seen as Ubuntu pedagogy because it considered multiple views brought in curriculum by various students who are taught by Black academics. In their study on Ubuntu pedagogy, Ngubane and Mukua (2021, p.1) observed that using Ubuntu pedagogy in higher education teaching and learning holds the potential "of reconnecting students with their values

and cultures, but it has the capacity to cultivate social justice values of equity, recognition and fair participation amongst students from diverse social backgrounds". Black academics in this study had similar conceptions about teaching and learning. Their conceptions were that teaching a large population of students from diverse backgrounds potentially nurtured Ubuntu pedagogy because students were recognised and given the epistemological responsibility to teach others, share their own thoughts, and contribute to knowledge development in the classroom.

Pedagogical approaches and methods in the landscape of South African higher education remain Western and European centred. They do not recognise or validate African indigenous methods such as Ubuntu and African scholarship in teaching and learning (Letseka 2014 cited by Ngubane & Mukua, 2021). Indigenous African teaching philosophies are labelled as illegitimate for thinking about and producing knowledge. The 2015-2016 #FMF Black student led campaign and academics demanded decolonised education and African-enhanced pedagogies. Students and other progressive Black academics in other words were calling for recognition which symbolised an idea that curriculum does not relate to the way they think, exist, and conceptualise knowledge (Luckett & Shay, 2020). To Fraser, they were calling for the injustices of misrecognition to be reformed (Fraser, 2009).

Black academics in this study believed that teaching and learning should not be taken as '*an priori'*, already given, and decontextualised but should be taken to students for further critique and that students should be encouraged to challenge beliefs and values around teaching and learning (Asakura et al., 2020). They called for student agency whereby students are given the role of determining pedagogic approaches they considered as socially just and transformative (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015). The above-theorised interpretations of Black academics evidenced that academics do attempt to break away from their conventional and traditional approaches of teaching and learning by using transformative dialogue and debate approaches to bring students voices to the centre of the curriculum. They believed that this brought socially just pedagogies when teaching culturally diverse students. They revealed the struggles and injustices of misrecognition where knowledge and pedagogies of teaching the curriculum largely falsify indigenous thinking pedagogies and draw from marginalising Eurocentric models. In an attempt to disrupt these marginalising models, they introduced African literary texts in the scholarship of teaching and learning as a way of reframing indigenous thinking in the curriculum.

Black academics tested their teaching approaches by allowing students to reflectively critique them. This suggested that Black academics understood that teaching and learning should be taken to students and that students should self-confirm and own their learning. A study about the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) (Griffits, 2004 cited by Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2016, p. 110) confirmed that the SoTL "in many cases, it also includes students as researchers of their own learning and as knowledge producers". Black academics' commitment to using transformative pedagogies in this study was hence evident as recommended by the SoTL. This was because academics believed that reflective practice was essential in refining their pedagogical approaches. To achieve this, they involved students as active participants in the learning process, soliciting their feedback on teaching strategies and encouraging them to review and monitor their own learning.

7.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, theoretically discussed and interpreted were the findings of the study using Nancy Fraser's social justice theory drawing from her three dimensions; the economic, cultural, and political dimensions. Findings were also discussed and interpreted under the fourth added dimension, the epistemic dimension. These discussions and interpretations happened under the three KPA's of an academic; teaching and learning, research and community engagement as the analytical frameworks that underpinned the decolonial commitments of the study.

The economic dimension under this chapter was analysed as social justice based on the economic struggles surrounding the three roles of an academic: teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. In the economic dimension, participants raised struggles of economic maldistribution around the allocation of financial resources in fulfilling their three roles. They called for financial resource allocation and redistribution in the form of university funding provision to purchase more technology and restructure the architecture and composition of their teaching spaces under the teaching and learning role. Black academics under the research publication role also called for financial support to carry out their research activities. Under research supervision they urged for economic capital whereby supervisors provide funding to their postgraduate students so that they could assist struggling students to navigate poverty with some social justice initiative. When it came to the role of community engagement, participating Black academics pointed out economic struggles of limited funding

towards this role. They then suggested that more funding in the form of incentives should go towards community engagement so that it can be seriously taken as another important role of an academic.

The cultural dimension titled social justice as cultural understanding in this chapter focused largely on teaching and research. In this dimension, the voices of Black academics were theorised around the outcry of being imposed and denied the chance to use their local languages in teaching and research. Black academics noted struggles of misrecognition and cultural alienation as the English language was given a superior status compared to their local languages. The participants proposed the decolonisation of language in the academy by being allowed to teach students using local languages and being allowed to synthesise and theorise research publications using African languages.

The political dimension under this chapter was discussed as political struggles from a social justice perspective. Black academics noted a misrepresentation of their voices in academic writing genres and styles because of being politically suppressed as they had to follow and subscribe to European standards of academic writing and publishing. Decolonisation was seen as necessary by Black academics in their work of publishing research articles. They argued that it was important to write academic research work and unpack knowledge from African standards of understanding. Black academics also brought to attention the mis-framing of their voices in postgraduate research work when they were students. One key recommendation proposed by academics was transformation, which entailed postgraduate research supervisors initiating students into academic culture. This could be achieved by providing financial support for students to attend conferences and encouraging them to present their research independently, thereby empowering them to produce knowledge in their own voices.

The epistemic dimension in the chapter, titled "Engaging Knowledge through Transformative Pedagogies as Social Justice" was elaborated. This dimension revealed that South African higher education pedagogies, approaches, and academic reading materials were predominantly Eurocentric, disregarding African indigenous teaching methods. Black academics corroborated these findings, sharing their experiences of marginalisation in teaching and learning roles. To counter these struggles, they employed dialogue and debate to transform teaching methods from a social justice perspective and incorporated African-authored texts to promote an epistemically balanced curriculum.

The next chapter provides a summary of the study's key findings, discusses the implications and limitations of the research, and offers recommendations for future inquiries.

Chapter Eight

Contributions, Implications and Conclusions

8.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the study analysed and theorised the findings using Nancy Fraser's social justice theory. In this chapter, provided are the contributions, implications and limitations of this study. The chapter proceeds in three stages. Firstly, the key findings of the study are presented. Secondly, the theoretical contributions of the study are discussed, and a social justice framework for re-imagining a decolonised and transformed university is proposed. Thirdly, the implications of the study for future research are explored, and the study is concluded.

8.2. A Reflection on Findings

The study aims were to 1) Identify Black academics struggle for transformation in teaching and learning, research and community engagement in one South African higher education institution the study took place in. 2) Identify the extent Black academics believe the university should be re-purposed to a decolonial university. 3) Determine the landscape of transformation in the South African higher education sector and the one institution the study focused on. The findings reflected on this section were discussed and analysed in the findings chapter and the theorising of findings chapter. These findings were informed by two key-critical research questions which were: 1) What are Black academics voices in the struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution? 2) How do Black academics perceive a decolonial university in the struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution? In responding to the research aims and research questions, several themes emerged from the data. These themes appeared under three KPA's of an academic; teaching and learning, research and community engagement that were used as decolonial analytical frameworks in this study.

The themes which are reflected on that emerged as key under teaching and learning are language racism and teaching spaces and transformative pedagogies however localising language in research was also evident. The research theme in this study was broken down into two research (supervision) and research (publications). Under research (supervision) the key

emergent themes were that of respect and academic agency. Research publications had the key theme of decolonise the mind. The last analytical framework of the study; community engagement yielded key themes such of community engagement as not data mining and the university at the forefront of community engagement.

Participants had individual ways of conceptualising a decolonial university and explained unique struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution. All of these conceptualisations and explanations, however, must be understood as one because they contributed to the inclusive and broader transformation struggles of Black academics in South African higher education. While several themes emerged from the findings of the study, only highlighted and discussed are themes that were considered important transformation struggles for Black academics in this study. The rationale for prioritising some themes over others was because of their conceptual relevance to the South African research context, the Black academic population, and the phenomenon studied (Maxwell, 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2020). Others were prioritised because they had theoretical significance and or the potential to contribute to existing theories (Nancy Frasers theory in the case of this study) and or frameworks (Aktas framework that drew from Frasers framework in this study) (Eisenhardt, Graebner & Sonenshein, 2020).

8.2.1. Language Racism and Decolonial Research

The findings revealed that there were major challenges around the language of teaching in a South African higher education institution. Most Black academics who participated in this study agreed that there was language racism and limiting teaching spaces since the language of instruction was English and their teaching spaces did not allow them to teach in other meaningful ways. Black academics found themselves limited in two ways; only using English and being confined to teaching in lecture halls with standardised structural designs that did not allow them to flexibly explore or introduce new pedagogic approaches. While South Africa is a nation-state with rich language diversity, English and Afrikaans continue to be used as sole languages of instruction (Foley, 2004). Black academics considered this racist because African indigenous languages were marginalised in the apartheid university context and still continue to be underused in the democratic epoch which serves as a barrier to learning.

The language policy for higher education document (2002) also stated that language has been and still serves as an obstacle to access and success in South African higher education in two ways. 1) African and indigenous languages remain underdeveloped in academia even though they are useable languages of instruction, and 2) a large number of students in South African higher education are not fully proficient to learn using English and Afrikaans (Ministry of Education, 2002). As a result, Black academics saw the language of teaching and learning as racially colonial, derogatory and marginalising.

Black academics thus revealed that the language of instruction should be decolonised and that their teaching spaces be transformed. The decolonisation of language they maintained should happen by incorporating African languages in the instruction model of university teaching and learning. The transformation of limiting and constraining teaching spaces was also suggested and the way put forward by Black academics was the need to redesign the architecture of university teaching spaces. Language racism was also evident in research. A significant finding of this study was the issue of localising and contextualising the language of research. Participants confirmed their struggles with being restricted to using English as the only language of researching, writing, and publishing their work. Participants emphasised that utilising their indigenous languages for writing and interpreting research could afford them prospects to tap into their cultural knowledge and perspectives, leading to more nuanced, effective and productive scholarship and or research outcomes.

8.2.2. Transformative Pedagogies

Black academics shared that teaching at university was a huge responsibility for which they had to think of more enabling and transformative pedagogical approaches. Participants argued that teaching and learning did not happen in a vacuum, and they reflected on their teaching practice by seeking student input. Participants identified this as transformative pedagogy because it centralised them into learning positions and altered their teaching approaches based on the feedback received from their students.

Transformative pedagogies for participants involved creating a South Africa-specific curriculum, which entailed decolonising the Western-centric curriculum by integrating African literature and scholarly texts. Some participants admitted that they had mainly relied on the traditional lecture method of teaching and learning which changed with the emergence of

COVID-19 pandemic to a more online and blended teaching approach. In the blended approach, participants found themselves using both the traditional teaching methods and learner-centred teaching methods which they found transformative, allowing them to engage with their students, and making teaching larger classes more manageable.

8.2.3. Respect and Academic Agency

Participants indicated under their role of research (supervision) that postgraduate student-supervisor relationships should be based on respect and agency, where the student and supervisor equally respect and trust each other. Respect for participants meant allowing students to take ownership of their work so that the marginalisation of postgraduate students' voices can be transformed. Participants had experienced supervisors who were disrespectful and imposing to postgraduate students. Participants, reflecting on their own experiences as former graduate students, revealed that they faced resistance when attempting to produce knowledge in their own unique writing styles within postgraduate education. To transform supervision, they recommended 1) allowing postgraduate students to learn and research at their own pace and in their own understanding of academic writing. 2) Providing students with the autonomy to lead and live their social lives, recognising that academic life is not the sole priority. 3). Emphasising to students the need for striking a balance between academic responsibilities and personal well-being. By implementing these changes, participants envisioned a more inclusive and supportive postgraduate education environment.

Participants also emphasised that academic supervisors should take proactive steps to integrate postgraduate students into the academic community. They believed this can be achieved by involving students in conferences and research publications to foster a sense of control and agency over their academic pursuits. Collaborating with students in epistemic endeavours was also highlighted as transforming the supervision role from a top-down approach to a more inclusive and participatory one. By working together participants were convinced that supervisors and students can co-create knowledge, and students can gain valuable insights into the nature of academic work, ultimately enriching their research experiences.

8.2.4. Decolonise the Mind

Colonial dominance in Africa was seen as a problem by most participants who noted that all aspects of our lives have to be decolonised because our way of being and living are completely defined by internalised colonialism. The participants saw an urgent need to undo the harms and burdens of colonialism by firstly decolonising the mind. The participants highlighted the harmful repercussions of colonialism and colonial research, which they attributed to the perpetuation of a colonised mindset. To break free from these shackles participants brought to the fore that, academics must decolonise their minds, by extending decolonisation efforts to all aspects of their academic and personal lives, fostering a more inclusive and equitable approach to knowledge production and dissemination. By acknowledging and addressing these colonial legacies, participants considered that academics can work towards more liberatory and empowering research paradigms.

Recommendations by Black academics in this study were that research should be approached from both decolonial and transformative praxis by not only using European but also African-developed research methods, theories, and by association drawing from the work of African scholars as well. The use of African epistemic traditions and theories developed in Africa as a reference point in academic research work was seen as fitting and useful in promoting multiple worldviews if a move towards decolonised academy is to be reality in the future which is what the study focused on.

8.2.5. Community Engagement as not Data Mining

The participants advocated for decolonising community engagement from its colonial logic by moving away from exploitative and unethical practices of academics treating communities as mere data sources. They criticised this prevalent approach where academics visit vulnerable communities to mine, extract data, and depart without contributing to meaningful social change. Participants highlighted instances of exploitative and unethical behaviour, such as academics offering incentives to desperate communities in exchange for data, without addressing the underlying challenges. To transform community engagement, participants envisioned collaborative and participatory action research methodologies that empower communities to define their struggles and solutions, foster equal power relations between researchers and community members and prioritise social transformation and community benefit. Overall, genuine researcher-community collaborations aimed at driving social change were thus seen as essential to decolonising community engagement.

8.2.6. The University at the Forefront of Community Engagement

Participants in this study viewed community engagement as a neglected aspect of academic roles. These findings were consistent with existing literature, which highlighted community engagement as an overlooked academic responsibility in South African higher education institutions (Dube & Hendricks, 2023; Mohale, 2023; Bidandi, Ambe & Mukong, 2021). Black academics noted that the complexity and ambiguity of definitions surrounding community engagement in different higher education institutions may have contributed to its neglect. Despite being a relatively new concept in South African higher education, participants emphasised the need for universities to be at the forefront of spearheading community engagement alongside teaching, learning, and research so that it may pursued relatively more by academics. To achieve this, participants recommended that universities need to foster a culture of community engagement through targeted initiatives and promotions, allocate increased funding to support community-engaged research and provide compensation for community-engaged research work to motivate academics to pursue this aspect of their role more.

8.3. Theoretical Contributions

This study, situated within the context of reimagining a decolonial university, drew on Nancy Fraser's social justice theory to explore the voices of Black academics in a South African higher education institution. Fraser's theory posited that social justice encompasses three interconnected dimensions, the economic (redistribution), cultural (recognition) and political (representation) dimensions. Recognising the limitations of Fraser's original framework, this study introduced an additional dimension: the epistemic (knowledge production and validation). This expanded framework provided a more comprehensive understanding of social justice, acknowledging the critical role of knowledge systems in perpetuating or challenging dominant power structures.

In the economic dimension Fraser advocated for equal distribution of wealth, to enable all individuals to participate meaningfully in society. In the cultural dimension she proposed recognising and representing diverse cultures of social groups within social institutions. In the political dimension Fraser emphasised the importance of oppressed groups having a voice and

achieving representation, regardless of location, as transnational politics increasingly shape representation. The epistemic dimension (as extended by this study) argued for a “pluriversity” of epistemic orientations within universities, allowing for knowledge production that draws upon and navigates multiple perspectives.

This study theoretical contributed to Nancy Fraser's social justice theory across her multiple dimensions. In the economic dimension, Black academics emphasised the need for redistribution through university investment in reconstructing teaching and learning spaces, enabling efficient participation in the academy. They also advocated for investing in technology to enhance instruction and student learning experiences. In the cultural dimension, Black academics expressed frustration with being forced to use dominant theoretical frameworks and language in their research. They called for recognition of African scholars' theories, promoting cognitive justice and diversity.

The political dimension, focused on representation, revealed the need for respect and agency in postgraduate supervision, allowing students to take ownership of their research. Black academics also emphasised the importance of student input in transformative pedagogies and the centring of community voices in community engagement, and prioritising collaborative knowledge production. The epistemic dimension, an extension of Fraser's theory, highlighted the need to incorporate African traditional knowledge into university curricula, making it a central component of academic programmes.

These findings theoretically underscored the importance of addressing the economic, cultural, political, and epistemic inequalities in higher education, promoting a more inclusive and socially just academic environment.

8.4. Social Justice Framework for re-imagining a Decolonial University

In observing and reflecting on the findings from this study, a social justice framework for re-imagining a decolonial university and for the transformation of struggles that appeared in the study from exploring the voices of Black academics in a South African higher education institution was developed: see figure 8.1 below.

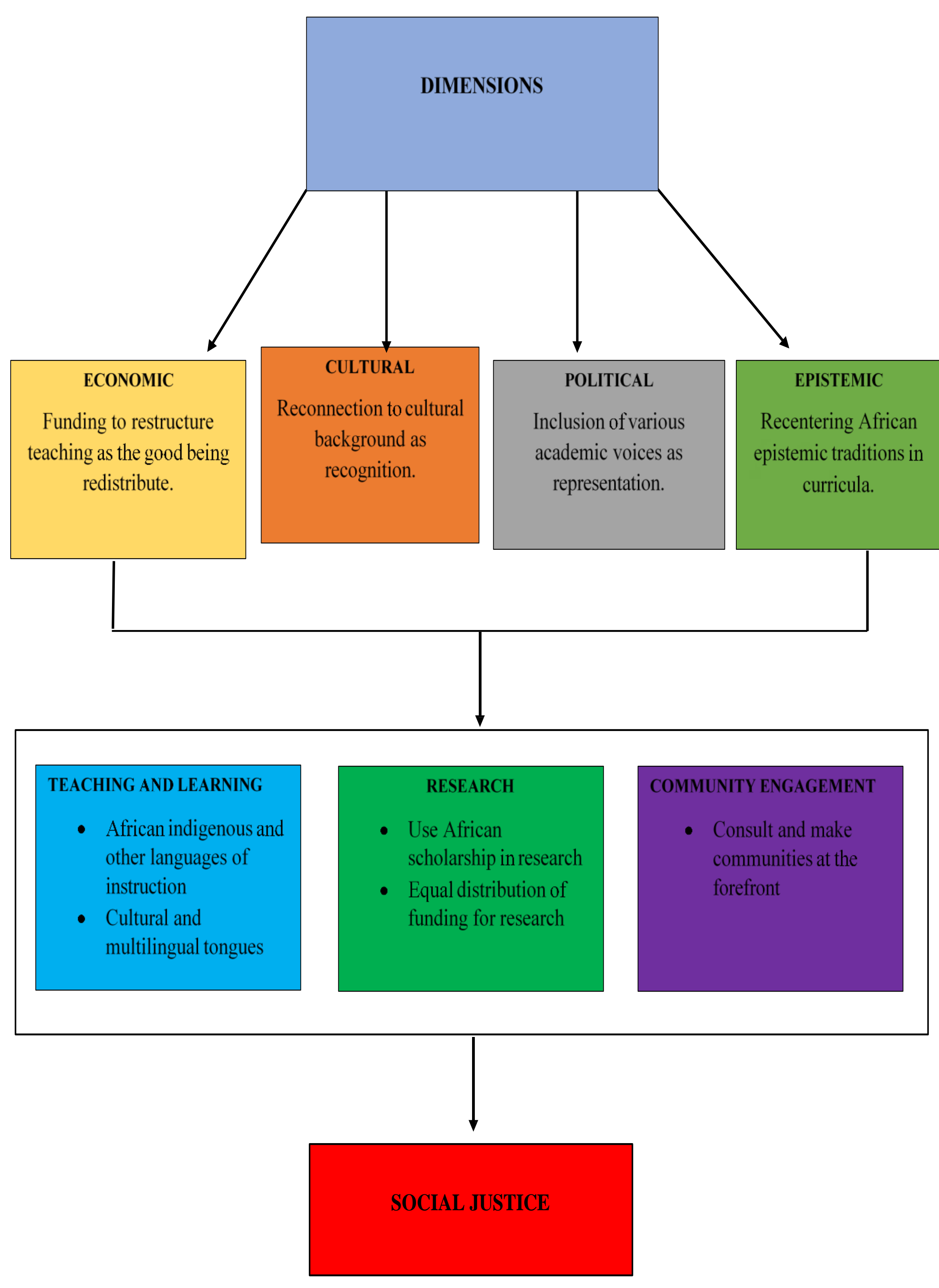

Figure 8.1. Social Justice Framework for re-imagining a decolonial university: an extension of Aktas's (2021) social justice proposed framework.

This study's social justice framework builds upon Aktas's (2021) framework, which was rooted in Fraser's participatory parity social justice theory. While Aktas's work focused solely on teaching, aiming to integrate students into lecture-based learning, this study's framework expands to encompass all three KPA's of academics. This broader scope aligns with the study's decolonial analytical framework, providing a more comprehensive approach to promoting social justice in academia.

Extending Nancy Fraser's social justice framework into a new model for reimagining a decolonial university was not only informed by previous studies but was also deeply anchored and enriched through case study design and qualitative approaches that brought out the findings of the study. By using case study design, the researcher of this study was able to thoroughly explore specific contextual social (in)justice dynamics prevailing and experienced by Black academics. The case study approach laced into various scholars arguments that to reimagine a truly decolonial university, Fraser's framework must be expanded to address ontological and epistemological erasures—issues her framework might not fully capture. For example, Adam (2024) suggested integrating decolonial and de-secularising critiques into Fraser's justice model to better reflect the plural knowledge traditions and experiences marginalised by Western secular modernity. Moreover, Zulu (2021) exemplified how Black women professors advance social justice through mentoring and leadership, exposing gaps in both recognition and representation that Fraser's original framework identified. By using the case study approach, the researcher was therefore able to thoroughly explore individual and collective experiences of Black academics on navigating a decolonial academy and the struggles of university transformation. The case study approach through focusing on Black academics voices thus enabled the researcher to critique and enrich Fraser's model based on situated experiences of systemic marginalisation attempting to contribute to the identified gaps.

The qualitative data generation approaches of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions on the other hand allowed distinct analysis of how Black academics experience maldistribution of resources (funding and promotions), misrecognition (cultural and intellectual contributions) and misrepresentation (leadership, voice and decision making) (Ajani, 2024). Through deep and detailed case analysis, Fraser's dimensions were expanded to incorporate power, voice, culture, experience and unjust epistemic erasures of African knowledge systems that Black academics endure. In summary, the qualitative case study

research and data generation approaches were not merely tools for applying Fraser's model- they were avenues for transforming and extending it. They provided critical research based approaches needed to evolve Fraser's framework into one that can think anew coloniality, epistemic injustice and global power dynamics, allowing for a more context-sensitive and decolonial reimagination of justice in the academy. This methodological combination ensured that Fraser's theory was not just abstract—it became empirically grounded**,** responsive to real-world injustices, and adaptable to emergent social realities. It also promoted praxis, where theory informs action and vice versa as highlighted below.

The proposed framework suggests that addressing the colonial legacy and transformation struggles in South African higher education, as highlighted by Black academics in this study, requires consideration of the four social justice dimensions: economic, cultural, political, and epistemic. Within the economic dimension, a decolonial university can emerge through redistributive funding whereby there is allocating of more resources to universities to redesign teaching spaces, enabling academics to explore diverse pedagogical approaches in what Mbembe (2016) called "classrooms with no walls". Moreover, a transformed university can emerge within the economic dimension by governments provision of structural development funding for university research, particularly benefiting Black academics who face significant funding constraints, as evident in this study. These strategies align with Fraser's (2009) emphasis on redistribution and reallocation of academic resources, fostering a more equitable and transformative academic environment.

Under the cultural dimension, the framework proposes that allowing Black academics to teach from their indigenous knowledge backgrounds enables them to reconnect with their cultural heritage, promoting a sense of belonging and identity in the academy where everyone can participate with equal social esteem, free from cultural domination or marginalisation. In the political dimension, the framework suggests that a decolonial university can emerge and transformation can occur when Black academics are empowered to write in their own styles, voices and are able to draw from and centre African scholars and scholarship, promoting a more inclusive and representative academic landscape. This enables the representation of diverse academic voices, challenging dominant narratives and promoting epistemic diversity. The epistemic dimension is crucial in realising a decolonial university by undoing the dominant knowledge production paradigm and creating space for diverse epistemologies, shifting from colonial-era practices that sideline community struggles and prioritize data extraction, to an

emancipatory approach that centres community voices and addresses their pressing concerns. This framework argues that social injustices in teaching and learning, research, and community engagement must be addressed through a comprehensive social justice approach, prioritising the empowerment and upliftment of marginalised communities. Only then can social justice be made manifest in the three KPA's of an academic for a true realisation of a decolonial university and transformed South African higher education institutions.

8.4.1. Implications for Future Research

This study was conducted at a HBU in the KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. A similar study can be conducted in a HWU which can offer further insight on a decolonial university and the struggles for transformation that Black academics are facing. This is because HWU's are characterised by unique colonial challenges and issues of transformation. HWU's are strategically located in geographic contexts that have predominantly White populations with the Black population being the minority. Therefore, a study conducted in a different context such as a HWU where Black academics are a minority population could yield different findings about their perspectives of a decolonial university and their challenges of transformation in higher education.

The findings revealed that there were decolonial challenges and transformation struggles tied to connecting higher education to communities and not just mining data, changing the language of research and teaching, and offering equal funding for academic's research and teaching. Going forward, it maybe be invaluable for future research to use the proposed social justice framework for re-imagining a decolonial university and investigate the realities of any sustained changes on teaching, research and community engagement struggles experienced by Black academics. Findings from such a kind of a study may in turn be useful for informing other education researchers on how to use the proposed framework to approach a decolonial study focusing and or centred on teaching and learning, research and community engagement. The Black academics who participated in this study were a mix of early career and older career academics, where older career academics had ten to fifteen years of work experience, and early career academics had five to ten years of work experience at the university. Consequently, their conceptualisation of a decolonial university were diverse. The opportunities of more diverse participants were however not totally exhausted in this study. A study therefore that focuses on the forgotten experiences of Black disabled academics might offer much more complex and

nuanced findings about decolonising and transforming South African higher education institutions.

One of the findings from the study on teaching and learning was that academics need to engage in transformative reflective practices through allowing students to critique their teaching for improvement. Additional findings highlighted the importance of collaborative knowledge production as academics acknowledged that their ideas are not exhaustive, and postgraduate students' voices and inputs are valuable in generating knowledge. In community engagement, there was also a similar finding to that of teaching and research where academics also emphasised that communities should take ownership of addressing their underlying problems, rather than relying solely on academic leadership. To further enhance academic practice, the study suggests conducting action research on academics' perspectives regarding reflective practice and its application to their KPA's. This would assess academics' understanding of reflective practice and their ability to make informed decisions about their work. Findings from such a study would help inform academics and university management on how to develop decolonial and transformative alternative approaches to teaching, research, and community engagement since a social justice framework demands university stakeholders to find ways to foster positive social change.

8.5. Conclusion

The researcher embarked this study with limited understanding of the concepts of transformation and decolonisation in the South African higher education context. Having negligibly experienced and witnessed the 2015-2016 #FMF student protests on his campus as an undergraduate, he lacked a deeper comprehension of the students' demands. However, through immersive engagement with scholarly literature, academic communities of practice, and insightful conversations with Black academics participating in this study, the researcher gained a profound understanding of the true meaning of transformation and the imperative for decolonising South African higher education.

The researcher's experiences during the 2015-2016 student campaign sparked a desire to understand how Black academics navigate colonial universities and address transformation struggles within their KPA's: teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. Notably, the researcher framed this study within the theoretical lens of Fraser's social justice

theory, providing a platform for Black academics to articulate the social injustices they face and envision possibilities for transformative change.

Upon completing the study, the researcher revisited the initial research aims to demonstrate how they were addressed. The findings revealed that Black academics vocally expressed their struggles for transformation within a university that perpetuates colonial logics in its KPA's. They emphasised the complexity and challenges of undoing colonial practices, citing the undemocratic and imposed nature of knowledge production, which remains rooted in Eurocentric epistemes. The study's aims were also fulfilled as Black academics shared their emergent fight for recognition of their perspectives, experiences, and thoughts on transformed teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. These academics envisioned a decolonial university that centres African epistemic traditions, fostering inclusive and public institutions.

In conclusion, the researcher notes that the journey towards a decolonial and transformed university requires relentless efforts, acknowledging the global scope of the colonial project. Re-centring African knowledge systems demands committed decolonial practitioners. Moreover, recognising that decolonisation is a complex, lengthy process that requires time and patience, dedication is crucial for meaningful transformative discourses.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Copy of the Email Sending Invitations to Research Participants.

Appendix: Email to prospective research participants

Dear Prospective Participant

Student number: 214501893

Study title: Re-imagining a decolonial university? Exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution.

My name is Zamokuhle Wiseman Magubane (214501893), and I am a pursuing a PhD degree at the university of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education, Edgewood campus under the discipline of Curriculum Studies. I am under the supervision of Dr. Thabile Aretha Zondi. My study is on re-imagining a decolonial university? Happening by exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggles for transformation in a South African higher education institution. I would like to humbly request you to be one of the participants in my study.

Please be aware and take notice of that I have attached my group ethical clearance letter, informed consent letter and my approved research study proposal. I have done this for your convenience and perusal so that you become more familiar with what the study is about and what your participation in the study will be like.

All interview sessions will be conducted online through the zoom online meeting platform since for this part of this semester we are still under online teaching and learning.
Should you accept and agree to participate in the study, do let me know of your availability and I am more than willing to work with your proposed times and schedules.

Yours sincerely,
Zamokuhle Magubane.

Appendix B: Consent letters

University of KwaZulu-Natal, College of Humanities, Education Studies Cluster, Discipline: Curriculum Studies.

INFORMED CONSNENT LETTER/FORM

Dear prospective participants,

I am Mr. Zamokuhle Wiseman Magubane, a PhD candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education. I write this letter to you kindly requesting you to take a moment of your time to collaboratively participate in a research study. My research study seeks to re-imagine a decolonial university by exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution. Should you choose to part-take in this study, the information session through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions will last for a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of 60 minutes. To accommodate your academic duties and responsibilities, the times and dates of these information sessions are negotiable so that they can be conducive to you.

Please be aware:

- You have a choice to either take part or not take part in this research study. In addition to that, you are allowed to excuse yourself from taking part in the study at any given time. You will not be fined or requested to provide an explanation for withdrawing in the study.
- Your head of department and or line manager has been contacted through a formal request outlining the topic, research objectives and methods for permission to conduct this study with you as a way of addressing any gatekeeping concerns your department head might have on the study's impact on workload, confidentiality and potential disruptions.
- Under no circumstances will you be required to take part in this study by force and you will not be subjected to any risks or hazards.
- You are taking part in the study on a voluntary basis for only academic intentions and no remuneration benefits or awards will be given to you for taking part in this study.

- The views and ideas you share during the information session in the interviews and focus group discussions will not be used for other purposes but only for research purposes nor will they be used against you.
- Your confidentiality will be guaranteed as when taking part in this study I will not use your real names to report your views as findings of this study but I will use pseudonyms.
- The data/information you provide as informing this study will be securely stored in a data cabinet file and will thereafter be destroyed after five years.
- If you choose to take part in the study, please indicate by placing a tick where applicable that you consent to being audio taped by me for the interview sessions:

	If consent	**If do not consent**
To be audio recoded	I consent to be audio recoded	I do not consent to being audio recorded

For further queries or concerns you may have regarding this study, you are more than welcome to contact me. I am reachable on:

E-mail: 214501893@stu.ukzn.ac.za/

Cell phone:

You can also contact my respective supervisor Dr Thabile Aretha Zondi based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's School of Education. Her contact information is as follows:

Ms. Thabile Zondi
E-mail: Zondit2@ukzn.ac.za
Tel: 031 260 1379

You may also contact the Research Office through: Ms. Duduzile Dlamini
HSSREC Research Office administrator E-mail: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za
Tel: 031 260 4557
Thank you for taking your time to partake in this study and contribute.

DECLARATION

I____________________________ (Name and Surname of contributing academic) do understand the purpose of this research and agree to take part in it and contribute

I am well aware that I am given the choice to withdraw my participation at any given time from this study and that should I wish to do so I can request this from to sign and confirm my withdrawal.

Signature______________________________ **Date____________________________**

Appendix C: Results of the Pilot-test

Research Method	Suitability for the study	Conclusion or decision reached
Semi-Structured Interviews	Physical-face-to-face interviews were not suitable for this study during the data generation stage as it happened while we were in the lockdown period because of the COVID-19 pandemic	To observe and respect the social distancing protocols of the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted online using the Zoom online meeting
Focus Group Discussions	Physical-face-to-face group discussions were not suitable for the study during the data generation stage of the study as this stage happened while we were in lockdown because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.	To observe and respect the social distancing protocols of the COVID-19 pandemic, group discussions were conducted online using the Zoom online meeting platform.
Challenges/Limitations	Some questions in the interviews were unclear and could have possibly have been interpreted different by participants which could have yielded data that was not richly focused into the study.	The questions were edited, revised, corrected and rewritten so that they were clear and in line with the focus of the study and the data that was sought after in the study.

Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview and Focus Group Discussion Questions

Section A: On teaching

- Describe your teaching for me. What are you teaching and how do you envision transformative pedagogy?
- Do you see a need to change your teaching? Yes, no? if no, why not? If yes, how can we change teaching and learning to a decolonial discourse?
- Do you have any teaching Strategy? Philosophy? Vision? If yes, what is it? If no, why not?
- If possible, can you share what an exciting class would look like for you?
- Any importance in terms of enrolment in your teaching and learning? What would your preferable student number-ratio be and why?
- Anything you would like to change about your current teaching?

Section B: On research (Supervision)

- Do you still remember how you were supervised in your Masters/PhD? How was the experience of being supervised?
- How do you conduct your supervision?
- Any supervision strategy/vision /approach that you prefer?
- Anything you would like to change about your current supervision?
- What would an inclusive postgraduate research supervision relationship look like for you?

Section C: On research (Research)

- Tell me a bit about your academic research life. What research are you currently involved in? Why are your research interests in this project?
- What decolonial research initiative would you like to uptake or be involved in?
- Do you believe that research has to be decolonised? Yes, No? If yes, how can we change research to a transformative and decolonial way? If no, why not?
- What would you like to change about research at your institution?
- Do you have a vision of decolonial research? if yes, what is it? If no, why not?

Section D: On community engagement

- Have you ever been involved in transformative community engagement projects? In future, what other projects would you like to be involved in?
- Tell me about your understanding of community engagement? What is your understanding of decolonial and transformative community engagement?
- Do you have any experiences on community engagement projects? Yes, No? if yes, what are they and what were they like? If no, why not?
- How can we transform and decolonise community engagements at the university?
- Do you see a need for authentic transformative community engagements at the university? If yes, how can they be made? If no, why not?

Appendix E: Copy of the Approved Ethical Clearance Letter for this Research Project.

21 July 2021

Dr Mlamuli Hlatshwayo 59225
Ms Thabile Zondi
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Dr Hlatshwayo and Ms Zondi

Protocol reference number: HSS/0240/019
Project Title: RE-centering and re-presenting students' and lecturers voices in the South African higher education curriculum and transformation discourses.

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 18 June 2021 has now been approved as follows:

- Addition of co-investigators: Amanda Mbatha 200100456, Bongiwe Majozi 221116173, Bongiwe Ngcobo 208505717, Cheslynn Van De Merwe 984173687, Nkululeko Majozi 213510100, Daphene Pillay 216074163, Thobile Mabuza 214584579, Zamokuhle Magubane 214501893, Thobile Dlamini 221119575, Innocentia Alexander 212545769, Ayanda Ndlovu 212548717

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

CORRECTED LETTER

....

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr A Pillay
cc School Administrators: Ms S Jeenarain, Ms M Ngcobo, Ms N Dlamini and Mr SN Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix F: Language Editor Report.

Dr Jabulani Sibanda
Senior Lecturer: English Education
School of Education
Tel: (053) 491-0142
Email:Jabulani.Sibanda@spu.ac.za
Alternate e-mail: [redacted]
Website: www.spu.ac.za
Cell: [redacted]
05 April 2024

LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

LANGUAGE EDITING DECLARATION	I confirm that I have proofread and edited the **Dissertation** detailed below, using the Windows 'Tracking' System to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the author(s) to action.		
DETAILS OF WORK COMPLETED	**Language Editing** **Document Type:** Dissertation **Title:**. Re-imagining a decolonial university? Exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transformation in a South African higher education institution.		
CLIENT'S DETAILS	**Author:** Zamokuhle Magubane **Student no.:** 214501893 **Affiliation:** University of KwaZulu-Natal		
EDITOR'S DETAILS	Dr Jabulani Sibanda PhD English Education		SARS Tax number [redacted]
Although the greatest care was taken in editing this document, the final responsibility for the product rests with the author(s).			
SIGNATURE	[redacted]	**DATE**	05.05.2024

This certificate confirms the language editing I have done in my personal capacity and not on behalf of SPU

Appendix G: Turnitin Report.

Re-imagining a decolonial university? Exploring the voices of Black academics in the struggle for transfromation in a South African higher education institution.

ORIGINALITY REPORT

9%	7%	6%	2%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

#	Source	Type	%
1	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za	Internet Source	2%
2	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal	Student Paper	1%
3	repository.up.ac.za	Internet Source	<1%
4	vital.seals.ac.za:8080	Internet Source	<1%
5	repository.nwu.ac.za	Internet Source	<1%
6	journals.ufs.ac.za	Internet Source	<1%
7	www.journals.ac.za	Internet Source	<1%
8	mafiadoc.com	Internet Source	<1%
9	hdl.handle.net	Internet Source	<1%