



**Academic Staff development in a changing South
African higher education context**

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requirements of the degree to be awarded:

**Doctor of Philosophy
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As the candidate's supervisor, I have approved this thesis for submission.

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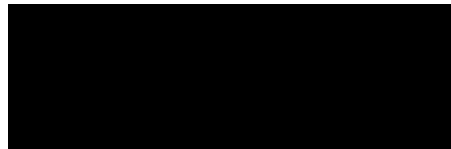

Date: 19 August 2025

Declaration

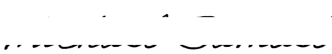
Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Discipline of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

I, NALINI CHITANAND, declare that:

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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06 February 2025

Name and Signature of Supervisor 

Name: Professor Michael Samuel

Date: 19 August 2025

Publications and Conference Presentations

Contributions towards the following publications have drawn on certain aspects of this study:

Chitanand, N., & Rathilal, S. (Eds.). (2023). *Academic Staff Development: Disruptions, Complexities, and Change (Envisioning New Futures)*. African Sun Media.

Ganas, R., Behari-Leak, K., **Chitanand, N.**, & Sabata, S. (2021). The Pedagogies for critical agency: Portals to alternative futures. *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning (CriSTaL)*, 9(SI), 15-37.

Behari-Leak, K., Ganas, R., **Chitanand, N.**, Sabata, S., Toni, N (2020). A deep dive into curriculum complexities in the time of COVID 19. In P. Ramrathan, N. Ndimande-Hlongwa & J.A. Smit. *Humanities Curriculum in the Time of COVID-19*. Alternations Book Series

Chitanand, N. (2019). Transcending Boundaries: Enacting a transformative philosophy for professional practice. In P. C. Taylor & B. C. Luitel (Eds), *Research as Transformative Learning for Sustainable Futures: Glocal Voices and Visions*, (pp. 279-299). Brill

Behari-Leak, K., Vorster, J., **Chitanand, N.**, Ganas, R., Padayachee, K., Merckel, V., & Masehela, L. (2018). How to be or not to be? A critical dialogue on the limitations and opportunities of academic development in the current higher education context. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 32(6), 401-421.

The following selected conference presentations drew on elements of this study:

Chitanand, N. *Cultivating ingenuity in staff professional learning: Broadening and shifting the gaze*. Learning & Teaching Imbizo, 16-18 October 2024, Durban, South Africa

Chitanand, N. *Developing a southern gaze for SoTL in South Africa*. ISSOTL, 8-11 November 2023, Utrecht, Netherlands

Chitanand, N. *Enacting Pluralism in Educational Research for Sustainable Futures*. Virtual International Congress for Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI), 19-22 May 2021 (Virtual conference) on Collaborative Futures in Qualitative Inquiry

Abstract (English)

This study explores the life history of academic staff development (ASD) within the context of South African higher education's significant transformation over the past three decades. Through a multiparadigmatic research design incorporating interpretivism, criticalism, and postmodernism, the research examines how academic staff developers enact their roles in response to changing institutional and national imperatives and investigates the underlying forces shaping these practices.

The study employs theoretical pluralism, drawing on Bourdieu's Field Theory, Samuel's Force Field Model, and Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory as an initial lens for this study. Data was produced from academic developers across a range of institutional types in South African higher education. Data was also produced through engaging senior academic developers located across the SA HE.

Through innovative representational strategies including narrative assemblages and a diffractive analysis, the research reveals ASD as a field-in-becoming characterised by rhizomatic features and complex entanglements between human and non-human actors. The study critically examines ASD's paradoxical nature through the concept of pharmakon, highlighting its simultaneous potential as both a benefit to and a constraint in addressing higher education challenges.

A key contribution of this research is the development of a southern gaze for ASD, grounded in decolonial praxis and an ethico-onto-epistemology. This perspective challenges the hegemony of Global North theories while advocating for more inclusive and transformative approaches through *embracing pluralism for academic staff development*. The study culminates in the proposal of the LOTUS RHIZE framework, which conceptualises ASD as a rhizomatous phenomenon capable of flourishing amid complexity through collaboration, dialogue, critique, and decolonial love.

Abstract (IsiZulu)

Dedication

To my Beloved Mother

the epitome of love and resilience

My mother was excited about this PhD and waited patiently for its completion

She transitioned from the material world three weeks

before I received the thesis results

I dedicate this thesis to My Mother

With all my love

Acknowledgements

In Hinduism, we subscribe to the philosophy *Mata, Pita, Guru, Deva*, which may be translated to *Mother, Father, Teacher, God*. This philosophy underscores that our mother and father are our first teachers, followed by all other teachers as we strive toward Godhead.

My parents exemplify this philosophy. They were the first teachers who ensured that education was always prioritised in our home. They have been my biggest cheerleaders and supporters throughout my studies, providing not just physical support but also immense emotional support. They have waited patiently for this submission, gently encouraging me at every step. I am profoundly grateful for their unwavering love, care and all they have provided.

My sincere thanks go to Professor Michael Samuel for his patience, dedication and unwavering support in seeing this study to fruition. Prof Samuel, you allowed me to experiment and play in all my methodological musings and you guided me along the way. Thank you for helping me grow as a scholar during this process.

I wish to also extend my sincerest gratitude to my master's supervisor, Professor Peter Charles Taylor, who introduced me to transformative education and innovative research design. Peter has admirably led the International Transformative Educational Research Network (ITERN) and has been a constant source of inspiration and support to my colleagues and me in ITERN.

To my loving husband, Vic and our children Mikal, Nikeel and Nikita: your love has been a constant source of strength, helping me see through the tough days. I am grateful to each of you for allowing me long periods of time away to complete this study. My children, you are my greatest teachers, from whom I learn more each day about love, life and becomings. Thank you, my darling children. My husband, Vic, your enduring love and patience have been invaluable; thank you for serving as my soundboard and listening to all my thoughts and ideas for this study. I truly value and appreciate you. I wish to also acknowledge my fur children, Raja and Roscoe, who have brought immense joy to our family.

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My participation in the two national projects has been crucial to my transformative journey. Thank you to Kasturi, Siyabulela, Rieta and Noluthando (from the NATHEP project) and Jo-Anne, Kibbie, and Xena (from the NADL project) for all the critical conversations we've had about transformative higher education and academic staff development.

My colleagues in the ITERN have been a constant source of inspiration for transformative education and education for sustainable development. Thank you to Peter T, Bal Chandra, Emilia, Bushra, Mangara, Milton, Naif, Neni, Nui, Peter HG, and Yuli. We have a home and a family in ITERN. Thank you for your support.

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I am extremely grateful to all my participants in this study who so graciously gave of their time amidst their hectic workloads. Your contribution to this thesis and academic development is greatly appreciated.

Finally, I am eternally thankful to God, the almighty, who has guided me throughout my study and my thirty years of serving as an academic developer in higher education.

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List of Abbreviations used

| | |
|------|---|
| AD | Academic Development |
| ASD | Academic staff development |
| CHE | Council on Higher Education |
| DHET | Department of Higher Education and Training |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| SA | South Africa |
| UCDG | University Capacity Development Grant |

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OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

In this doctoral study, I aimed to critically understand academic staff development in South Africa, what was, what is and to envision new possibilities for advancing the developing field within a rapidly changing higher education, society and world. The research undertaken in this study diverged from a traditional and linear process for inquiry and was rather emergent as the research progressed.

This section presents the various chapters in this thesis. The thesis comprises three parts: Section A, Section B and Section C.

| Section A Setting up the Study | Section B Tales of the Field | Section C Learning from Tales of the Field |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prelude: The Lotus - Embodying Pluralism• Chapter 1: Background and Context• Chapter 2: Exploring the shifting AD landscape• Chapter 3: Methodological Pluralism | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 4: Dialogues At Café <i>Spiralina</i>• Chapter 5: Narratives - Institution A• Chapter 6: Narratives - Institution B and C | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 7: Thinking with Theory and Diffractive entanglements• Chapter 8: A Biography of ASD• Chapter 9: Implications and Limitations• CODA: From Bricolage to Assemblage |

Figure A: Overview of Chapters in the thesis

SECTION A is concerned with knowing and representing the various contexts and setting up the study. This section consists of the Prelude and the first three chapters that discuss setting up of the study.

In the **Prelude**, I discuss the embodied nature of this study. I argue for a multiparadigmatic research design and connect this to my ontological positioning and cultural context and background. I draw on the metaphor of the lotus flower, which is associated with my name, and use this to make a case for a pluralistic approach to the study.

Chapter one presents the background and context of the study. Elaborating on my ASD position, positioning and experience, I discuss how this provided the impetus for my study. I then present the context by drawing on key aspects of the national and international HE and AD contexts and provide an overview of the national foci leading to ASD. I then provide the rationale for the study, outline the key critical questions guiding the study and explain the significance of this research inquiry. I have included a timeline of this research undertaking in Appendix 1, page 342.

Chapter two elaborates on the shifting ASD landscape. In this chapter, I pay homage to my AD/ASD predecessors who have engaged in AD and ASD inquiry within the national and international contexts.

This chapter consists of two parts.

In Part A, I explore the shifting AD and ASD landscape by focusing on 4 key aspects of the global and local literature, namely, the contestations, roles and changing discourses of AD/ASD, the scholarly foci, challenges experienced in the field, and the need for more deliberate critical inquiry.

In Part B, espousing theoretical pluralism, I present the three theoretical positions that have guided the conceptualisation of this study, the field work undertaken and the initial analysis and interpretation of data. In this section, I draw on Bourdieu's Field theory, Samuel's force field model and transformative learning.

In **Chapter three**, I present the methodological approach and argue for a multiparadigmatic research design with an Integral perspective. I then qualify the choice of a Critical Narrative

inquiry as the methodology for this study. Following this, I explain the data production methodology utilised in this study that includes the data sampling method, my entry into the field, and the data production techniques used. Next, I discuss how the data was analysed, the ethical considerations for the study and how I ensured quality and validity.

SECTION B presents the Tales of the Field, which is the narrative analysis following the restorying approach. This constitutes the first and second level of analysis of the data. This section comprises three chapters.

In **chapter four**, I draw on an arts-based methodology and present a series of imaginary dialogues between eight colleagues and me, in an imaginary café called Café Spiralina. This chapter captures the theoretical and conceptual understanding of the key contributors of this study, who are senior academic developers and who have spent a considerable amount of time in the field of AD. Also included in these dialogues are the contributions from key HE colleagues (and leaders) in the national space. The academic developers (or pioneers) are drawn from a diverse range of institutions across the country.

In **chapters five and six**, in a similar restorying process, I present the narrative assemblages of the three institutional contexts. In these chapters, I narrativise the experiences of the academic developers and leaders of the teaching and learning centres and present these as individual narrativised accounts for each of the eight participants from the three institutional contexts.

Chapter five presents the narratives of the participants from University A, considered as a traditional or research-intensive university. I include first the narrative of the director of the teaching and learning centre, followed by the narrative of three participants.

Chapter six presents the narratives of the remaining two institutions, University B and C, each comprising two participants, the director of the unit and one academic developer.

SECTION C is the final section for this study and presents the key learnings from this inquiry process. The descriptive data from the narratives are abstracted further as I move toward developing the central argument (thesis) emerging from this study.

In **chapter seven**, I engage in the third level of analysis, engaging in dialoguing with the theories. I experienced a methodological disruption during this study and shifted from

conventional data analysis, drawing on elements of post-qualitative research. I argue for exploring new lines of flight for educational inquiry and engage in the analytical strategy of thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, 2023) and a diffractive analysis (Barad, 2007). I extend my existing theoretical repertoire of Bourdieu's Field theory and Samuel's force field model by drawing further on Barad's agential realism and a decolonial lens.

Chapter **eight** develops the thesis for this study, Embracing Pluralism for Academic Staff Development in South Africa. I commence the chapter by theorising the biography of academic staff development, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's figuration of the rhizome. I argue next that this biography is characterised by a paradoxical nature and I engage with Derrida's (1981) idea of the pharmakon to illustrate that there are both benefits and challenges of ASD as a developing field of practice and scholarship.

Next, considering the above challenges, I argue for broadening and shifting the ASD gaze through cultivating a southern gaze embedded within an ethos of Ubuntu. This, I argue, may contribute to enhancing the transformative aspirations and visions for ASD.

Finally, drawing on the discussions above, I present the central thesis (argument) for this study. I once more invoke the metaphor of the lotus flower that I introduced in the Prelude to depict this thesis. I argue for an ethico-onto-epistemology (Barad, 2007), which in the context of this study is about cultivating an ethical practice that seeks to contest what/who is privileged or marginalised in ASD and HE more generally. In re-envisioning ASD for South African higher education, the LOTUS Rhize framework reflects the potential for transformation and growth within challenging contexts.

Chapter **nine** is the penultimate chapter of this thesis. In this chapter, I present the Implications and contributions of this study, its limitations, and offer recommendations for future possibilities for practice and research. In this chapter, I also present *An Aside: Global crises impacting academic staff development*. The focus of this section is on the COVID-19 pandemic and AI in higher education. Given that the data for this study were produced before these major events in HE, these events presented both challenges and opportunities for ASD.

In the final section, I present the **CODA**: From Bricolage to Assemblage, which is a meta-reflective account of my engagement in this doctoral study. I reflect on the disruptions,

irruptions and new lines of flight I encountered and experienced and present my transformative journey.

SECTION A

KNOWING CONTEXTS and PLANNING RESEARCH

Setting up the Study

Section A Setting up the Study

- **Prelude:** The Lotus - Embodying Pluralism
- **Chapter 1:** Background and Context
- **Chapter 2:** Exploring the shifting AD landscape
- **Chapter 3:** Methodological Pluralism

PRELUDE

THE LOTUS: EMBODYING PLURALISM

Being and becoming an academic developer



Figure B: Image of a lotus flower¹

I have known for a long time that my name is associated with the lotus flower. A google search revealed that my name, according to the Sanskrit² means *A Lotus flower* (of a thousand petals) or as described in other websites, *an assemblage of lotuses*.

I have selected this image as a point of departure for two reasons:

Firstly, I have found synergies with my identity (as revealed in my name) and the pluralistic approach I have adopted for this study. The lotus flower grows in muddy environments, much like our current higher education environment nowadays. However, like the beautiful flower that emerges from this environment I have witnessed, as a staff developer in higher education, the number of transformative practices that have emerged amidst the structural and cultural conditions and challenges prevalent in higher education in South Africa.

¹ This image was developed as the logo for a Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (SoTL) programme for which I served as the (SoTL) Programme coordinator from 2018-2024 at the Durban University of Technology. The six colours of the petals represented the six faculties of the university. I was drawn to the image of the spiral, as I explain further in this chapter – to represent the evolving nature of being and becoming and the continuous learning, unlearning, relearning – and I combined the spiral with the lotus flower to form the logo for the SoTL programme.

² Sanskrit is the language of my ancestral heritage. It is regarded as the ancient language in Hinduism, a language of India and the language used for Hindu scriptures and from which many northern Indian languages are derived. <https://www.ancient.eu/Sanskrit/>



The lotus flower has spiritual significance in the Hindu culture and is often depicted with Lakshmi³, the Hindu Goddess, as in figure C, alongside.

I do not see a separation from who I am, a South African Indian Hindu woman, my work as an academic developer in higher education, and the pluralistic approach I have adopted in this study and other research activities. I was also able to make connections to my Hindu self and this pluralistic worldview, as illustrated in the excerpt below:

Figure C: image of Hindu deity Lakshmi on a lotus flower (Source: <https://www.ancient.eu/image/4007/lakshmi/>)

“...I realised that my pluralistic worldview and epistemologies connected to my Hindu self. Hinduism is known for embracing different views and supports the process of spiritual growth and awareness through multiple ways of coming to know. There is often a misunderstanding that Hinduism draws on many deities (Gods and Goddesses). This comes from an individualistic understanding of each of the deities as a singular. However, each form is actually different manifestations of divinity. For example, the Trinity⁴ Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are not three Gods but one manifesting in three forms for particular purposes. Brahma is considered the creator, Vishnu is the preserver, and Shiva is the protector. Likewise, the Tridevi⁵ (trinity of Goddesses) Lakshmi denotes light (in various forms, wealth, health, happiness, wisdom), Saraswathi (learning and knowledge) and Durga (courage and strength). There are many other manifestations in Hinduism. And we would draw on each manifestation depending on where we are on our journey in life and the growth, guidance, knowledge and empowerment we seek.” (Chitanand, 2019)

Like the thousand petals of the lotus flower, I too have adopted a pluralistic approach for this study on academic staff development in a changing South African higher education context. Pluralism was a key construct in my study. I drew on the pluralistic approach through the methodology and theoretical perspectives adopted for this study. I explain these in chapters 2 and 3. As I progressed with my study, the pluralistic approach was further extended, especially as I engaged with deeper analysis of my data through drawing on new theoretical perspectives, as I have described in Chapters 7 and 8. The lotus flower and the associated idea

³ Picture credit, Jean-Pierre Dalbera, Creative Commons: Attribution. <https://www.ancient.eu/image/4007/lakshmi/>

⁴ Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/beliefs/intro_1.shtml

⁵ Source: <https://www.hindufaqs.com/tridevi-the-three-supreme-goddess-in-hinduism/>

of pluralism were also evoked further as I developed the final thesis for this study in Chapter 8.

Secondly, I am particularly drawn to this image of the lotus flower as it has associated with it the Spiral, an image that I have used metaphorically to denote the evolving nature of contexts, practices and being in the process of becoming. I was inspired by the scholarship of Waghid (2017) wherein he makes “a case for a university as a responsible institution-in-becoming within an African context” (p. 2). This implies that a university and society for that matter, is never static and constantly evolving. Drawing on Barnett (2016) Waghid argues that

‘the university is a task without end ... [and] since the university is always on the move, always moving in its spaces – economic, social, political, cultural, institutional and so on – its possibilities will always be moving on’ (Barnett as cited in Waghid, 2017, p. 2).

As a staff developer, I was initially drawn to the image of the butterfly to metaphorically reflect transformation. I realised while writing a chapter for a book that this image was limiting and was more inclined towards the spiral, which suggested for me continuous learning, changing, learning (Chitanand, 2019) as a process of becoming (Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2007; Waghid, 2017). Furthermore, the spiral also represents the reflexive (rhythmic) process of zooming in and out of our experiences, to generate self-knowledge that may be used to enhance the encounters in which we find ourselves. This process of reflexivity has been crucial as a staff developer. I discuss this further in chapter 1 (section 1.2).

Further, for more than two decades as a staff developer, I have adopted a similar pluralistic approach, integrating a multiplicity of paradigmatic positions, theories and methodologies as a staff developer, much like an *assemblage*⁶, borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and my own practice was constantly on the move as I encountered new ways of being and becoming an academic (staff) developer. This is best described by Green (2013), who avers that “[o]ne enters the mangle at any point and time and follows the lines encountered until another possible line emerges and redirects our gaze and energies” (p. 753). This reflects my entry into and development in academic development and academic staff development.

⁶ Assemblages according to Livesey (in Parr, 2010, p. 18) are complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning.

In the next section, I present this brief narrative of being a science graduate, entering the field of academic development, encountering resistance and challenges and eventually finding a home in this very field I did not initially plan to enter at all, or know existed.

Of Ducks, Rhythm and Reflection

Twenty years ago, I found myself at a park in Como, Perth, Australia, watching ducks and reflecting on my journey as a science teacher at a university (Chitanand, 2005). I was in Australia on a master's scholarship engaged in a MSc in science education. The rhythmic motion of ducks in search of their food resembled my own search then, as I delved deeper and deeper into my experiences of being a student and teacher of science.

As I engaged with my PhD study, I found myself engaged in a similar rhythmic motion of reflecting on my journey of being and becoming an academic developer, a journey that spanned more than two decades. I did not plan to be an academic developer or enter the field of higher education. I was a chemist after all. It was what I had studied and where I thought I would be or become. For many years, I detested being in the field of academic development. I struggled. I was frustrated and I was lost in my early years of being in the field. How does one *do* academic development?

I resonated with Shannon Cannon's experience, although her experience related to her doctoral study,

I struggled from the beginning ... to figure out to which field I belonged and how to *be* in the field. I have come to believe that there is no right field for me to be in. Instead, I will twist field, fold field, and *unfield* by making connections across fields. As I traverse fields, I make marks and marks are made on me. Both field and I are disrupted. The boundaries of field are called into question as I move across them carrying the marks of other fields. (Cannon, 2019, pp 15-16)

Twenty years ago, I was inducted into what Peter Taylor, my master's project supervisor, called Transformative Education. And from there began my journey in a field that I was happy to call home. The poem below, *an Epiphany*, written for a chapter (Chitanand, 2019), reflects the sudden realisation I had one morning, where I felt I 'belong' as an academic (developer) in higher education, after many years of being/ feeling as an outsider.

An Epiphany

*One morning I had an epiphany
For years I wondered
Where do I fit?
Chemistry graduate in Education field!
For years I wondered
How do I fit?
Two worlds apart*



Figure D: A 60-70 year lamp

*One morning I had an epiphany
⁷ Chemistry field I had to be
Same as dad, brothers and sister
But never as a chemist did I practice
A teacher, I was destined to be*

*One morning I had an epiphany
And the puzzle suddenly fit
This is where I'm meant to be
This is where I ought to be
This is where I love to be*

*One morning I had an epiphany
That this was my gateway
To transformative educational research
And practice, My home*

*One morning I had an epiphany
But this does not mean
That I have arrived
For we can never truly 'arrive'
To arrive, is the end of a journey
Rather we are in-becoming
Constantly learning, constantly changing*

(Chitanand, 2019)

⁷ I chose this old lamp given to me by my late grandmother as the metaphor to depict the 'aha' moment that I experienced but also as a symbol for the memory-generating process expressed in this poem. I found that personal artifacts can serve as powerful memory trigger devices in educational research.

Rhythm in Waves: Staying with the trouble

As I reflected on my journey in academic development and academic staff development, I noticed wave-like motions of ebb and flow, sadness and joy, love and despair, comfort and loneliness, frustration and exhilaration. For a recent conference presentation, my colleague and I articulated our trajectory in academic development, exploring this wave in our experiences (Rathilal & Chitanand, 2019). Although the journey highlighted in Figure E, below, highlighted frustrations, there were many moments of exhilaration and joy and we continued “staying with the trouble” (Harraway, 2016) in the contested terrain of academic staff development.

From Frustration to Exhilaration: A tour with LCT

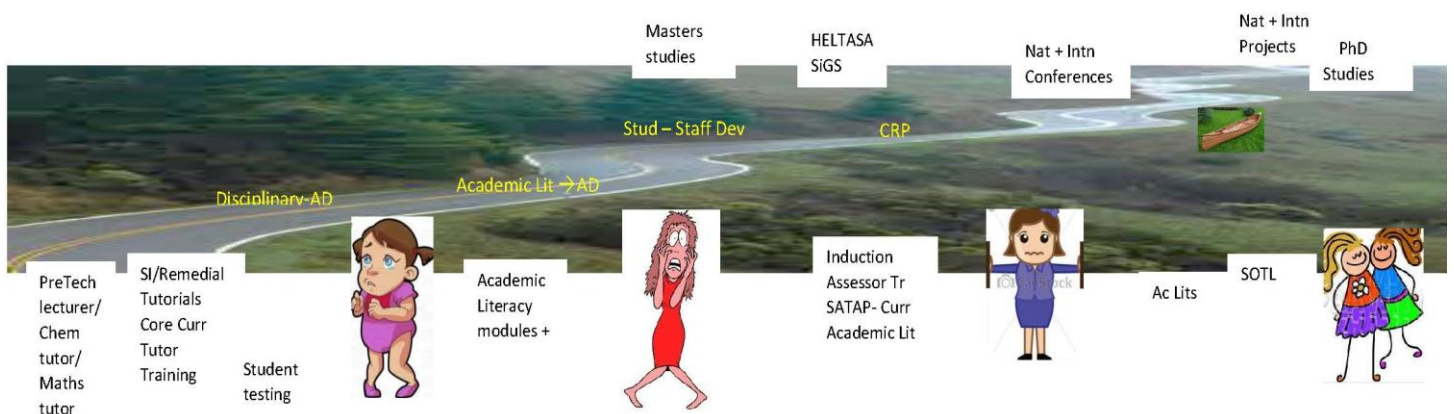


Figure E: Image of our journey in academic development (Source: Rathilal & Chitanand, 2019)

In closing, drawing on the lotus flower's multiplicity, pluralism and assemblages, I was driven by an ontology of relationality that privileges and prioritises relationships and connections. Such a position also emphasises the process of becoming as we engage in knowledge creation about our personal and professional lives. This resonates with the image of the spiral in a continuous process of learning, unlearning, relearning and becoming.

Furthermore, being of an assemblage manifests:

an ontology of becoming(s) rather than being. Reality is viewed as a continual process of flux or differentiation even though this fact is usually masked by powerful and pervasive illusory discourses of fixity, stability, and identity...This ontology of becoming(s) enables (even urges) us to see things differently– in terms of what they might become rather than as they currently are (Martin and Kamberelis in Green, 2013, p. 751).

These ontological positions have shaped an epistemology of pluralism, wherein I have drawn multiple knowledges and theoretical positions to frame and shape this study. It also demonstrates a process of knowledge creation that remains on the move. These are discussed further in this thesis.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND, CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction and Overview

This study is constructed in a higher education (HE) context that has seen significant shifts in the last three decades⁸. In particular, it was during this time that South Africa (SA) was concerned with infusing principles of equity, redress and transformation within its newly forged democracy. While SA HE was marked by this unique political dispensation that continues to influence many aspects of the sector today, it too was subject to influences experienced globally, specifically as it relates to massification, globalisation, Information and Communication Technologies and the fourth industrial revolution, as well as the nature of knowledge production and purpose of higher education.

This research is a study of the field of academic staff development⁹ (a subset of academic development¹⁰), in a changing South African HE context, its discourses and ideologies and forces influencing it. Figure 1.1 illustrates academic development (AD) on a shifting trajectory, from student support (development) toward professionalising HE teaching through various academic staff development (henceforth referred to as ASD) programmes. These developments are explored in this study.

⁸ It is important to indicate at the outset that the data for this study were produced during 2018-2019. As such, the major shifts that occurred after this period, especially the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid rise in Artificial Intelligence, which influence academic staff development significantly, are not included in the discussions. The analysis undertaken in this study is based solely on the data produced. I do, however, briefly discuss these developments in the last section of this thesis, the CODA. See Appendix 1 (p. 342) for this study's timeline

⁹ Throughout this report, there will be references to both academic development (AD) and academic staff development (ASD). ASD is a subset of AD. There are other aspects of AD, for example, student development and curriculum development. This study focuses on ASD but draws on the literature of AD as well. A further elaboration of these terminologies is contained in the sections that follow.

¹⁰ In the global context, academic development refers to professional development (or academic staff development). Within the SA context, academic development is comprised of student development, (academic) staff development, institutional development and curriculum development with the overarching imperative of student success in higher education. The idea of student success and what it entails is also a complex construct.

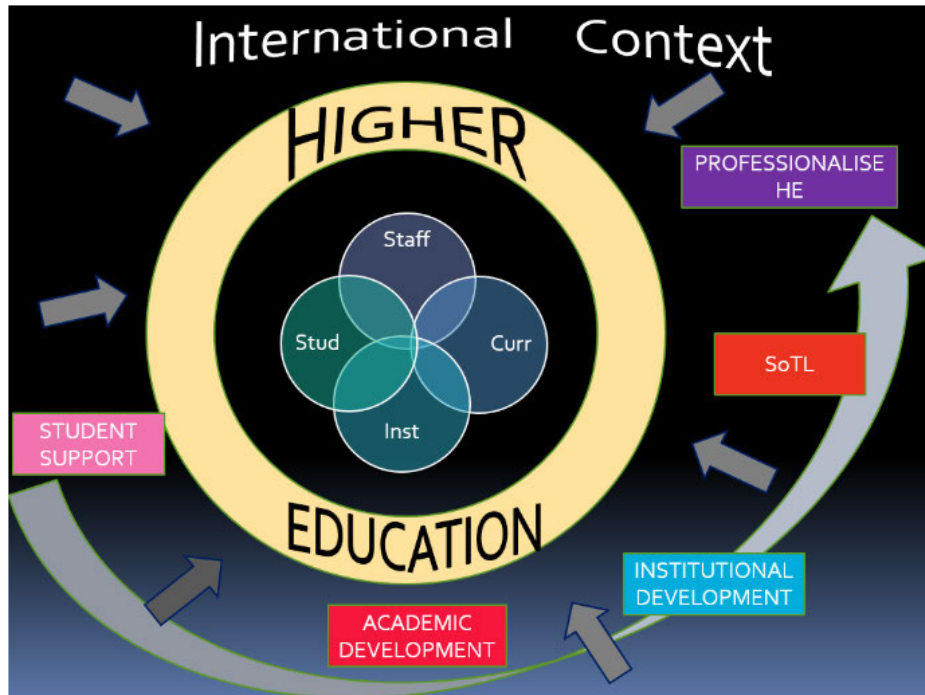


Figure 1.1: The many foci of academic development in SA with academic staff development being one of the areas
 (Source: Author's compilation)

In this chapter, I draw on my experience in AD of almost three decades and which provided the impetus for this research. My ongoing reflections on the goals and challenges of AD, as well as critical conversations with my colleagues, and my own reflexive engagements led me to critically explore the phenomenon of academic staff development. These reflections provide the background to the study.

I then present the contextual landscape, discussing the evolving HE context both internationally and within SA. This includes an overview of AD in international contexts with particular attention to SA and the emergence of ASD within these settings.

Following the contextual framing, I discuss the rationale and significance of this study, along with the critical research questions that guided this investigation. I conclude the chapter with the outline of the chapters in this thesis and a synthesis of the key points discussed.

1.2. Background

The impetus for this research grew out of a critical reflection of my experience in the field of AD which spanned almost three decades, the last almost twenty years of which were in academic staff development. With no particular knowledge of, or interest in the field, my entry into AD may best be described as 'happenstance' (Baume & Popovic, 2016). Following academic developers' diverse pathways into the field (McDonald & Stockley, 2008) I too began the journey in AD as a disciplinary migrant (Green & Little, 2013; Manathunga, 2007) after having spent a year as a lecturer in chemistry. Through the last two decades I have assumed a number of roles in student support and development (including training of tutors and teaching add-on, stand-alone courses to students like Core Curriculum and Academic Literacy), staff development (for example facilitating an induction programme for new staff, assessor training, and workshops on learning, teaching and assessment), policy development and, more recently, promoting and fostering the scholarship of teaching and learning. Reflective practice and research-informed teaching were the key drivers in my staff development programmes, and Jack Whitehead's (1989, 2000, 2008) overarching research question, 'How do I improve my practice?' underpinned my work in staff development.

My master's study in science education (Chitanand, 2005) sowed the seeds for transformative educational practice and further pushed me to question the purposes, roles and function and impact of my staff development practice. This prompted a reflexive turn in my practice, a "deep inward gaze" (Ryan, 2009, p. 2). I drew on Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory to understand my own presuppositions, assumptions and values about learning and teaching and research in higher education. Reflexivity and Transformative learning have been integral components of my ASD conceptual and theoretical repertoire. I considered not only my own staff development practice but also those of my colleagues and my unit (an AD department) and the AD field/ movement in SA and globally as well. I felt that while we (as a community of AD) espoused transformative ideals and philosophies, our practices did not yield the transformed practices of the staff with whom we worked. For example, many of the staff development programmes resulted in minor tinkering of curricula or pedagogy. Feeling like a living contradiction (Whitehead, 2000) I questioned what we did and why, as academic staff developers. I became passionately involved in debates and conversations around

Conforming, Reforming and Transforming HE practices (Chitanand, 2013, 2016) and these words became a mantra for my ongoing practice and in my staff development programmes. How do we ensure that our practices as staff developers are beyond reformist approaches that merely perpetuate the status quo and how can we engender a transformative praxis addressing some of the pressing concerns of HE and society at large? Hence, transformative and sustainable staff development was a vision I aspired to.

This led to questions about the field of AD and ASD. I turned to Baume and Popovic (2016), who ask:

Is academic development a field, a discipline, a profession, a subject, something else? Some of the apparent dilemmas around identity and legitimacy – for example, are we able to pass judgement on the professionalism of others (teachers in HE) if we aren't members of a legitimate profession ourselves? – may stem from the comparative youthfulness of the field. (p. 9).

Baume and Popovic (2016) raise a number of important considerations for the field of AD and academic staff development, especially around the legitimacy of the field and the practitioners. How can legitimacy be achieved? What is the role of knowledge in the field? How is knowledge in/of the field developed? The latter became especially important considering concerns raised about AD being an “emergent, contested and relatively unstable profession” (Niven 2012, p. 155) with “diffuse professional identities and an arbitrary knowledge base” (Shay 2012, p. 315). According to Boud and Brew (2013) “despite increasing research and scholarship in the area of AD in recent years, it remains an under-theorised field of endeavour” (p. 208). Shay (2012) cautions AD that “unless we strengthen our knowledge base, we will not emerge as a professional field able to engage rigorously and systematically with the problems of higher education” (p. 311). A similar view is shared by other SA researchers in the field of AD (Boughey, 2014; Boughey & Niven, 2012; McKenna, 2014; Shay, 2015; Vorster & Quinn, 2015).

During two decades in ASD, there were numerous shifts in my own perspectives, practices and scholarship and these were prompted by the reflexive moments I highlighted above. During my doctoral study, I was invited to participate in the steering committee of two national collaborative projects and these further disrupted my thinking, practice and scholarship in profound ways. The projects were the New Academics Transitioning into HE

Project (NATHEP)¹¹, and a project focused on Enhancing the status of the field of ASD with a sub-project National AD Landscape (NADL)¹². While the second project is currently underway, my participation in NATHEP, which was underpinned by a decolonial lens, was instrumental in illuminating the gaps in my practice. I encountered the emptiness of my practice as I, too had succumbed to the hegemony of neoliberal performativity. Below is an extract from my journal as I prepared for a research paper for the project:

My thinking about TE was further disrupted and extended when I joined NATHEP in 2018, which has seen me go through more turns in the Spiral of Learning and Becoming as an academic staff developer. Reflexivity, transformative learning and disruption of assumptions are essential components of my ASD conceptual and theoretical repertoire and which I've incorporated into my NATHEP contributions. Integral to my learnings have been engagements, discussions and debates during NATHEP on the sociocultural and historical aspects of SA and how these influence educational practices. Engaging in critical reflexivity has revealed that while I've espoused a social justice orientation, I have acknowledged my limitation that much of my practice was devoid of a deeper contextualisation for our SA context" (30 April 2020).

The above reflection on my own ASD practices has prompted me to engage in deeper work in line with social and epistemic justice imperatives, especially regarding the decolonisation of HE and curricula. While previously I held reservations based on my own knowledge of the field, following my NATHEP engagement, these foci had become a critical aspect and priority for my staff development programmes and projects.

The experiences and concerns highlighted above framed the background to my study. Next, I discuss the context for this study.

¹¹ See Behari-Leak et al. (2024) for more details about this project

¹² Details about this project may be found here <https://sites.google.com/view/national-ad-landscape/home>

1.3. Context

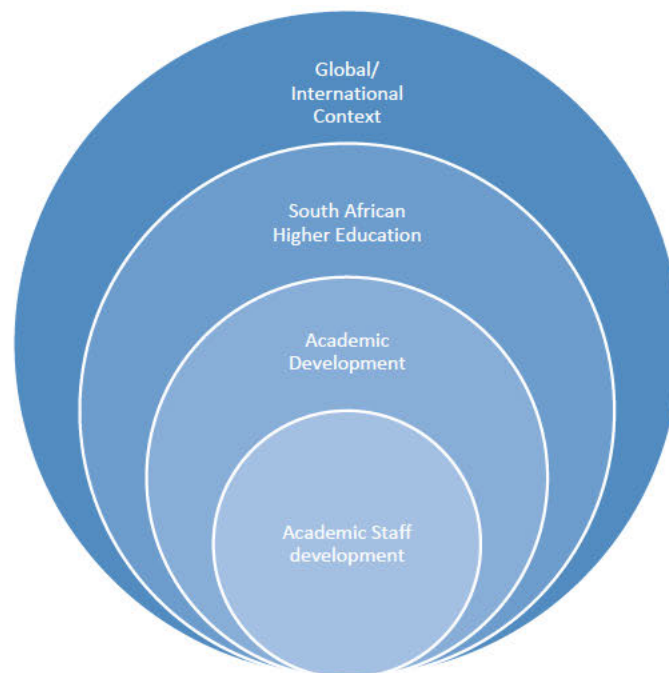


Figure 1.2: Academic staff development located within the South African and international higher education milieu
(Source: author's compilation)

To understand the influences on ASD and AD in general, an exploration of the South African and international HE contextual landscape is essential. Figure 1.2 represents the field of ASD, a subset of AD and which is located within the South African HE context. While both HE in SA and AD/ ASD are to some extent influenced by global trends, South African HE is impacted by national developments, especially marked by the political and social climate of the country.

1.3.1. *The international HE context*

There is much written about the 'crisis in higher education' internationally in research and popular media, suggesting that in some way, higher education is standing on a precipice – whether to disappear into the abyss of irrelevance or to take off soaring to new heights in an ICT revolution is not necessarily clear. What is clear is that universities, as a particular institution of higher education, have endured since the middle ages, yet, chameleon-like, they have adapted in form and function to changing realities and social forces (Council of Higher Education (CHE), 2015, p. 6)

Some of these 'realities and social forces' impacting on HE globally include massification, globalisation, ICTs and the fourth industrial revolution, and the nature of knowledge (CHE, 2015). These changes impact on the provision of HE and its changing identity and purposes;

funding, curricula, the preparedness and experiences of academic staff and students and HE institutions in general.

The provocative title in the March 2015 article of the Economist, “The world is going to university” and the accompanying representation, as in Figure 1.3 aptly sums up the rapid expansion of HE enrolments worldwide.

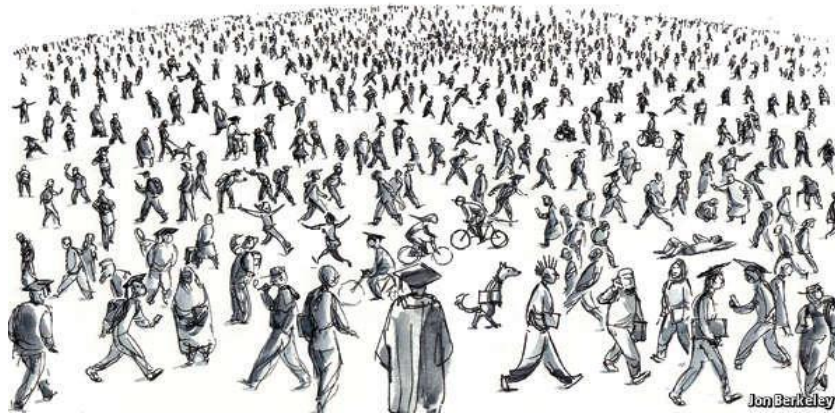


Figure 1.3: “The world is going to university”
(Source: [The Economist](#), 2015)

By far one of the greatest forces impacting HE has been massification on a global scale. “The global tertiary-enrolment ratio...went up from 14% to 32% in the two decades to 2012” (The Economist, 2015), although this may be somewhat skewed for Sub-Saharan Africa (CHE, 2015). Social, economic and political change has been cited as the key driver of massification in HE worldwide for the past half a century (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2010).

The rapid massification of HE has influenced not just the size and shape of universities but the identity and purpose(s) and many other facets as well. No longer is HE for the elite only, but considered to be serving a utilitarian purpose, preparing students for skills necessary for economic advancement (CHE, 2015), with the latter receiving much criticism against the purposes of universities as a public good. Alternative curricula and pedagogies to suit multiple purposes and larger numbers as well as the need to ensure quality of HE, are other impacts of a massified system.

While numbers have increased, funding for HE has not been sufficient to meet the growing need, placing the responsibility on universities to generate their own additional income (CHE,

2015). These have impacted on the purpose of universities, that is seen to drive the neoliberal agendas and the nature of research where researchers align research to major businesses that fund and thus drive the nature of research projects (CHE, 2015). While most institutions have a three-pronged focus on teaching, research and community engagement/service, these “live in constant tension with each other” (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2010, p. 139).

HE is now part of the global economy, with globalisation and internationalisation making study and research possible beyond national borders (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009). However, “the tension between aligning institutional missions with national goals and the harnessing of the energies of an increasingly mobile, changing and outward-looking academic population that seeks its validation in international communities of practice, lends an element of further stress to higher education systems” (CHE, 2016, p. 14).

In their essay, “An avalanche is coming” (Barber, Donnelly & Rizvi, 2013), the authors caution about the challenges facing HE worldwide with respect to massification, globalisation, funding of higher education, research and Information and Communications technology, with the latter, bringing forth the next large force in HE and contributing to the ‘ubiquity of knowledge’ (Barber, Donnelly & Rizvi, 2013, p. 2). With ICTs on the rise and forming part of the fourth industrial revolution, this has “changed the way research is conducted and how teaching and learning is conducted...and is arguably poised to change the very nature [of the global higher educational landscape]” (CHE, 2015, p. 15).

This brings to the fore the next impact of a globalised higher education, namely, Knowledge and the nature of nature of knowledge production. Quinn (2006) asserts that “in the postmodern world, knowledge can no longer be understood as one unified concept and the university is no longer the only site of knowledge production” (p. 106). Competing purposes of HE influences the nature of knowledge, curriculum and pedagogy, which is increasingly targeted toward vocationalism and professionalism. As will be seen in the next section, what and whose knowledge is being legitimised in, HE has been the centre of debates on the decolonisation of HE and curricula.

1.3.2. The HE context in South Africa

The period in South African HE that I have selected to review in this study is the period from the 1980s to 2019. I have specifically selected this era as it was during the early 1980s that the new emerging political dispensation had a marked influence on South African higher education. It was during this time that the emphasis was on infusing democratic principles of equity, redress and transformation. “Higher education in has been regarded as key to social and economic development” (CHE, 2016, p. 7). It was also during the early 1980s that AD had its first foothold in HE in SA.

From a politically disparate HE system, the new democratic dispensation in 1994 attempted to reconcile the inequities of the past apartheid regime. Prof Narend Bhajinath, CEO of the Council on Higher Education at the time, aptly sums up the achievements of South African HE in the two decades of democracy.

There is much that HE can claim to have achieved: integration as a system from its fragmented past; an established quality assurance and advisory body; a single dedicated national department; a fundamentally altered institutional landscape; greater access and a radical change in the demography of its students, with an 80% growth in the number of African students; higher research output and international recognition through large research projects, more attention paid to teaching and learning, to curriculum and to student support; the implementation of a governing framework for its educational offerings (CHE, 2016, p. 8)

Perhaps most important for this study Prof Bhajinath additionally notes the “limits of academic staff capacity as a further crack in the foundations that threaten to widen and have a detrimental impact on the quality of provision” (CHE, 2016, p. 9). What are the demands that are being placed on academic staff in our current and changing HE landscape? What are the roles of ASD in this regard? These are some of the questions that this study sought to address. Teaching and learning, research and community engagement have been regarded as the three pillars of higher education. The roles and greater purposes of HE and its contribution to a greater public good have further been a renewed focus of higher education. Barnett (2000) contends that we are in an era of supercomplexity and educating for an uncertain future, a future that does not yet exist. These have major implications for teaching, learning, curriculum and research in higher education. These further impact the roles of ASD within these changing conceptions, roles and purposes of higher education.

While the current goals of HE have not changed in principle from that of the first millennium, especially with regard to its commitment to educational and social development, there has been great emphasis on the “role of knowledge in late modern cultural and economic development – especially with regard to the production, dissemination, application (networking), structure, management and quality of knowledge” (CHE, 2004, p. 3). As we shift to events confronting HE around 2015-2016, especially as it concerns the student protests and debates around decolonisation of higher education, the issue of knowledge becomes central to these debates. These debates around knowledge in the academy and the decolonisation of HE and the curriculum and the role of ASD were important considerations for this study.

Waghid (2017) considers a university as an institution-in-becoming, without a starting or end point and never really arriving, thus constantly evolving. This is perhaps the state of the changing HE context in SA and globally as well. The implications of the university as an institution-in-becoming for HE research and this study on academic staff development will be explored further.

1.3.3. Academic development in international contexts

According to McDonald and Stockley (2008) AD in international contexts has “progressed from an informal set of instructional improvement activities to a scholarly field of study and practice” (p. 213). On the international front, Gibbs (2013) highlighted trends in the changing nature of AD work, to include amongst others, a shift away from the margins (Little & Green, 2012) to more centralised function, from working with individual academics to course teams, from change tactics to change strategies, from being atheoretical and unscholarly to theoretical and scholarly.

Winberg (2001) identified five generations of ASD. While these practices emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s, many of these practices continue to influence ASD even today, globally. These occur to varying degrees in line with the contextual realities of HEIs.

Generation 1: ASD as technique/technology

The focus on teaching methodology through often (decontextualised) workshops dominated the early initial phase of ASD. The underlying assumption governing this practice was that academics would master their individual skills, which would then improve student outcomes.

Generation 2: ASD for student learning

In this phase, the focus was on enhanced student learning and there was a shift in ASD from teaching methods to the quality of student learning. ASD practices then focused on curriculum planning, lesson plans, small group learning and assessment issues. During this phase there was an increase in programmes focused in assessor training.

Generation 3: ASD for reflective, scholarly practice

The key idea in this phase is that teaching is influenced by one's conceptions, assumptions, and values. By reflecting on these and holding them up to critique there could be possibilities for enhancing practices. Reflection practice was a driver and strategy for ASD in this phase. Further developments in this phase led to a focus on scholarly teaching and strengthening the teaching-research nexus.

Generation 4: ASD in the disciplines

This phase brought into question the relevance of generic ASD. There began more focused attention on discipline specific initiatives and new models for ASD emerged: centralised/ decentralised/ mixed models. There was also an increase in discipline focused ASD e.g. engineering education and health education foci and centres and these developments were not necessarily driven by ASD centres

Generation 5: An institutional view of ASD

This generation of ASD saw considerable growth of ASD as the focus shifted from enhancing teaching to improving institutional structures. There was simultaneously more demands placed on academic, teaching, research, engagement including the pressure of high workloads and managerialist culture that crept into HE. These provided the fertile ground for ASD.

While the developmental stages of ASD were evident both internationally and within SA HE, South Africa's ASD journey followed its own distinct path, which I discuss next.

1.3.4. Academic development in the South African context

As alluded to earlier, it was during the early 1980s that AD gained its first foothold in HE in SA. While much of AD in SA reflected international practices, the country had its own unique historical beginnings. In her analysis of AD Shay (2012) emphasised that AD discourses in SA are fundamentally values driven. These discourses initially centered on moral, political and social ideals of liberation and equality (Volbrecht, 2003). However, the emerging global economic landscape underpinned by increasing demands for institutional performance and skills development shift the dominant narrative. Consequently, efficiency discourses dominated much of the work in AD (Boughey, 2007a).

The development of AD in SA highlights the ideological shifts from academic support, to AD and more recently institutional development (Boughey, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Volbrecht, 2003). During the 1980s there existed a distinctive 'academic support phase' of AD to assist a limited number of black students entering historically white universities. This approach was fundamentally rooted in a deficit perspective, which presumed that the challenges that students faced were inherent to the students, and characterised them as being 'underprepared'. The significant expansion of access to HE in the 1990s challenged the problematic constructs of 'disadvantage' and 'underpreparedness' (Mehl, 2000; Vilakazi & Tema, 1985). This significant shift had led question whether the deficit resided with the students or with universities that were unprepared to support the diverse and differently prepared student population. This emerging perspective of AD suggested that it was institutional transformation, rather than decontextualised (Boughey & McKenna, 2021) student support that was required. This evolving approach was termed academic development and included strategies for staff and curriculum development (Boughey, 2007a, 2007b, 2010).

Knapper (2016) argues that,

developers cannot claim to occupy an influential place within the academic hierarchy, and hence, by ourselves, we lack the power and leverage, and even the resources, to effect change in teaching and curriculum. This suggests that developers will need to adopt new roles and stances within the institution, and that instead of seeing ourselves as primarily responsible to faculty, we will need to act as an institutional resource that helps implement policies and processes developed by senior administration, often at the behest of government (p, 113).

Much of the above thinking was implicit in the institutional development phase of AD in SA where “policy development at a national level since the early 1990s has the potential to impact on AD practice” (Boughey, 2010, p. 13). These included national policies that governed institutional differentiation, curriculum design and programme development (for example through the HE Qualifications Sub-Framework), and the funding framework. While the three phases of AD were not separate but rather overlapped across time, staff development was viewed as a key driver for institutional change.

The structural and systemic institutional trends highlighted by Gibbs (2013) for the international contexts, have not entirely been experienced within South African academic development; some AD units still remain on the periphery, work with individual teachers, and run ad hoc workshops that are under-theorised and not often scholarly, as reflected in institutional reports for the Quality Enhancement Project which has as one of the focus areas, the enhancement of academics as teachers (Council on Higher Education, 2015). I could attest that my own practice and (those of my peers in my unit), reflect much of this. However, different permutations exist for AD units across HE institutions in SA

Many critiques have been offered recently around how HE has lost focus on its educational and epistemological agenda. For example, HE is argued to be dominated by neoliberal and managerialist imperatives and discourses (Badat, 2009; Maistry, 2012) against the call for universities to serve as the public good (Singh, 2001) and contribute to democratic citizenship (Nussbaum, 2006). With the marketisation of higher education, market-related metaphors shape the current HE landscape. Within this ‘knowledge economy’, education has become a ‘commodity’, and HE students have become ‘customers’ or ‘clients’. Success is measured by how much of this commodity can be acquired (or purchased) and is evident as throughput rates, success rates and graduation rates. A hegemonic performativity and efficiency discourse ensues and within this context, academic developers are expected to contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning in a somewhat piecemeal and technical way to show immediate impact (Di Napoli, 2014), sometimes in contrast to their own values. In this respect, Di Napoli (2014) suggests that political ontology – “the sets of values academic developers import into their work and how these values may or may not be enacted in their own institutional space” (p. 4) – is an important consideration for AD work.

He raises the following important question for consideration in this study: “how do academic developers position themselves if their own values do not reflect the social and institutional discourses of their workplace?” (Di Napoli, 2014, p. 4). It also needs further exploration about what constitutes these values that underpin AD practitioners, and from where they derive these interpretations and mandates of their roles and purposes. This points to biographical and/or contextual influences on the roles of academic developers. Samuel (1998, 2008) claims that there are at least four dominant forces: biographical, contextual, institutional and programmatic forces that push and pull in multiple directions and which influence student teachers’ identity construction.

1.3.5. Toward a national focus on academic staff development

Within the South African context, there has been a growing emphasis on staff development over the last two decades, shifting ASD from the margins toward the centralised foci at universities. This has included:

- the new funding formula (DHET, 2003) which allocated teaching development grants for various aspects of teaching development related to research (e.g., improving qualifications) and teaching and learning development (e.g., ASD activities – workshops, symposia, scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning)
- the Quality Enhancement Project that commenced in 2014 (Council on Higher Education, 2015) with an emphasis on enhancing teachers as academics
- the Staffing South Africa’s Universities’ Framework (DHET, 2016)– provides novice ASD through the New Generation of Academics programme (nGAP) and HE Leadership and Management Programme (HELM)
- The University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) which replaced the teaching development and research development grants (DHET, 2016). Staff development is one of the three programmes that is priority. The other two are student development and programme development.
- Decolonial engagements following the 2015-2016 student protests

As alluded to in an earlier section, the years 2015-2016 in South African HE marked by student protests and the ‘decolonial turn’ disrupted current conceptions about HE and further pulled ASD into a central (or perhaps centralised) position with academic

developers and academics negotiating new understandings to alleviate ‘pedagogic frailty’ (Voster & Quinn, 2017).

- The 2018 National framework for enhancing academics in higher education (DHET, 2018). This was a guiding framework for HE institutions in South Africa for professional development during the full trajectory of an academic life from new emerging academics to managers.

1.3.6. The 2015-2016 national student protests and their impact on the HE and ASD landscape

Student protests at South African universities have a long history that predates democracy and since 1994, students have been protesting against the high costs of university education, quality accommodation and transformation in and across universities (South African History Online, 2015). These protest actions received little recognition and were confined to regional awareness (Mail & Guardian, 2016). However, the 2015 protest action initiated by a University of Cape Town (UCT) student marked a historic and pivotal moment that sparked the nationwide #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements. These fallist protest movements became the catalysts for the decolonisation of higher education and the curriculum.

On 9th March 2015, Chumani Maxwele, a political science student at the University of Cape Town (Hodes, 2015), South Africa, emptied human excrement at the statue of British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes (Figure 1.4), sparking a series of protests known as the #RhodesMustFall (UCT, 2015). The Rhodes statue at UCT stood as a contentious symbol of persistent colonial exploitation and marginalisation of Africans (Hodes, 2015). This political performance by Maxwele was in response to the slow transformation of university structures and symbols that continued to reflect the deep colonialism, subjugation and oppression of the people in South Africa (South African History Online, 2017). As reported in the South African History Online (2015), “Maxwele’s performance was a radical protest against UCT’s purported institutional racism and an appraisal of the lack of transformation on campus”.



Figure 1.4: Chumani Maxwele's at the Rhodes memorial at UCT
(Source: South African History Online, 2015)

Soon after, students joined Maxwele in the protest action sparking widespread action throughout South African universities and globally as well (Figure 1.5).

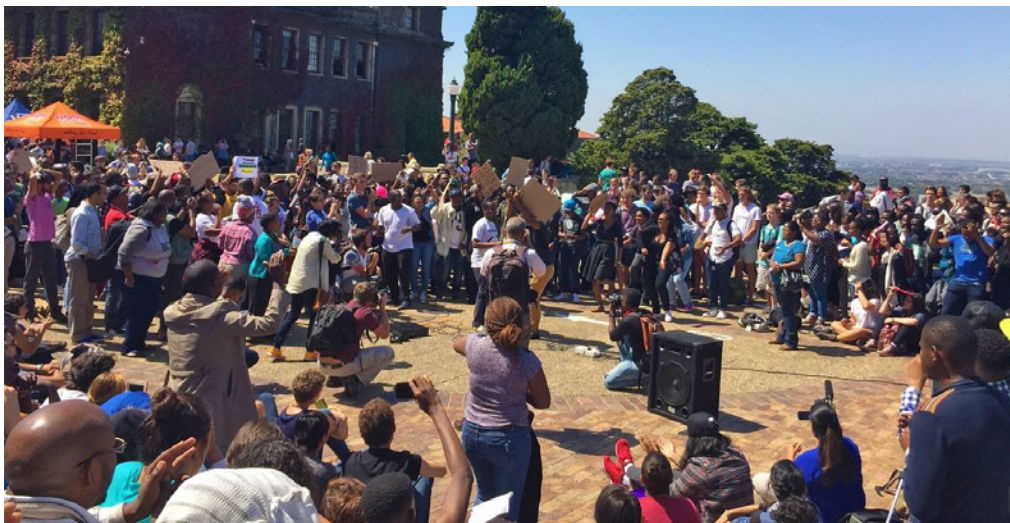


Figure 1.5: Students join the protest action at UCT in March 2015
(Source: Hodes, 2015)

Following the #RhodesMustFall campaign, the #FeesMustFall campaign that started in October 2015, was another significant event that reshaped higher education in South Africa. This followed the announcement of a 10.5% fee increase by the national government in October 2015. The protests commenced at the university of University of Witwatersrand (WITS) and rapidly spread to other universities across South Africa. While the concerns centred around access to university and student fees, there were calls for broader issues

around social justice and “the de-commodification of education...[and]...free quality decolonised education” (SABC Digital News, 2016).

Jansen (2019) avers that while the student protests “added a new term to the lexicon of South African universities – decolonisation...[it] had never been a prominent or sustained component of the struggle discourse under or after apartheid” (p. 1). He adds further that “[I]terally overnight the word decolonisation rolled off the lips of activists...and initiated across mainly the formerly white campuses seminars, conferences and committees to determine means and methods for changing universities – their complexions, cultures and curricula” (Jansen, 2019, p.1). The decolonisation of the curriculum, also referred to as epistemic decolonisation, centred on transforming academic programmes to reflect diverse epistemologies and perspectives that go beyond western-centric knowledge systems (Griffiths, 2019; Heleta, 2016; Hlatshwayo and Alexandra, 2021).

As universities grappled with how to decolonise the curriculum, a substantial body of scholarship on decoloniality and curriculum transformation emerged. However, much of the scholarship originated from scholars outside of AD¹³ more broadly. While there has been subsequent growth in decoloniality scholarship and practice within ASD¹⁴, this development seems paradoxical given the inherently transformative focus of AD/ASD. This raises critical questions: Why did ASD not take the lead in this transformative agenda of universities? Was this a blind spot for AD/ASD? These are some of the questions that I seek to illuminate and explore further in this study.

This gap in ASD becomes even more concerning alongside broader national marginalisation of decolonisation. In an interesting and somewhat disturbing observation, Heleta and Dilraj (2024) reveal that “decolonisation is not even a footnote” in national strategic documents, “decolonisation is not government’s priority and that neoliberal visions continue to dominate strategic planning for higher education” (p. 1).

¹³ See for example Badat (2023); Fataar (2018); Heleta (2016, 2019, 2023); Heleta and Chasi (2023); Heleta & Dilraj (2024), Jansen (2019); Keet (2014); Hlatshwayo (2022); Le Grange (2018b; 2020); Waghid (2023); Woldergiogis et al. (2023); Zembylas (2018a, b)

¹⁴ See, for example, Behari–Leak, et al. (2020); Behari-Leak (2021); Ganas et al. (2021); Lockett and Moreira (2018); Mgqwashu (2023); Voster & Quinn (2017)

1.4. Rationale

With almost fifty years in international contexts and almost forty years in SA, Lee, Manathunga, and Kandlbinder (2010), argue that AD has ‘come of age’. Its development as a field is not just about its role in improving teaching but on the “study of higher education as a field and to the critical resources at our disposal in order to accomplish the task” (Clegg, 2009, p. 413). In response to this, Clegg asserts that “the ideal of improving teaching needs to be understood in terms of a critical understanding of the power relations of higher education” (Personal communication, 2015).

However, these claims need further analytical review about what is indeed the shape of influence of AD within the teaching and learning environment of HE more globally, and especially in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. According to Boughey (2016), AD work had adopted a culture of compliance targeted towards meeting the needs of globalisation and vocationalism. Has AD been complicit in bolstering particular forms of elitist normative educational worldviews, or has AD indeed contributed to a transformative discourse engendering a greater critical social justice worldview and operations within the HE terrain? What kinds of roles have AD played in different eras of the changing face of HE globally and locally?

In this study, I examined the field of ASD from the perspective of ASD practitioners engaged in the processes of ASD or leading teaching and learning centres within which ASD is located. While other studies have examined the field of ASD (also referred to as professional development or professional learning), mainly through the perspectives of academic staff (e.g. a large institutional study on professional learning, see for example Leibowitz et. al., 2017, discussed in chapter2), this study explores the phenomenon through the perspectives of academic staff developers (the practitioners) and leaders of AD/ASD units.

In order to understand the complexity of the field of ASD from the perspective of the ASD practitioners it is important to examine their 'lived' experience, what they do and how they explain/understand what they do. This study attempted to bring to the fore the forces and influences that have shaped the field in order to *theorise what was, what is and to envision future possibilities* for ASD and to understand the shifts in the overall HE system, its challenges

and systems not operationally, but philosophically. This research thus sought to examine critically the biography of the discourses of the field of academic staff development, rather than the biography of individual participants in the study.

1.5. Critical research questions

To theorise what was, what is and to envision future possibilities for academic staff development, I approached this study by examining the experiences of academic staff developers and leaders of AD/ASD units.

To achieve this aim, the following were the broad objectives of the study:

- To understand the roles enacted by academic staff developers
- To understand from a critical perspective the reasons why academic staff developers enact their roles in particular ways
- To contribute to theorising the field of academic staff development

Based on these, the following critical research questions guided this investigation into the phenomenon of ASD in a changing South African HE context:

- How have academic staff developers enacted their roles in a changing HE context?
- Why have academic staff developers enacted their roles in a changing HE context in the way that they do?

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study intended to contribute contextually, theoretically and methodologically to an exploration of the mandate and worldviews of AD staff members within the complexly changing HE system discussed in this chapter. Contextually, the study intended to develop knowledge around the growing field of ASD in SA, especially within the wider social-political context of attempts to refashion the profile and purposes of HE in a more democratic era. Whilst AD as an overarching umbrella of possibilities may encompass a range of foci (on institutional *governance* transformation, on *curriculum design and development* reformulations, on *students' access and success*, and on reforming *pedagogical* HE [teaching/learning/assessment] *practices*), this study chose to focus on the sub-set of the field looking at AD as a form of intervention to transform the practices, philosophies and

perspectives of the academic staff who engage with alternative/changing pedagogical teaching and learning practice. This latter focus could be defined as “academic staff development” while recognising its interconnections with wider umbrella foci which co-affect its mandate and operations. In researching how individual academic staff developers enact their practices and why they do so in the way they do, I aimed to theorise what *was*, *is* and potentially *could be* ASD theoretically/philosophically. The insights from this study illuminate how the theoretical /philosophical shifts in ASD could assist to reframe our interpretations and understanding of shifts in the overall HE system, and its challenges and systems not operationally, but philosophically. In contributing methodologically, this study proposed a *multi-paradigmatic research design* that draws on multiple paradigms, perspectives and lenses at various stages of the data production, analysis/ interpretation and representation. This multi-paradigmatic research design, underpinned by an integral perspective fostered envisioning (Luitel, 2009) (See further discussion in chapter 3).

1.7. Synthesis

This chapter provided the background, context and rationale for this study. In the background, I explained how this study was prompted by my critical reflection in and of the field of ASD, having spent almost two decades in the field. The contextual landscape included a brief overview of the developments within HE globally and in SA and this was followed by a discussion of AD and academic staff development, globally and in SA HE. I included in this discussion the developments within SA HE that prompted and facilitated ASD.

The background and context provided the rationale for this study, which is about understanding critically the structuring of the field of ASD and the multiple forces that have shaped and influenced the structuring of the field. I explained that while there is research on various aspects of ASD, its pedagogical approaches, methodologies, theories, identity, and impact, these, in the main, are based on individual practices. There are only a few studies that explore the field of ASD more holistically (e.g., Boughey, 2007; Leibowitz, 2014) to understand the shifting trajectory and the forces impacting it. This study is an attempt to make a small contribution to the scholarship of ASD. I then presented the critical questions for the study. In chapter two, next, I discuss the shifting AD landscape and provide an overview of the theoretical referents that initially guided this study.

CHAPTER 2

EXPLORING THE SHIFTING ACADEMIC (STAFF) DEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPE

2.1. Introduction and Overview

The previous chapter presented the foundational elements for this study. These included the background that provided the impetus for this study, the contextual landscape, rationale and the broad critical questions guiding this research inquiry. This present chapter consists of two parts.

In Part A, I present an overview of the literature, highlighting the emergence of AD and the trends in the international and national context that have influenced its practice and research. I then move on to interrogate the emergence and development of ASD in SA and the current key debates in this field. I explore the roles, purpose and functions of ASD as expounded in the existing literature as well as the shifting conceptions, discourses and ideologies of ASD. Through this exploration, I further identify and present the gaps that this research seeks to address.

In Part B, in espousing theoretical pluralism, I draw on a range of theoretical referents that have served as the initial temporary lens that guided this study through establishing the foci for this research study, the development of research instruments and engaging in the field.

2.2. Part A: Exploring the shifting AD and ASD landscape

AD, as a field has been concerned with change (Land, 2001) and through its commitment to improvement and innovation (Clegg, 2009), AD as an emergent field may be argued to have contributed to shaping learning and teaching in HE institutions, globally. In line with the shifting, HE context in SA as well as shifts in the international AD field. AD in SA is also on a shifting trajectory. More recently, there has been a marked emphasis on ASD in SA, especially with the growing interest in professionalising teaching and enhancing academics as university teachers¹⁵ (DHET, 2018). In addition to this, the ‘decolonial turn’, brought about by student

¹⁵ the National Framework for Enhancing Academics as University Teachers – a guiding document approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training on 1st November 2018.

protests since 2015, has pulled ASD from the margins to more centralised positions (Behari-Leak et al., 2018). How these various forces impact the field of ASD is explored in this chapter. The ‘field’¹⁶ of ASD is determined by its practices and scholarship. In order to understand, explore and investigate the field, we need to understand what its practices are, what pedagogical approaches have been used, what scholarship has emerged about its practices, what methodological and theoretical approaches and perspectives have been used to investigate the field, and produce knowledge about it.

In this chapter, I pay homage to my academic predecessors who have contributed to such knowledge-building and shaped the developing field of academic staff development. I also use the notion of ‘field’ with respect to ASD with some caution and acknowledge that ASD is not a professional field yet (Shay, 2012; Boughey, 2022) in the Bourdiesian sense and may be referred to rather as a ‘region’ using the Bernsteinian construct (Clegg, 2009a; 2009b; Gosling, 2009; Shay, 2012). I discuss these aspects in this chapter.

2.2.1. Academic (staff) development: Contestations, roles, discourses

According to McDonald and Stockley (2008), AD in international contexts has “progressed from an informal set of instructional improvement activities to a scholarly field of study and practice” (p. 213). While similar trends have been observed in South African contexts, AD in SA had its own unique historical beginnings. Shay (2012) argues that AD discourses have a strong axiological orientation. This is concerned with the moral, political and social values associated with change and transformation (Shay, 2012), with initial AD practices underpinned by a discourse of liberation and equity (Volbrecht, 2003).

While in the international contexts, AD refers to the support provided to academic staff for enhancing learning and teaching, in the South African context, AD refers to the all-embracing activities associated with student, staff, curriculum and institutional development, as per the

CHE definition,

Also known as Educational Development. A field of research and practice that aims to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in higher education, and to enable institutions and the HE system to meet key educational goals,

¹⁶ I use field in inverted commas, as ASD is not regarded as a field in a Bourdiesian framework. I discuss this briefly in Part 2 of this chapter.

particularly in relation to equity of access and outcomes. Academic development encompasses four interlinked areas of work: student development (particularly foundational and skills-oriented provision), staff development, curriculum development and institutional development (CHE, 2007, p. 74).

This study is particularly concerned with the subfield of academic development, focused on academic staff development. This chapter includes insights from all phases and subfields of academic development to demonstrate the shifts and trajectory of AD/ASD in the changing South African context.

On the international front, Gibbs (2013) highlighted trends in the changing nature of AD work, to include amongst others, a shift away from the margins (Little & Green, 2012) to more centralised function, from working with individual academics to course teams, from change tactics to change strategies, from being atheoretical and unscholarly to theoretical and scholarly. These structural and systemic institutional trends highlighted by Gibbs (2013) have been enacted differently within South African academic development. Some AD units still remain on the periphery, work with individual teachers, and run ad hoc workshops that are under-theorised and not often scholarly, as reflected in institutional reports for the Quality Enhancement Project which has as one of its focus areas, the enhancement of academics as teachers (CHE, 2015). However, different permutations exist for AD units across HE institutions across SA, and these vary depending on institutional contexts and the forces that impact their provision.

There is considerable variation in approaches to and methods of engaging in academic development work in South Africa. Some of the differences are ideological while others are practical. For example, the scope of staff development opportunities available to academics – whether staff development is offered as short, stand-alone workshops or short courses or as part of a coherent staff development programme – depends on the extent to which an institution values teaching in relation to research” (Behari-Leak et al., 2018, p. 417).

Drawing on the Gosling report (2009) ASD roles have overlapped the three roles of: Service (conducting workshops, consultancy with academic staff); Management (working together with managers to develop and implement institutional policies); and Academic (conducting research, e.g., SoTL and other educational research, teaching on programmes, usually PGDHEs, supervising postgraduate studies). Gosling contends that AD units may adopt any of these roles or a variety of them, and more importantly, he argues that the dominant positioning or roles will determine how the AD/ ASD unit is received and perceived (Gosling,

2009). What informs these choices, and the critique of their limitations and potential, are also part of the foci of my study.

Drawing on research into AD in the global north¹⁷ (including Australia and New Zealand) and the global south (e.g., South Africa), Clegg (2009) asserts that “that academic development is now a definable set of practices with its own distinctive values and professional organisation and that its project is one of increasingly contributing to strategic educational change” (p. 54). In the South African context, Behari-Leak et al. (2018) affirm this.

AD has effected many gains. Institutional changes and policies demonstrate the significant role that AD research has played in shaping the learning and teaching landscape at institutions. Professional development programmes and postgraduate diplomas in Higher Education have contributed to the theory and practice of academics in the classroom, while empirical research has advanced the scholarship of teaching and learning overall. Academic developers...serve on numerous committees, contribute to institutional projects and serve the academy in a myriad of roles, such as conference organisers, workshop facilitators, seminar leaders and the like. Interventions by academic developers have advanced a national recognition of the status and importance of teaching for student success and have contested the everyday discourse that “anyone can teach” to assert that the way disciplinary experts teach directly affects students’ ability to succeed (Behari-Leak et al., 2018, p. 404).

From the above assertions by Behari-Leak et al. (2018), AD and ASD in SA have made strides, contributing toward relevant, responsive, contextualised higher education learning and teaching practices. Yet, AD remains a contested field of practice and research. Located within a contested HE landscape, we have seen AD and ASD traverse a rocky terrain with shifts axiologically, methodologically and theoretically shaping the field.

As alluded to earlier, AD in SA was axiologically charged (Shay, 2012) with initial discourses of liberation (Volbrecht, 2003), redress, equity and social justice being superseded by discourses of efficiency and performativity (Boughey, 2012; McKenna & Boughey, 2021). Although AD is underpinned by a transformative agenda, Vorster and Quinn (2018) have called for stronger discourses, like the decolonial discourses so that the “structural and cultural stasis in higher education is to be disrupted”. They draw on social realism to inquire into how structure and

¹⁷ Although countries like Australia and New Zealand may be in the southern hemisphere the idea about the hegemonies of the global north is not necessarily restrictive to geographic borders as following Connell (2017) inequities crosses these geographic or nationalistic borders.

culture in the Archerian¹⁸ sense serve to maintain the status quo of HE that marginalises students, thus perpetuating social and epistemic injustices.

2.2.2. *The scholarly interests and foci of ASD*

Research within the area of ASD has largely focused on the strategies used for staff development or academics' perception of staff development. As observed by Boughey & Niven (2012) "much research continues to be praxis-based and student-focused and, as a result, seems reminiscent of much of the earlier work of the movement" (p. 650). Some of this research included, for example, approaches to and methodologies for academic staff development including curriculum development (Bozalek & Dison, 2013; Brew & Jewell, 2012; Chitanand & Rambharos, 2016; Clarence-Finscham & Naidoo, 2013, van Schalkwyk et al., 2013), conceptions of AD (Holmes & Manathunga, 2012; Sutherland, 2013; Linder & Felten, 2015; Loads & Campbell, 2015; Mårtensson & Roxå, 2015), scholarship of teaching and learning (Haigh, 2012; Willingham-McLain, 2015), and roles and identities of AD (Kensington-Miller, Renc-Roe, & Morón-García, 2015; Sutherland, 2015). Recent research has focused on more critical engagements with ASD and HE praxis (e.g., Vorster and Quinn, 2017; Behari-Leak et al., 2018, 2020; Ganas et al., 2021; Lockett, 2017; Lockett & Blackie, 2022, amongst others).

There has been an increased interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), with most universities in SA offering SoTL capacity development programmes to support academic staff in engaging in research in learning and teaching (see, for example, the blog post by Cupido et al., 2023). This has seen a further proliferation of research outputs of academic staff (and sometimes in collaboration with ASD partners). This need, to contribute to building the knowledge base of learning and teaching in SA, as well as focusing on knowledge of the global south, has led to the biennial SoTL in the South conference and an associated journal. While the conference and the journal contributions have, in the main, included research on learning, teaching and assessment, there has not been much focus on AD research in this journal. My review of the journal has found only a few articles on staff development, professional development, or professional learning. Understandably, the journal has focused on learning and teaching development and contributing to its knowledge base, given also that the focus

¹⁸ The authors draw on the work of Margaret Archer (2003) especially the influence of structure, culture and agency on academic practices and student learning in HE

and prioritising of disciplinary research is another factor that may influence the developments in and of SoTL.

AD/ ASD researchers have published their work in other SA teaching and learning journals, for example, the South African Journal of Higher Education (SAJHE), Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning (CriSTAL), Alternation: a Multidisciplinary Journal, Education as Change, Journal of Education; and in international journals such as Teaching and Learning Inquiry, the International Journal of Educational Development (IJAD), Teaching in Higher Education, and Studies in Higher Education. However, having an article published in an international journal may be challenging.

Given the focus of building knowledge in the global south (Connell, 2007; Manathunga & Grant, 2017; Motsa, 2017; Chaka, Ndlangamandla, Mkhize, 2022), it is noteworthy to mention that there is no journal dedicated to AD in the global south. Neither is there a conference for AD. The Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of SA (HELTASA)¹⁹ to which many academic developers are affiliated, does present more opportunities for AD engagement, but is also a general teaching and learning conference. Could this in any way delimit or conflate the ASD agendas?

In engaging in AD/ ASD research, academic staff developers have drawn on a range of methodological and theoretical perspectives to inquire into their practices. Given that the nature of ASD embraces a social justice and transformative educational perspective, many academic developers have drawn on critical theory to frame their inquiries (e.g., Ngwenya, 2019). Critical and social realism have dominated much AD research in South Africa, including Roy Bhaskar's critical realism and Margaret Archer's social realist framework of structure culture and agency, (e.g. Boughey, 2012; Niven, 2012; Quinn, 2012; Behari-Leak, 2015; Naidoo, 2021), and Bernstein's Knowledge structures and Karl Maton's Legitimation Code theory (Shay, 2012; Vorster & Quinn, 2017; 2019 Lockett & Shay, 2020; Wolff, 2022, Wolff & Winberg, 2022). Bourdieu's field theory has been used to some extent to explore the AD/ ASD field (Kloot, 2009, 2015) or some aspect of AD engagements (Jawitz, 2009). Other theoretical perspectives drawn on include Nancy Fraser's concepts of global justice and parity of

¹⁹ HELTASA: Higher Education Learning & Teaching Association of Southern African, is a professional organisation for academics and academic staff developers in Southern Africa

participation (McKenna et al., 2022); Cultural Historical activity theory – CHAT (Garraway & Winberg, 2020), the capabilities approach (Walker, 2015) and, to some extent, Transformative learning theory (Chitanand, 2019; van Schalkwyk et al., 2019).

More recently, some AD scholars have turned to posthumanisms for alternative theorisation and explorations of AD. These include research in the areas of socially just pedagogies (e.g. Bozalek & Zembylas, 2016; Leibowitz, 2016; Leibowitz & Naidoo, 2017) and collaborative online learning (van den Berg & Verster, 2022).

The above is only a snapshot of the range of theoretical perspectives deployed for AD/ASD research, but the diversity may augur well for ASD in light of Jacobs' (2021) cautionary note, which

...caution against looking to one conceptual framework or one analytical toolkit for all the answers. While academic developers, need to be informed by their own educational philosophies, it is important for them to guard against becoming sectarian in their thinking" (Jacobs, 2021, p. 6)

While the ascholarly and atheoretical nature of ASD in SA has been discussed extensively by Shay (2012), Niven (2012), and Boughey and Niven (2012) with calls for strengthening the epistemological spine (Shay 2012), the above brief account demonstrates the developing scholarship in various areas of AD and ASD work. Whether this research has contributed to engendering a transformative praxis in South African HE remains contentious. I discuss this contention in the next section with an observation from Ganas et al (2021) about the usefulness (or not) of the 'wealth' of AD/ ASD research.

To date, there are three inter-institutional collaborative research projects²⁰ enabled through funding from the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG). The first project, involving eight institutions that was funded by the National Research Foundation (Leibowitz et al., 2017), focused on the 'contextual influences on the professional development of academics as teachers in HE in South Africa'. While the project and the various ancillary research activities associated with the project highlighted structural, cultural and agential factors that enabled or constrained professional

²⁰ During the timeframe for this study and data production, until 2019, there was one collaborative study that had completed (the Structure, Culture, Agency project) and the second project, NATHEP had just commenced in 2018. The third project, NADL, commenced in 2021.

- There appears to be a silence of ASD for postgraduate studies (master's and doctoral programmes) and community engagement, with the former usually residing within the ambit of research units in SA HE, with little recorded collaborative engagements between AD and the research ambit. A few initiatives do exist. For example, the national learning and teaching organisation HELTASA facilitates a PhD programme for academic staff developers and some universities in SA are facilitating master's and doctoral programmes in the area of HE studies for academics and academic developers.

In a recent article by Sutherland (2018) she asks, "*Is it time to think more broadly about the AD project?*" (p. 265, italics are author emphasis). In this article, Sutherland provokes us to think about expanding or extending our AD work to "focus beyond learning and teaching to consider the *whole of the academic role*...we could take more account of other aspects of academic careers (research, service, administration, leadership)" (p. 263).

- Who should be doing ASD work? Who should be called an academic developer? I make this observation considering academic staff who are not designated academic developers but engage in ASD-like activities either on their own or in collaboration with academic staff, for example, research units that offer supervision training that may be considered as enhancing learning and teaching at the postgraduate level and writing centres. Will this flatten what ASD is (its role) or who could be classified as an academic staff developer, or increase the perception that the field is so open that anyone could be an academic developer? Will this compromise the integrity and validity of the field that is itself trying to achieve legitimacy? These, in my view, are important considerations for ASD. Leibowitz (2014) captures this concern in the next section below.

2.2.3. Challenges of AD Practitioners

Within this growing field, AD practitioners are beset by challenges. Considered as a 'family of strangers' (Harland & Staniforth, 2008) with 'unhomely identities' (Manathunga, 2007), focusing mainly on craft knowledge (Shay, 2012), academic developers have had to work on the margins 'betwixt and between' managers and academics (Little & Green, 2012). These hybrid identities, coupled with a struggle to be considered as legitimate role players within HE have resulted in academic developers occupying chameleon-like existences (Kensington-Miller, Renc-Roe, & Morón-García, 2015; van Schalkwyk & McMillan, 2016). Sugrue et al.'s

(2018) systematic review of AD trends highlighted that although AD “occupies a more prominent and visible position in HE than it did two decades ago” and their “struggles continue, the status and identity of academic developers is a work in progress” (p. 2342).

Academic (staff) developers join the field from a range of disciplinary backgrounds. There is no disciplinary home for AD, rather “Higher Education Studies [is] the academic field from which AD draws its knowledge” (Behari-Leak et al., 2018, p. 413). This diverse family could result in the field being considered as fragmented (Harland & Staniford, 2008), and “sacrifices coherence in terms of its axiological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings” (Behari-Leak et al., 2018, p. 416).

The looseness/ openness as expressed by Leibowitz (2014) in her assertion that there are ‘no fixed recipes’ for AD work, could be another challenge for the field. “The concept of academic development – whether it is viewed as a profession, a sphere of activity, a theme, a concern or even a vocation – remains at best, elastic and flexible, and at worst, elusive or murky” (Leibowitz, 2014, p. 73). This openness, she suggests, may be both advantageous and problematic for AD.

The advantage of academic development remaining open, elastic and flexible is that it provides space for a broad church of researchers and writers, using a variety of methods for analysis or intervention strategies, who are able to respond critically, creatively, sensitively and instinctively – but in a scholarly manner – to the challenges that are posed by varied higher education contexts... if the field is left too open and ill-defined, it becomes difficult to generate an adequate community of practice, which is necessary to provide peer support and to set criteria or standards on which to base judgements about quality or validity...An open field also threatens the job security of academic developers, whose units may be frequently reorganised (Ling, Fraser, & Gosling, 2013). A less codified field, in some cases, causes academic developers to be classed as a service group without an academic or scholarly identity (Boughey & Niven, 2012) (Leibowitz, 2014, p. 73).

How these definitions and interpretations of roles of AD practitioners play themselves out within the present climate of increasing challenges to HE as a system, the widening debates of relevance and access of the curricula of HE in the context of calls for decolonising of higher education, the curriculum and pedagogy -- and how the audit cultures, increased performativities and neoliberal policies still dominate the discourses of not only state systems and private /public expectations of HE, but also of staff and students’ discourses (Badat, 2009, 2022; 2024; Clegg, 2009; Maistry, 2012; Heleta, 2023) are the subject of this doctoral study

agenda. Where is AD and specifically ASD, shifting to and why? What are its limitations, possibilities and potentialities? These are some of the considerations for this study.

In their paper, *How to be and not to be: The limitations and possibilities of academic development* (Behari-Leak et al., 2018), members of the HELTASA committee who were authors of this paper were candid about some of the limitations and blind spots of academic development. They have highlighted AD's stance as being reactive rather than leading practices and scholarship of learning and teaching in higher education.

[T]he philosophies and ideologies of AD...included social justice; redress and equity; human dignity; democratization; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; public accountability; institutional autonomy and human resource development, thus mirroring the philosophies and ideologies of HE. The challenge of being a mirror is that...when shifts occurred in HE, it seemed that AD followed closely, responding to the challenges, problems and dilemmas of the sector, instead of leading the way with theorised and practical interventions and 'solutions'... the general academic community tends to view AD as institutional 'fixers' and 'trouble-shooters' who could be called on, not as leaders in the field, but as practitioners to whom others turn when in crisis (Behari-Leak et al., 2018, p. 412).

Espousing a similar view, Debowski (2014) avers that although academic developers may be knowledgeable practitioners, they may be powerless in effecting widespread change unless there are strong collaborators, or, I might add, people in power to make decisions. Otherwise, Debowski (2014) adds, academic developers will have to "operate through influence, alliances, stealth, lobbying, and whatever other technique they can employ to be considered an important source of insight and ideas" (p. 54).

In light of the above reflexive revelations about the field of academic (staff) development, AD practitioners (or practitioner-scholars²²) have made strides in leading debates around HE pedagogy, including concepts of *good* teaching, *best* practices and teaching *excellence* (Behari-Leak and McKenna, 2017; Jacobs, 2019, 2021; Cattell-Holden, 2020).

The second blind spot revealed by Behari-Leak et al. (2018) relates to the decolonial challenges of higher education, where AD should have been leading the deliberations.

²² What's in a name?

Perceptions of practitioner focus is on practice only; whereas scholar includes the scholarly dimension of the work, which may often not be recognised. "A less codified field in some cases causes academic developers to be classed as a service group without an academic or scholarly identity (Boughey & Niven, 2012).

Our most recent history has pointed to at least one of our blind spots. The student protests of 2015 and 2016 and calls for the decolonisation of higher education have given academic developers cause to think about what may have gone wrong in our endeavours to create the most fertile conditions for enabling epistemological access for most students.... [we] came to understand that because our gaze was focused on particular places, we failed to see other vistas that clearly did not escape the vision of many students (Behari-Leak, 2018, p. 413).

Behari-leak et al. (2018) acknowledge the influence of neoliberalism on AD practices and their (AD's) own complicity in perpetuating particular forms of AD and ASD. While recognising the need to engage in critical reflection, which they deem necessary to transform AD practices, they attest may also be compromised by the high-stakes environment that often accompanies most AD work.

“A neo-liberal sensibility that seems to pervade HE might have also crept into our original modes of engagement, making us complicit and passive in different institutions. The need to self-reflect and challenge our own modus operandi is urgent and linked to demands of the current context which suggests that we might not have been as successful in driving the transformation agenda as we could / should have been” (pp. 405-406).

2.2.4. Need for (more) critical, reflexive deliberations for ASD in South Africa

Brew (2007) argues that “academic developers need to be able to be able to critique the underlying ways of thinking and acting in HE through a reflexive approach to their work” (p. 70). Kloot (2015) contends that much AD work has been “unreflexive and theory-poor” (p. 959). Taking on this cue from Brew (2007) and Kloot (2015) I adopt a reflexive approach to researching the field of ASD through forcing the field (through my interactions with my participants in this study) to ‘bend backwards on itself’ focusing on the underlying values, assumptions, beliefs, ideologies, and forces impacting on ASD practices.

I now turn to four key (in my view) texts that have been developed by South African academic developers and which provide opportunities to engage in the reflexive deliberations and which may provide insights for re-envisioning academic staff development.

Based on her years of research in the field of academic staff development, Cecilia Jacobs presented a keynote address at the 2019 HELTASA conference and the paper, based on this presentation, *Contextually responsive and knowledge-focused teaching: Disrupting the notion of ‘best practices’* (Jacobs, 2021) asks the following questions pertinent to this study:

Are the current practices and Discourses within the field of Academic Development, normalising a decontextualised approach to teaching? How do we disrupt our own thinking and develop politically clear educational philosophies?” (Jacobs, 2019, p. 4-5).

She calls for academic development to play a more significant role in countering genericism (or hyper-genericism, following Fataar, 2019)²³ which reinforces decontextualised notions of teaching and learning (Jacobs, 2021). Jacobs argues that academic developers who play a key role in shaping teaching and learning in HE have the responsibility to disrupt the notion of ‘best practice’ and challenge the decontextualised approaches to teaching. This will involve promoting more contextually relevant, responsive approaches and pedagogies that are informed by local contexts and realities rather than drawing on predominantly generic approaches and frameworks that may not be relevant or suitable for the educational landscape of SA HE.

Drawing on the seminal works of Freire, Jacobs argues for critical consciousness for a contextualised approach for SA HE and ASD, which will “reconnect teaching to the lives of people” (Jacobs, 2021, p. 4). Paulo Freire’s (1970) seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, provides useful concepts for critically examining educational contexts. The two central concepts are critical consciousness (*conscientizacao*) and critical reflection (*reflexao critica*). Critical consciousness is an individual’s critical awareness of how social, political and economic factors shape and influence lives and structures around them. This awareness is crucial for understanding how dominant educational knowledges and practices are produced and perpetuated in higher education institutions. Critical reflection, through which critical consciousness is enacted, involves active and ongoing questioning of how power works in an educational context. Freire (1970) emphasises that critical reflection must be coupled with action (*praxis*) to be meaningful and transform oppressive situations. For South African higher education, this lens is particularly relevant to examine post-apartheid transformation challenges and especially how historical power dynamics continue to influence and shape higher education and academic staff development practices. This is crucial given the country’s

²³ In this article, Jacobs (2021) critiques the idea that there are universal best practices for learning and teaching, which she claims is rooted in the notion of genericism. This generic, universal view, she contends, leads to decontextualised or autonomous teaching practices, which do not consider the unique needs of diverse educational contexts like SA and are not effective for the diverse students within this context. She draws on the work of Fataar (2019), who introduced the idea of hyper-genericism to indicate that such a view of genericism is not only dominant in SA HE but is growing rapidly. He refers to this phenomenon as “genericism on steroids” (Fataar, 2019, p. 3, cited in Jacobs, 2021, p. 2).

historical legacies deeply embedded in social and epistemic injustices and the reliance on knowledge from the global north that produces hegemonic perspectives and practices that perpetuate inequities. For Freire, Jacobs avers,

teaching and learning is primarily about developing a political consciousness which questions the nature of society, uncovers the causes of injustices and oppression, and then intervenes in order to change the world into a more democratic society (Jacobs, 2021, p. 4).

By drawing on Freire, Jacobs's provocations provide a contextually relevant entry point for the critical examination of academic staff development in this study.

Jacobs further highlighted the claim by Vorster and Quinn (2014) that many of the theoretical perspectives used to strengthen AD work have originated from the global north. This has also been raised quite vehemently by Ganas et al. (2021), who draw our attention to extraversion (Hountondji, as cited in Ganas et al., 2021). For Hountondji, extraversion is about "being oriented to external sources of authority", (Connell, nd) in this case, the global north. Connell further refers to Hountondji's book, *Endogenous Knowledge*, wherein he describes a "global division of labour: data are gathered in the colony, but theory is made in the metropole. Scientists from the global south travel to the USA and Europe for training and recognition, learn northern intellectual frameworks, try to get published in northern journals" (Connell, n.d).

Considering this, Jacobs (2021) prompts AD to consider the following:

The time has come for us to be more deliberate about drawing on knowledge emanating from the global South and explore what it has to offer about contextualised views of good teaching (p. 4).

The third argument that Jacobs proffers is to bring knowledge to the centre of the academic project and ASD deliberations. She contends that much ASD practices have focused on narrow, instrumentalist views of pedagogy, like the generic notion of 'best practices' and it is time to be more focused in our work with academic staff to engage in critical, theorised conversations about "what students are learning – the different knowledges with their specific structures and organising principles" (Jacobs, 2021, p. 7). Drawing on the work of Maton (2014b), Muller (2011) and Morrow (2009), Jacobs (2021) suggests that the role of ASD should focus on assisting academics to make explicit the often hidden and tacit organising principles and epistemic values of disciplinary knowledges.

So, when I refer to 'knowledge', I do not mean the content knowledge only, it is also about the epistemic values which shape the field, as well as the specific structures and organising principles underpinning how knowledge is produced in that field-the disciplinary rules of the academic game, as it were (Jacobs, 2021, p. 8).

While in the above extract, Jacobs (2021) refers to the kinds of knowledge building we as academic staff developers, are focused on in our staff development engagements with academics, I offer this provocation by Jacobs as a further consideration for the knowledge building around ASD knowledge itself. As she has argued earlier, many of AD's theoretical perspectives are drawn from the global north. Is it time for Academic staff developers to be looking at our own contexts? The challenge is that there are few or no theories in the South African contexts, hence academic developers turn to the global north for theoretical frameworks to explain global south phenomena. This is an important consideration for this study, which I shall draw on later.

The second paper, by Ganas et al. (2021), *Pedagogies for critical agency: Portals to alternative futures*, also focuses on contextualised AD and HE praxis and scholarship and draws on a decolonial framing. Like Jacobs (2021), Ganas et al. conceptualise an expansive notion of pedagogies in context that debunks what Freire regards as the banking model of education and instead promotes transformative forms of pedagogy that could serve to unmask and transform oppressive social conditions. They argue that "[t]o re-imagine AD pedagogies in context requires we consider the effects of coloniality in our HE systems" (Ganas et al., 2021, p. 24).

In my earlier discussion of AD/ ASD research, I have highlighted the variety of research areas and theoretical concepts/ tools/ perspectives that have been used to engage in AD scholarship. An important critical observation by Ganas et al. (2021) that is crucial not only for this study but AD/ASD in general, questions the worth of the extensive research that has been done to date. They "trouble the claims about the existence of a 'wealth of research' produced in AD in SA" (Ganas, et al., 2021, p. 23) and contend that if the research had been productive then it would have been able to 'come to the rescue' of SA HE during the tumultuous era of the student protests of 2015-2016. They would have had the answers to solve the crisis perpetuating higher education, especially about social and epistemic injustices, which, to date, continue to plague our systems, societies and HE.

“Within the South African HE landscape, AD responses to contextual relevance have often conflated global asymmetrical epistemic relations of power with mere geographical location of scholars and in so doing, ignores the global north gaze that is often dominant and celebrated in AD scholarship in SA....

Celebration of theoretical developments in this field from a SA context, however, could be viewed as perplexing as we find it difficult to understand the proud proclamation of an abundance of valuable research in a context where universities continue to reproduce colonial epistemic relations of power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018)...

If we agree that the call for a decolonised HE was central to the student protests which engulfed SA HE in the 2015-2016 academic years, then the availability of a wealth of research (Boughey and Niven, 2012) should have provided a more effective curriculum and pedagogic response” (Ganas et al., 2021, p. 23).

Having brought to the fore a contextually responsive approach, the centrality of knowledge for the academic project, including the importance of knowledge of/for the global south and a decolonial approach for our ASD work in the above two articles, the next article by Lockett and Blackie (2022) puts both the knowledge production and decoloniality in dialogue with each other. Their article, *Beyond epistemology: the challenge of reconceptualising knowledge in higher education* (Lockett & Blackie, 2022), shows the incommensurability of the Bernsteinian school of thought and the decolonial school and advocates for an ontological view of causality to enable transformation.

They build on the work of Suellen Shay who for most of her career worked within the Bernsteinian school of education. With a decolonial focus Shay drew on Bernstein to emphasise “reforming curricula for greater equity of access to knowledge and ultimately for social justice” (Lockett & Blackie, 2022, p. 1). Lockett & Shay argue that Bernstein’s theorisation of knowledge structures was attractive in the absence of any theory-building about knowledge.

The attraction of Bernstein’s work to education development in South Africa should be clear. In a strongly divided and unequal society, to find a theory that affords a strong agentic role to the pedagogue to provide ‘epistemic access’ to the modern disciplines to first generation black students from poor schooling background was to be embraced (Lockett & Blackie, 2022, p. 3).

Through a decolonial lens both Ganas et al. (2021) and Lockett & Blackie (2022) draw on Maldonado-Torres’s critique of Descarte’s *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) and his claim that “colonial difference is not only epistemological but also ontological” (Lockett & Blackie, 2022) and thus knowledge is situated and embodied.

Luckett & Blackie (2022) discuss the shortcomings and blindspots of both the Bensteinian and decolonial schools, and by drawing on Bhaskar's philosophy of ontology they argue that "transformation cannot be effected by epistemological shifts alone" and the need to also "take into account the domain of interrogation and that of the knowers" (Luckett & Blackie, 2022, p.7). This focus on ontology as well as epistemology is also shared by Shawa (2019) in his chapter, *Beyond Epistemology: Ontological transformation in South African universities*, Shawa (2019) posits that "in order to meaningfully contribute to the objectives of a transformed, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic (HE) system...epistemological aspects of transformation need to be complemented by ontological dimensions" (p. 110) focusing on students knowing, acting, being and becoming.

In the fourth article, while also supporting the need to strengthen the epistemic spine of ASD, McKenna et al. (2022) call for academic developers "to be deeply reflexive about our current framings and look forward to what the flourishing of social justice in our universities might look like" (p. 1015). They position their arguments drawing deeply on the negative impact of the neoliberal agenda on HE and academic development.

"Universities are in society and are framed by neoliberal ideologies that have served to cement social injustices at a global level. Academic developers then work within this context, often with limited institutional power" (McKenna, et al., 2022, p. 1025).

Within the context of this hegemony of performativity and efficiency that ensues within HE, academic developers are under pressure to contribute to enhancing teaching and learning by demonstrating quick results through fragmented and technical methods (Di Napoli, 2014), sometimes in contrast to their own values. In this respect, Di Napoli (2014) suggests that political ontology – "the sets of values academic developers import into their work and how these values may or may not be enacted in their own institutional space" (p. 4) – is an important consideration for AD work.

He raises the following important question for consideration in this study: "how do academic developers position themselves if their own values do not reflect the social and institutional discourses of their workplace?" (Di Napoli, 2014, p. 4). It also needs further exploration about what constitutes these values that underpin AD practitioners, and from where do they derive these interpretations and mandates of their roles and purposes. This points to biographical and/or contextual influences on the roles of academic developers. Samuel (1998, 2008) claims

that there are at least four dominant forces, biographical, contextual, institutional and programmatic, that push and pull in multiple directions and which influence student teachers' identity construction.

McKenna et al. (2022) argue that AD work is inherently political and has been largely affirmative, that is, not fully interrogating the underlying causes of the injustices. This could perhaps refer to surface-level changes, for example, tinkering with the curriculum without fully understanding how and why curricula are structured in the ways that they are. Drawing on Nancy Fraser's *Abnormal Justice* (Fraser, 2008) and parity of participation (2009), McKenna et al. (2022) strongly advocate for revisiting and interrogating staff development and other AD work and moving from an affirmative to a transformative orientation. This will require challenging the neoliberal discourses that serve to perpetuate HE and thwart transformation, revisiting and interrogating existing (curriculum) frameworks, interrogating assumptions and engaging in collaborative initiatives on "larger issues of institutional cultures, practices, and policies" (McKenna et al., 2022, p.1016). Heleta (2023) cautions us that the road to decolonisation (and ultimately HE transformation) is a long and arduous one in light of the neoliberalism and eurocentricism that persist in South African higher education, but also stresses that we must continue to challenge the status quo.

The four articles discussed above have highlighted critical issues that impact HE and ASD in the changing South African HE context. Interestingly, the word 'changing' in the previous sentence and in the title of my study suggests shifts that have occurred. However, the four articles above and the previous discussions in this chapter point to some of the challenges of our practices (HE in general and ASD) that keep academics, academic (staff) developers locked within particular frames and the reflex deliberations prompted in this section may be crucial for shifting ASD praxis and scholarship from affirmative to transformative orientations (McKenna, et al., 2022) and for considering the question below, posed by Behari-Leak et al. (2018).

how can AD contribute to a transformative discourse and programme that engenders a greater critical social justice worldview within the HE sector in South Africa today? (p. 418).

2.3. Part B: Espousing theoretical pluralism – Theoretical Integralism

In this section I discuss the three theoretical perspectives and lenses that informed my study: Bourdieu's Field Theory, Samuel's Force Field Model, and Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. These theoretical perspectives together formed the initial temporary lens that guided the examination of the field of ASD and HE more generally.

2.3.1. Bourdieu's Field Theory

According to Bourdieu's Field theory, society and social practice is a multi-dimensional space consisting of sub spaces (fields) with particular discourses or 'rules of the game' (doxa) and within these fields are actors or agents with particular dispositions (capital/ habitus) (Bourdieu, 1990; Nolan, 2012; Sullivan, 2002)).

In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 97)

Habitus includes the

attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and practices, all formed through the embodiment of one's life history...[and which are] created and recreated through social interaction and tradition (Nolan, 2012, p. 204).

To be considered a legitimate agent in the field will be dependent on an individual's capital (cultural, economic or social) and the extent to which the individual can learn the 'rules of the game'. In considering the practice of and in a field, Nolan adds further that these practices "cannot be accounted for without considering the structure of the power relations among the members" (Bourdieu, 1998, as cited in Nolan, 2012, p. 204). I note and draw on Foucault's (as cited in Bhattacharya, 2005) notion of the relationality of power and not as a unitary entity as he elaborates below:

We must cease at once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms; it "excludes," it "represses," it "censors," it "abstracts," it "masks," it "conceals." In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth (p. 194).

In this study, conceptualised as a critical narrative inquiry, my interest is in what work power does within the discursive spaces of the university and national HE contexts. Also important are the agents of power. From a Bourdieusian perspective, such agents of power would include cultural capital and I explore how the various forms of capital at play in the field of HE and ASD work to produce and structure ASD in particular ways.

In terms of academic development's status as a field, Shay (2012) contends that AD is not a professional field yet, in the Bourdieu sense, drawing on the elements of a field at the beginning of this section. Shay (2012) and Clegg (2012) acknowledge elements of a community of practice evident in academic development, but extend this understanding of AD to include the Bernsteinian construct of a 'region' to describe AD looking outward towards a field of practice and dependent on this field of practice, which in this case is higher education.

Regions, according to Shay (2012), face both ways – towards the field of knowledge production and towards the field of practice. Shay (2012) argues that much of AD work has relied on craft knowledge and cautions that “unless we strengthen our knowledge base, we [academic development] will not emerge as a professional field able to engage rigorously and systematically with the problems of higher education” (Shay, 2012, p. 311).

2.3.2. Samuel's Force Field Model

The Force Field model developed by Samuel (1998, 2008) for understanding the forces impacting on teacher identity is a useful lens to explore the forces that influence and shape academic staff developers' roles in a changing HE context. These forces may be internal to the individual, as in the biographical forces drawn from an individual's lived experiences and life history, or they may be external to the individual, as in the contextual, institutional, or programmatic forces.

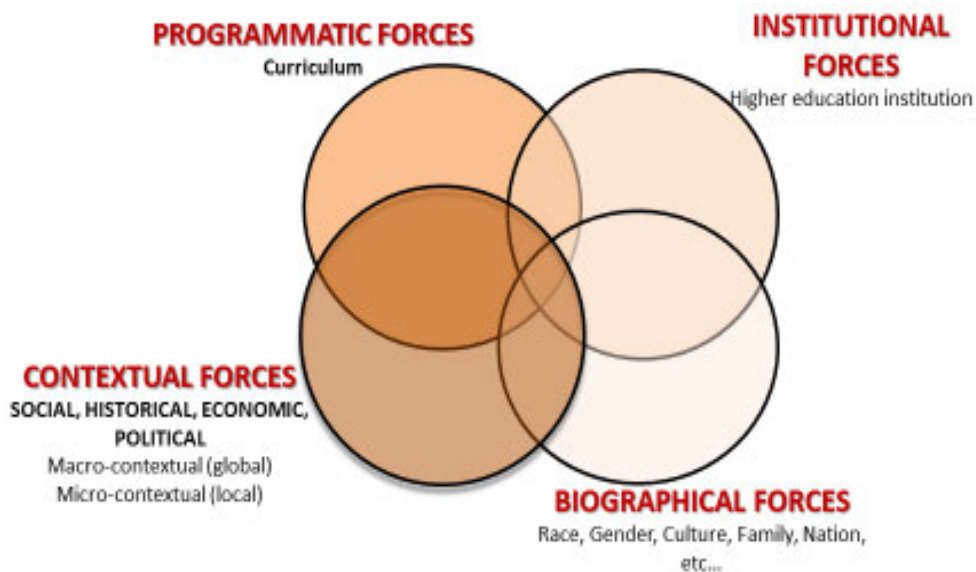


Figure 2.1: Force Field Model
(Samuel, 2008)

As indicated in Figure 2.1, these forces are not mutually exclusive but rather work together to influence teacher identities and shape practice. I have provided below further guiding questions for each of the forces, relevant for this study.

Biographical forces

- Who are the academic staff developers?
- How do they come to be in ASD?

Contextual Forces

- Macro contextual (global) forces
- Micro contextual (local) forces
- What are the socio-historical, political, and economic forces and how have they shaped ASD?
- How is ASD enacted within the contextual variations of ASD?

Institutional Forces (HE Institutions)

- What are the particular institutional imperatives that drive and enable ASD?
- What variations exist across the varied institutional contexts?

Programmatic Forces (Curriculum)

What are the purposes/ roles/ functions across the range of institutional contexts?

Why do academic developers hold these particular conceptions of ASD?

What is the ASD curriculum/ knowledge production about?

Samuel (2008) argues that the biographical force is the most powerful of the forces and is the “residual force towards which individual teachers often retreat when other external forces begin to exert too forceful a control over their identity” (Samuel, 2008, p. 12). Implicit in these biographical forces are an individual’s beliefs, values and assumptions which often are unnoticed or not considered important but drive actions, sometimes unconsciously. These beliefs, values and assumptions are embedded in the habitus, alluded to earlier, and require to be brought to light, interrogated and revised in order to shape new practices. In light of this, I selected Mezirow’s Transformative learning as the third theoretical lens for this study.

2.3.3. Mezirow’s Transformative Learning

Mezirow (1997) argues that being human entails understanding the meaning of our experiences, not necessarily based on what someone else explains to us about our experience, but rather to develop our own understanding and interpretations of these experiences. Developing this kind of autonomous thinking is the basis of transformative learning theory. Transformative learning involves effecting changes to our frames of reference, which are composed of deeply held assumptions reflected as habits of mind and a point of view that is an outward perspective (Mezirow, 1997; Gunnlaugson, 2007).

One of the criticisms levelled against transformative learning theory is its emphasis on individual as opposed to social change (Gunnlaugson, 2007). However, through engaging in transformative learning, an individual is able to question their taken-for-granted assumptions and re-examine their preconceptions, values and beliefs that (un)consciously drive their behaviours, actions and practices, which may contribute to social change. Brookfield (2000) suggests that critical reflection is a necessary condition for transformative learning. As alluded to earlier, habitus includes attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and practices. Through engaging in transformative learning within a field, region or community of practice and exploring their biographical forces, an individual will be able to confront their biases, beliefs and perceptions

to inform or transform practice. Transformative learning theory provides the reflexive approach required for this study that is emphasised in the earlier PART 1 of this chapter.

In this study, I set out to examine how the different orientations to ASD with respect to its status as a field influence the roles enacted by academic staff developers and shape their practice. As alluded to earlier, Clegg asserts that “the ideal of improving teaching needs to be understood in terms of a critical understanding of the power relations of higher education” (Personal communication, 2015). The theoretical perspectives highlighted in this study point to the complex nature of a field underpinned by power relations and forces that push and pull in multiple directions. This study explored the power relations and forces within the field that impact ASD practices and that will help to reframe our understandings of the field of HE. The study further sought to identify whether other forces influence academic staff developers’ roles in a changing HE context.

The above theoretical perspectives assisted me in producing the data to examine and understand critically the developing field of ASD through the perspectives of academic staff developers and key agents in the field of higher education.

2.4. Synthesis

In the first part of this chapter, I drew on the range of literature to explore the developing field of ASD: its practices, contestations, roles and ideological underpinnings; how it impacts HE practices in SA and how it is being impacted upon by the various forces. Through the literature, we can surmise that although AD/ ASD is underpinned by social justice imperatives and has adopted a critically reflexive orientation, “academic developers have not sufficiently questioned or created adequate spaces for academics to interrogate the social structures and institutional arrangements that inform our practices” (McKenna et al., 2022, p. 1010). “AD practitioners, due to constraints, often tend to operate in a mechanistic and reactive manner at the margins of the academic project” (Behari-Leak et al., 2018, p. 412-413). Engaging in transformative work is not an easy task within a neoliberal HE context, observes Heleta (2023), but we should persist, he advises.

In the second part of this chapter, I provided a brief overview of the theoretical perspectives used to produce the data and engage in a first and second-level interpretation of the data for

this study. I drew on Bourdieu's Field theory, Samuel's Force field model and Mezirow's Transformative learning as the theoretical referents guiding this study. These three theories formed the initial lens to assist me in developing this study and entering the field to produce the data. Given that academic staff development is a developing field, I was interested in examining critically the forces impacting on the structuring of the field. Given that power is one of the largest forces in a field, I was interested in how power worked to produce the field. Given that a field is made up of actors, how is power manifested, and what work does power do.

Bourdieu's Field theory may be powerful to illuminate the power dynamics in a field through exploring the capital and habitus of key agents. A significant critique of Bourdieu's theory is that it may be deterministic, implying that individuals may lack agency and are merely products of their environments and the positions they hold. This view, advanced by Margaret Archer (2007) in her book, *Making our way through the World*, argues that Bourdieu's theory, especially his concept of habitus (dispositions acquired through social conditioning), overemphasises structural constraints and underplays individual agency and the capacity for deliberate change. While Bourdieu's theory emphasises how individuals' thoughts, actions and lives are shaped by their social structures, Archer (2007) contends that individuals have the capacity for reflexivity. Engaging in reflexivity through internal dialogue and active deliberation enables individuals to question, examine and transform their practices and beliefs even through social conditioning. In response to this critique of being deterministic, Kloot (2011) suggests that Bourdieu "does not rule out strategic calculation nor does he imply that agents mindlessly reproduce the structure of the field of which they are a product, as automatons" (p. 32).

Samuel's (1998, 2008) Force Field model, which was primarily developed to understand the complex influences on teacher identities, was adapted in this study to explore the various forces impacting the field of academic staff development. A similarity with Bourdieu theory could, for example, align Bourdieu's habitus with Samuel's biographical forces. The biographical force refers to the influences based on an individual's lived experience and are individual conceptions of teaching, often shaped by their social interactions, personal backgrounds, and lived experiences. While the model offered by Samuel emphasises the influence of a range of external and internal forces, it may be limited in addressing the capacity of individuals to exercise agency. In this regard, Samuel (2008) does argue that the biographical force may be a 'comforting force', "residual force towards which individual teachers often retreat when other

external forces begin to exert too forceful a control over their identity” (p.12). Thus, an individual’s capacity to exercise autonomy and engage as active agents who can engage in critical reflection is not reflected in this model.

Mezirow’s (1998) transformative learning theory addresses some of the limitations posed in the earlier two theories by focusing on critical reflection and reflexivity, challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and engaging in the internal dialogue that Archer suggests is needed for deliberate change. However, its limitations may be its focus on the individual, rather than on examining social or contextual forces that could influence transformative experiences. A further limitation is its focus on rational critical reflection while potentially neglecting the emotional and social dimensions of learning, change and transformation (Taylor, 1998; Gunnlaugson, 2007).

Each of the theories drawn to make up the initial temporary lens for this study presents strengths and limitations. Taken together, each of the different theories offers nuanced accounts possible for the phenomenon under inquiry. In chapter 7, I revisit the theories and, based on their limitations, I draw on a new set of theories to complement and strengthen the analysis and interpretations of the key arguments in this study.

In the next chapter, in line with my pluralistic approach for this study, I theorise methodological pluralism and discuss my choice of a multiparadigmatic research design with an Integral perspective. Given the evolving nature of my research inquiry, I also encountered a methodological and conceptual disruption that enabled me to explore and add to the theoretical repertoire. I include a discussion of this disruption and the new lines of flights made possible for analysing the data further in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL PLURALISM: A MULTI-PARADIGMATIC RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Introduction and Overview

In the previous chapter, I presented insights into the shifting AD and ASD landscape that illuminated further gaps and considerations for this study. I also presented the theoretical referents guiding the study. In this chapter, I focus on the methodological approach that I adopted.

In designing this study, I encountered difficulties in locating it in one fixed methodology, with one single research method. As this study was concerned with a shifting trajectory of academic development within a changing HE context, I was committed to adopting a similar shifting metaphor in my research design and attempted to push the boundaries of educational research methodologies. I was also interested in not just *understanding* the phenomenon under inquiry; I adopted a *critical* perspective on my own practice in AD and those of my peers. I was also mindful of how I was to *represent* the stories from these practices in a way that could evoke pedagogical thoughtfulness in my readers. I was drawn to Patti Lather's (2006) notion of paradigm proliferation. I was also attracted to and gained inspiration from the work of my colleagues enacting various levels of paradigm proliferation, Amin (2003), Afonso (2006), Jacobs (2006), Luitel (2009), Rahmawati (2012), Taylor, Taylor & Luitel (2012), Mariana (2021), Afzal (2022) and my own previous master's study (Chitanand, 2005). Espousing epistemological and methodological pluralism, I engaged in a multiparadigmatic research design (Taylor, Taylor & Luitel, 2012; Taylor & Medina, 2013) with an Integral perspective (Wilber, 2003). Integralism was incorporated in the selection of the theoretical perspective, the paradigmatic consideration, the methodological approaches, analytical frames and axiological positions guiding the study.

In this chapter, I argue for the choice of a multiparadigmatic research design (MRD) with an Integral perspective for this study. The chapter begins with an explication of three paradigmatic approaches, Interpretivism, Criticalism and Postmodernism and provides a rationale for an MRD. I then qualify the choice of Critical Narrative inquiry as the methodology for this study.

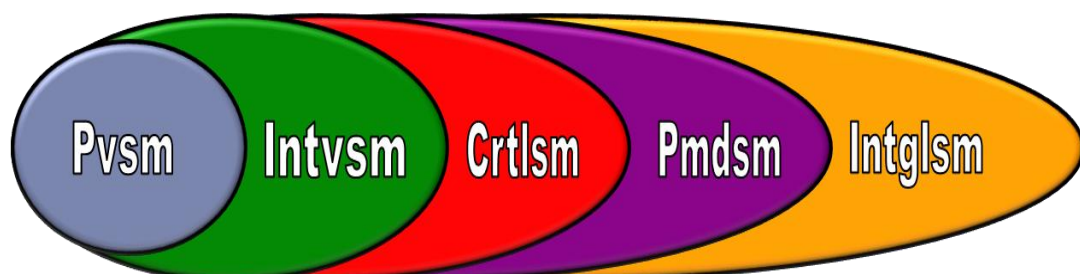
Following this, I explain my data production methodology utilised in this study which includes the data sampling method, my entry into the field, and the data production techniques used. Next, I discuss how the data was analysed, the ethical considerations for the study and how I ensured quality and validity.

3.2. Paradigmatic Considerations

This study adopted a qualitative approach and attempted to disrupt and decolonise the process of inquiry and traditional research design through engaging in a multiparadigmatic research design (Taylor, 2014) that draws on *aspects* of critical theory, interpretivism and postmodernism. Multiparadigmatic research design is not a new phenomenon and has been used by researchers merging interpretivist and critical theories to gain a critical understanding of the phenomenon of their study (for example Amin, 2008; Dhunpath, 2003) or to examine the de-contextualised curricula in their respective countries and propose culturally inclusive transformative curricula (for example Afonso, 2006; Luitel, 2009; Rahmawati, 2012). These studies involved the use of multiple theoretical perspectives and methodologies at the various stages of the research process.

The meta-theory holding these three paradigms together is Integralism. This view sees paradigms not as distinct units but rather developing and building from each other – in holons.

“...the word ‘integral’ means comprehensive, inclusive, non-marginalising, embracing. Integral approaches to any field attempt to be exactly that- to include as many perspective, styles and methodologies as possible within a coherent view of the topic. In a certain sense, integral approaches are ‘meta-paradigms’, or ways to draw together an already existing number of separate paradigms into an interrelated network of approaches that are mutually enriching” (Wilber 2003, p. xii).



Key: Pvsm= Positivism; Intvsm= Intepretivism; Crtlsm= Criticalism; Intglsm= Integralism

Figure 3.1: Research Paradigm Emergence

(Taylor & Medina, 2013)

“Ken Wilber developed this theory of paradigm development...in which each part (or ‘holon’) is itself whole and simultaneously a part of some other whole” (Taylor, Taylor & Luitel, 2012, p. 383). Taylor, Taylor & Luitel (2012) assert further that the integral perspective recognises that “each paradigm produces valuable knowledge - and accordingly it rejects attempts to privilege any single paradigmatic way of knowing” (p. 384).

This multiparadigmatic research design espousing epistemological and methodological pluralism was used to explore the roles enacted by academic staff developers in a changing HE context. The potential coexistence of practitioners’ multiple paradigmatic orientations and perspectives, drawn from their plural historical, political and biographical heritages, suggests that this theoretical framework of multiparadigmatic pluralism might be an appropriate lens to generate data. How these paradigmatic worldviews came to co-exist (or not) both within the individuals, the institutions and systems is the focus of the theoretical exploration in this study.

In positioning this study within a multiparadigmatic creative design space, I drew on an Interpretivist frame with a critical angle, making this a CRITICAL INTERPRETIVIST study. Interpretivism enabled me to understand and “construct contextual meanings of events or phenomena under inquiry” (Luitel, 2009, p. 30). The critical perspective informed the analytical framework, where the analysis entailed utilising “critical methodologies that assess policy [and other] issues at the macro [and micro] levels” (Shawa, 2011, p. 8) that influence ASD in particular ways. Taylor and Medina (2011) argue that critique alone is not enough and that critical researchers need to develop a vision for a better future. Envisioning new possibilities for ASD in SA HE has been a key aspect of this study as well.

Although a criticism of postmodernism is its suspicion of grand narratives (Taylor, Taylor & Luitel, 2012), researchers have drawn on the constructive form of postmodernism that employed creative methods for knowing and representation (see, for example, Luitel, 2009). Postmodernism seeks “not to eliminate the traditional scientific method but to question its dominance and to demonstrate that it is possible to gain and share knowledge in many ways” (Wall, 2006, p. 147). This perspective is crucial for postgraduate studies seeking to contribute to new knowledge in the field of inquiry and to recognise that knowledge may be created in many ways. For this study, Postmodernism with its literary and narrative turn (Taylor, 2014) enabled me as the researcher to employ arts-based methodologies (literary and metaphoric

genres; stories, poems, vignettes) to portray lived experiences. This form of arts-based educational research (Barone & Eisner, 1997) makes use of “aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry and its writing” (p. 73).

3.3. Methodological approach

In line with my paradigmatic position, the main methodological approach that I have selected for this study is **Critical Narrative Inquiry**, narrative inquiry with a critical theory lens. Narrative inquiry is a powerful methodology for understanding human experience through stories. Based on the premise that humans are fundamentally storytelling beings who make sense of their lives through narrative, this approach treats stories not merely as data sources but as a way of knowing and understanding the world (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Chase (2005), narrative inquiry can be considered as an

“amalgam of interdisciplinary analytical lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them” (p. 651).

This highlights the methodology’s flexibility to the individual’s lived reality. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) consider narrative inquiry as the “way of understanding experience” (p. 20) and the narrative as both the method and phenomena of the study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Pinnegar and Dayne, 2007). This dual role is crucial as the stories are more than just data, but a profoundly useful strategy through which the research questions are explored.

The purpose of narrative in this context is not about telling the unfolding of the sequence of a story plot chronologically but to explore and capture the complexities of the phenomenon under theoretical exploration using the hallmarks of a literary genre (Samuel, 2014). The emphasis is on understanding the what, how and why underpinning experiences rather than just when. Narrative inquiry is an appropriate methodology for investigating academic staff development in SA given that the sector continues to grapple with transformation challenges, including efforts to decolonise curricula and address historical inequities pervasive in the landscape. Narrative inquiry can provide useful insights into how academic staff developers navigate these challenges.

Narrative inquiries begin with an autobiographical inquiry that positions the researcher in relation to the phenomenon under study (Clandinin, 2013). In the background to the study in

the Prelude and in Chapter 1, I presented my autobiographical positioning and highlighted my personal lens as I come to understand the shifts that are occurring in AD and HE, more generally. It highlighted my current thinking about the phenomena and I acknowledged that there are other ways of thinking about the phenomena, which were drawn from participants' narratives of their experiences as academic staff developers.

The *critical* dimension of this study transforms the standard narrative inquiry into a Critical Narrative inquiry. This means that while individual stories are central, they are simultaneously viewed through a lens that seeks to uncover power dynamics, social injustices, historical influences and ideological underpinnings that shape and influence those experiences (Freire, 1970). Guided by Habermas's (1968) emancipatory (critical) interest, this study is not only about understanding experiences but also oriented toward critique and liberation from social and ideological constraints. This approach for the study is crucial given the inequities inherent in SA HE as well as the challenges ASD highlighted in Chapter 1. This critical lens allows for an examination of not just what is happening, but why it is happening in specific ways, for whom and what potential opportunities exist for change. A key aspect of this study is envisioning new possibilities for ASD in SA HE. By intertwining individual stories with a critical examination of the changing context, this approach aims to generate insights that can inform more equitable and transformative practices with ASD and HE more generally, in SA.

Within this critical narrative inquiry approach, the primary sources of data for the study were generated from academic staff developers located within HE institutions (HEIs) in South Africa. Their stories are central to understanding the nuances and complexities of their professional lives. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, other important sources of data were also incorporated. These included insights from key role players with HE institutions, such as managers of AD units (teaching and learning centres). Data was also gathered from key role players (for example, managers of AD units) and key representatives from national HE departments. Finally, relevant documents related to institutional policies, reports, guidelines and historical documents related to HE transformation were analysed to contextualise the individual narratives. These sources of data allowed for a critically informed narrative analysis that moved beyond the individual accounts to reveal the underlying systemic issues at play.

3.4. Data Production

3.4.1. Data Sampling

Participants were selected based on purposive sampling which involved handpicking participants according to particular categories, making the process selective and theoretically biased (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). There were two levels of sampling based on the criteria. The first was to select the HE institutions from which the participants would be drawn. According to Leibowitz et al. (2017) “[c]ontextual differences, however, impact on the nature of academic work and cannot be ignored in an unequal society like South Africa” (p. 13). These contexts also impact the nature of the ASD work within higher education. Once I had selected the participating HEIs, the next category of selection was the participants from of the selected HEIs.

Of the 26 HE institutions in South Africa, I selected the HE institutions based on the following categories, highlighting the contextual differences that impact academic staff development:

1. *Institutional type*: The restructuring of the HE system through mergers between 2002 and 2005 resulted in a differentiated HE system, resulting in Traditional Universities (TUs), Comprehensive Universities (CUs) and Universities of Technology (UoTs). The differentiation meant that HEIs needed to rethink, re-evaluate and renew their curricula based on new imperatives and institutional identities. Traditional Universities, for example, that are designated as research-intensive had to consider the relationship of research to undergraduate teaching; programmes at Universities of Technology were expected to include more conceptual knowledge, and Comprehensive Universities were required to develop vocationally oriented programmes (Hall, 2015; Badat, 2015; Leibowitz et al., 2017). All of these had implications for the nature of higher education, curriculum reform and academic staff development.
2. *Location – Rural/ Urban*: The location of an HEI influences the willingness of staff to take up positions within AD units. The location also impacts the nature of AD within the university, for example, within a rural setting with a greater number of underprepared students and fewer academic staff developers, the emphasis may be on student development rather than academic staff development.

3. *Research-intensive/Teaching-led*: The polarisation of teaching and research and the hegemony of research over teaching is widely documented in the literature on higher education. This is exacerbated by the

perceived status accorded to universities by large numbers of publications, [and which] have often consumed an inordinate amount of the time and resources needed to develop and sustain quality university teaching (Council on Higher Education, 2015, p. 15).

Increased workload and the need to focus on improving qualifications and engage in (disciplinary) research are deemed important and may impact ASD at the HEIs.

4. *Nature of the academic staff development unit*: I selected participants from a well-developed academic staff development unit that holds a strategic place in the university structures and offers a range of programmes for academic staff and that has itself been through many cycles of AD to be where it currently is. In this category, I also selected participants from a less well-developed ASD unit. For example, a staff development unit that has been in existence for less than 5 years may be considered fairly new. In this case, there may not be many different enactments of the roles by academic staff developers.
5. Once the HEIs had been selected, academic staff developers from the participating HEIs were selected to participate in the study. The category for selection of participants was based on:

Participants' experience in academic development/ academic staff development: I selected participants with a range of academic development/ academic staff development experience to be able to show the shift in their various roles as academic developers in higher education. This was important given that the focus of the study was on the roles of academic staff developers' reflective accounts of a (shifting) HE landscape over different periods of time.

Based on the above categories, I selected one province in SA (Province X) from which to draw participants from institutions that satisfied the above categories. I invited participants from the three institutions in Province X, namely Institution A (a Traditional University – TU), Institution B (a Comprehensive University – CU) and Institution C (a University of Technology – UoT)²⁴. For

²⁴ To ensure anonymity of the data production sites, I have used a pseudonym for the institutions from which I drew participants, as well as the province in which they are located

the purposes of the feasibility of the study, I had planned to select three (3) participants from each of the institutions, making 9 participants in total. The following table highlights the selection categories of participants in the range of institutional types.

Table 3.1: Categories for selection of participating HE institutions and selection of participants

| | Institutional type | Location | Research/ Teaching focus | Nature of AD unit | Experience of participants |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Institution A | TU | Urban | Research intensive | Fairly well established | >10 years |
| Institution B | CU | Rural | Teaching | Fairly new | 5-10 years |
| Institution C | UoT | Semi - urban | Teaching | Developing | >10 years |

Although the above was the planned process for the selection of participants, in some institutions, there was only one academic staff developer. Each institution participant cohort included the academic developer and the leader of the Teaching and Learning centre within which ASD was located.

3.4.2. Data Production techniques

To understand the complex nature of the roles enacted by academic staff developers in a shifting HE context, I planned a number of different data generation methods in this study. These included analysis of key documents, semi-structured interactive interviews with participants and focus group interviews. I further planned to utilise arts-based methodologies, for example, visual representations - a data elicitation technique in addition to the semi-structured interviews, for example, through developing a poster of one's experiences as an academic developer. However, not all strategies were successfully implemented. Below, I discuss the planned strategies, the strategies implemented and instances of failure where the process was not possible.

The data production plan for this study is included in Appendix 2.

3.4.2.1. *Document Analysis*

The documents that I drew on included university strategic plans, AD unit strategic plans, teaching and learning development or staff development plans, relevant national and institutional policies/ review documents related to staff development (for example, Quality Enhancement Project reports), and participants' staff development programmes plans or documents. The purpose of this analysis was to examine the declared official perspective regarding the philosophies, discourses, ideologies and assumptions embedded in these documents with respect to staff development structures, processes and practices.

3.4.2.2. *Semi-structured Interviews*

Interviews were semi-structured and employed the life history interview methodology (Samuel, 2015; Tierney, 2000) where participants were required to share their personal biographies of their journey into and practices of academic staff development, through drawing on key moments, events and behaviours of their lives that have shaped and influenced their lived experiences. Through engaging in interactive interviewing (Ellis, 2015) the researcher and participant co-constructed stories of lived experiences.

I utilised interviews to elicit

- How participants' *personal biographies* and who they are - their philosophies and values, their education and experiences, their status and standing in the university- come to bear on the various ASD roles enacted
- The *dominant philosophies, ideologies and discourses* that impacted on ASD
- How the roles enacted by academic staff developers were influenced by the various forces at the institutional, national and international levels, forces internal and external to the individual participants.

The participant cohort for this data production was from the three institutional contexts. Five academic staff developers and three leaders of teaching and learning units participated in this process. Each of the interviews ranged from 60-90 minutes.

3.4.2.3. *Visual Methodology*

As a mode of inquiry and representation (Mitchell et al., 2011) a visual representation (for example a metaphor drawing activity or drawing of rich images, a collage, mind map or digital

image) was used to enable participants to portray aspects of their *lived experiences* as academic staff developers and to bring to light nuances and ambiguities that may often remain hidden (Black, 1999) or not easily expressed in oral or written modes. The visual representation was used as a prompt during the semi-structured interview. Thus, it also served as part of the interview schedule for the semi-structured interview with participants (Jacobs, 2006). Citing time constraints many of the participants did not engage in this process. Only two of the eight participants participated in this process and developed a collage of their journey in academic development. These are included in Appendix 15.

3.4.2.4. Focus Group Interviews

The difference with a focus group as compared to a traditional interview is that the interaction among members of the group discussing a common theme leads to the emergence of the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). The participants from the group of eight academic developers and leaders of teaching and learning centres were invited to participate in the focus group discussion and the topic of discussion was selected from the key issues emerging from the individual semi-structured interviews. However, this data production process did not occur due to the time constraints of participants.

3.4.2.5. Semi-structured interviews: Other key contributors

These interviews were conducted with key informants to generate further insight into the phenomenon. I included in this cohort senior academic developers whom I regarded as 'pioneers' in the field of AD. This included other key role players within the national structures (for example Chair for Teaching and Learning, UCDG National Coordinator).

3.4.2.6. A reflective account of the data design and piloting of the instruments

The process of data production for this study was iterative and adaptive rather than a linear process. While no formal pilot study was conducted, the data production plan was continuously refined, mainly in response to the availability of the participants and logistical constraints. My initial design ambitiously included a variety of data production instruments, including arts-based strategies. These included the production of visual artefacts (posters by

participants depicting their journey), which would serve as prompts for the semi-structured interviews.

Data production involved both analysis of institutional documents and direct engagement with participants. Relevant documents were sourced from national and university websites and other, more specific university plans and programmes were obtained from the participants in the three university contexts. A significant challenge was negotiating with participants who were already managing demanding schedules. Numerous meetings were scheduled but had to be rescheduled due to other priorities of the participants and this impacted the intended sequence of the data collection.

The initial arts-based production, the creation of visual artefacts, faced considerable limitations. Due to time constraints only two participants only two of the eight participants across the three university contexts were able to complete this activity. Consequently, in the next iteration of data production, I had to streamline the process by proceeding solely with the semi-structured interviews. Fortunately, this was able to proceed with all participants. In the third iteration of data production, I experienced further challenges with respect to participants' availability for a focus group discussion. This component of data production had to be abandoned.

Through the data production process, I maintained a reflective journal recording my thoughts in Google Docs. This allowed me to continuously monitor and document the evolving process, ensuring that sufficient and relevant data was produced to explore the phenomenon.

3.5. Data analysis approaches

Once all interviews were conducted, I engaged a transcriber to transcribe all interview data. This was from all sixteen interview sessions. Then followed a lengthy process of checking through transcripts and correcting them. There were instances where they had to be returned to the transcriber to be corrected.

Following this the data analysis followed narrative representation. During this process, the data from the interviews as well as the documents was interpreted and transformed through a process of restorying (Clandinin, 2013) into narratives using a plot line (Polkinghorne, 2002).

This involved a reconstruction of critical/key moments and comprised the *first part* of the data analysis. In engaging in the restorying process I had to be familiar with the accounts as discussed by the participants. This involved establishing intimacy with the data (Lather, 2013) through reading the transcripts for familiarity, but to avoid “violence of thought” (Deleuze, as cited in Le Grange, 2018a, p. 8) through the “banality of coding and categorising” (Le Grange, 2018a, p. 8).

Graue and Walsh (1998) recommend that researchers touch the data as an embodied process of familiarisation with the data

...handle the raw data as much as possible and in as many different ways as possible. Touch the data....Handling the data gets additional data out of memory and into the record. It turns abstract information into concrete data (p. 145).

Following this tactile process of working with the data and to enable me to see all the interview data, I wrote down the data on flip chart paper (and post-its) together with the visual data and insights from the documents. I then pasted all the data in flip chart posters on my home passage walls. and engaged in the actual process of data walking (see images in Figure 3.2).

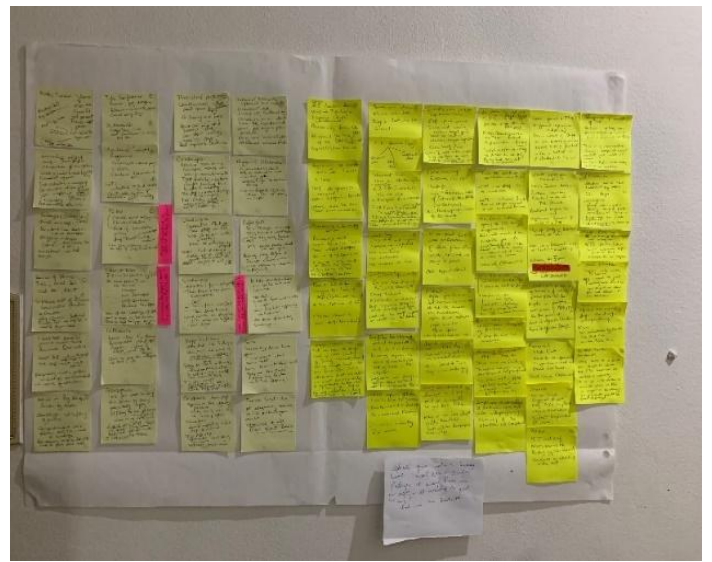
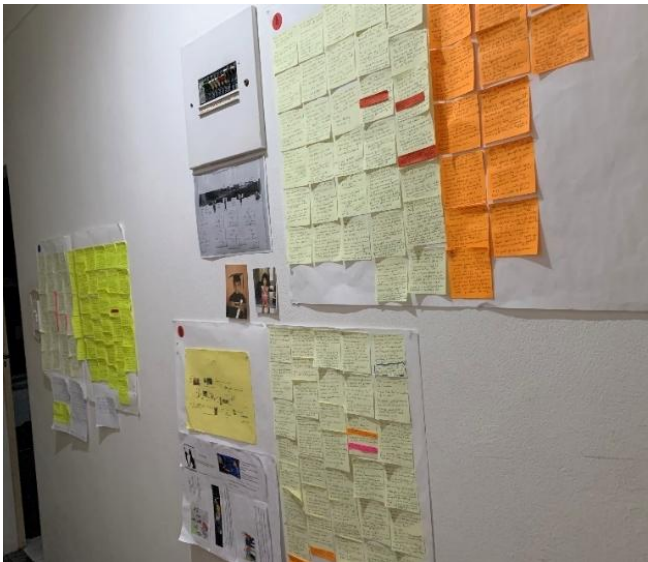
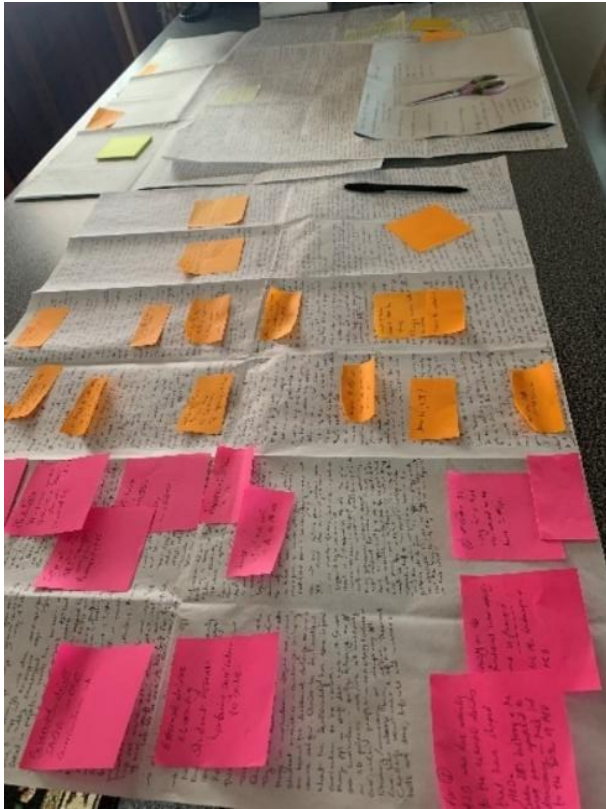


Figure 3.2: Images of data captured on my home walls

I used coloured post-its (sticky notes) to record the data that glows (MacLure, 2013). MacLure suggests that data is more than “dumb matter” (as cited by Massumi, in MacLure, 2013, p. 228) and adds that,

another potentiality associated with data, beyond and beside their capacity for mute surrender to the colonialist administrations of social science. This potentiality can be felt on occasions where something...seems to reach out from the inert corpus (corpse) of the data, to grasp us (MacLure, 2013, p. 228)

These were then grouped to form the narratives in chapters four to six and were part of Section B: Tales of the Field.

I developed two kinds of *tales* of the field (narrative accounts) as my participants represented two categories/ groups as discussed in section 3.4. The first group was comprised of six senior academic developers (or AD Pioneers) drawn from a range of AD units across the country. In this group, I included two participants from the national HE context, but who were not academic developers. The second group of participants was from three AD units. They were academic staff developers and leaders of AD units or Learning and Teaching centres, as they were referred to in some instances (eight participants in total).

In the first instance, in chapter 4, I drew on the data from the key contributors (the six academic development pioneers and two national participants) to develop fictive conversations based on a key idea/theme. This was constructed as a conversation and took place in an imaginary Café where participants and I engaged in conversations around the theme. I developed five conversational style pieces. The focus was on understanding ASD conceptually/philosophically.

In chapters 5 and 6, I represented the narrative accounts of the three university cases as individual accounts by academic developers and leaders and these were constructed in university contexts. The focus was on understanding ASD operationally. However, in both instances, there were overlaps in terms of conceptual/ operational understandings of ASD, the roles enacted by academic developers and how this influenced and shaped the structuring of the field.

The next level of analysis involved abstracting the data further by engaging with the theories. I pause on this discussion to allow an uninterrupted description of the field and its context in

chapters four to six. In Chapter 7, Section 7.2, I discuss the analytical strategy employed for the next level of analysis and interpretation.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The study was rigorously designed to ensure ethical codes of conduct during the various stages of the research; prior to data production, during the data collection process and when assessing the accuracy of the data and findings. Before the commencement of the data collection, full ethical approval for the study was secured from the University Ethics Committee (Appendix 12, page 357). This involved a detailed review of the research proposal, including the data production plan, informed consent forms, and data management plans to ensure compliance with institutional ethics requirements. At all times, I ensured non-maleficence (no harm to the participants) (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). This was achieved through obtaining informed consent, allowing voluntary participation and ensuring privacy and confidentiality through negotiating anonymity as well as ensuring the accuracy of the data that was collected (Christians, 2000; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Webster et al., 2014).

Through the process of gaining informed consent, I ensured that participants were aware of the nature of the research (the aims and purpose of the research, data production plan) and the nature of their involvement (duration of their involvement, data production strategies that were to be used). The informed consent also included participants' voluntary participation and freedom to withdraw from the study should circumstances require it. Access to participants and their agreement to participate in the study were first obtained through applying for and receiving the relevant gatekeeper's permission to conduct the study at each of the selected universities. Participants were given opportunities to ask questions about the study and their signed consent was obtained prior to their participation.

Participants were assured of their privacy and confidentiality through negotiating their anonymity by protecting their identities and those of the institutions in which they work. Christians (2000), however, suggests that "watertight confidentiality has proved to be impossible" (p. 139). Acknowledging this, I negotiated with participants the best possible

strategies to minimise any potential for identification, primarily through use of pseudonyms and disguised locations.

Beyond negotiating anonymity, stringent measures were implemented to ensure the security of all collected data. All digital data, including interview transcripts and recordings and visual representations, were stored in a password-protected device and in password-protected online repositories (Google Drive) that were only accessed by me, the researcher. In terms of assessing the accuracy of the data, I practiced member-checking by sharing the transcript of interview sessions with participants, allowing them to review and verify the accuracy and to provide any clarifications or amendments.

Ethical consideration was also extended to the dissemination of findings, where care was taken to present the research responsibly, ensuring that the privacy of participants and institutional anonymity were maintained in all publications and presentations. Researcher reflexivity is another ethical consideration that I had to undertake for this study. Given my insider status I had to acknowledge my own biases and assumptions based on my positionality. A more detailed account of this is included in the next section.

3.7. Establishing quality for Integral design

As an academic staff developer for more than two decades and researching ASD, I may already be considered an insider to the phenomenon. Ramklass (2006) highlights that this is not necessarily a disadvantage as it enables the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of the context and “being an insider of the experience, enables the researcher to understand what some participants have to say in a way that no ‘outsider’ could” (Ramklass, 2006, p. 131). However, the nature of qualitative research brings to the fore issues of biases and subjectivities of the researcher due to her positionality to the research phenomenon and context, which influences the research process (Bourke, 2014). Having spent more than two decades in the field of AD with different roles and responsibilities, the chances of reacting emotionally to the data and its concomitant impact on the selection, analysis and interpretation are present. This calls for the researcher to be reflexive (aware of how their positionality and biases may influence the research process) but also to be in possession of theoretical and methodological tools to achieve reflexivity (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

An important aspect to consider for this study is that it draws on three paradigmatic positions to form a multiparadigmatic research design guiding the research process. This is a critical interpretivist study drawing on the literary genres of postmodernism.

Taylor and Medina (2013) suggest that for an interpretivist perspective, I needed to ensure trustworthiness by spending sufficient time in the field with my participants and providing rich thick descriptions so that the readers are able to relate to the research. From the critical perspective, Taylor & Medina, (2013) suggest creating critical awareness in readers. This was going to be achieved through following the literary standards of postmodernism, which is concerned with how our research is represented. To satisfy the literary criteria of postmodernism, Taylor and Medina (2013) recommend writing in a style that will encourage pedagogical thoughtfulness (Van Manen, 1991). To ensure the believability of the texts, I attempted to create verisimilitude. Barone and Eisner (1997) assert that a text with verisimilitude will enable a reader to identify with the experiences that are depicted and thereby render them as an “analogue to a ‘real’ one[s]” (p. 74). This process was adopted through the creation of narrative accounts of my engagement with the participants.

Finally, Richardson (2000) suggested crystallisation instead of triangulation, to enable multiple interpretations depending on the positioning of the reader and researcher in the research and in the text. I enabled this by creating narratives from multiple perspectives about the phenomenon.

3.8. Synthesis

In this chapter I presented the processes undertaken to conduct this study. I commenced by advocating for a multiparadigmatic research design and the design of a critical narrative inquiry. I discussed the sources of data and data production strategies employed, including what worked and did not work. Following this, I included the restorying process employed as part of the level one and two data analysis. I then moved on to discuss the ethical procedures followed and strategies for establishing quality for qualitative research. This chapter concludes the section on Setting up the study. In the next section, Tales of the Field I present three chapters of narrative accounts.

Section B

Tales of the Field Dialogues and Monologues

Section B Tales of the Field

- **Chapter 4:** Dialogues At Café *Spiralina*
- **Chapter 5:** Narratives - Institution A
- **Chapter 6:** Narratives - Institution B and C

CHAPTER 4

DIALOGUES AT CAFÉ *SPIRALINA*

4.1. Introduction and Overview

This chapter captures the theoretical and conceptual understandings of ASD from the vantage points of key contributors to this study: academic developers who have been in the field for several years (some from as early as the 1980s) and have experienced the different iterations of the field. Many of these academics²⁵ hold key positions in their universities and/or in the national and international sectors. Also providing their perspectives are key contributors from key national HE departments.

These perspectives and understandings are presented as a series of dialogues and are set up as a Café Conversation with these participants in a Café called *Spiralina*. I drew inspiration for this methodology for representation from the book *A Novel Idea: Researching Transformative Learning in Fiction*, by Lawrence and Cranton (2015). In their book, Randee Lawrence and Patricia Cranton explore the perspectives of transformative learning embedded in narratives in six novels and engage in imaginary conversations with characters from these novels to develop a model for transformative learning. They draw on the arts-based methodologies (Barone & Eisner, 2006) of using fiction and creating dialogues to draw the reader vicariously into the lived experiences of the characters, thereby creating verisimilitude (Richardson, 2000). Evoking polyvocality (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2015) enabled multiple perspectives to be shared and discussed. I have explained in detail the choice of this analytical strategy and the process for developing the dialogues in Chapter Three, section 3.

The dialogues occur between eight participants and me in Café *Spiralina*. I have constructed this imaginary dialogue based on my engagements with the participants. The data for this reconstituted café dialogue is drawn from the formal interviews and interactions with the participants of this study and could be considered as a form of narrative analysis represented in this literary form. The participants in the narrative are not present at the same time but

²⁵ While the participants in this aspect of the study are considered academics, not all the academic developers across HE institutions in SA have an academic status.

enter, leave, and re-enter the conversations periodically. The eight participants in this study, who are the six AD pioneers (or key contributors) and two participants from the national HE context, are the characters who engage in conversations with me at Café Spiralina. They are as follows:

Six AD Pioneers: Sally, Mary, Jane, John, Linda and Cindy

National HE Participants: Michael and Lionel

All the names used in the Dialogues at Café Spiralina are Pseudonyms.

The dialogues are written in direct quotes using the Calibri normal font, 12pt. In addition, there are brief internal thoughts written from my perspective as the narrator. These are written in *Calibri italic font, 12pt*.

The dialogues include the actual words of the participants from the individual interviews. The dialogues in this chapter are constructed along five thematic areas that explore ASD over almost four decades, from the 1980s to the present day (2019). Each theme commences with a short personal narrative (written in a poetic format) that serves to introduce the theme.

The first theme focuses on the emergence of academic development and academic staff development, highlighting the many turns or iterations responding to national and institutional imperatives. While some of these developments in AD are well-documented (e.g., Boughey, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Volbrecht, 2003), the narrative explorations delve into issues not necessarily explored in the literature (e.g., hearing first-hand from academic developers about the stereotypes and their associated challenges in HE). The last theme may be considered a summation of the Café conversations and explores a contextually relevant approach for a South African ASD, as evoked through the thoughts of the participants and me. The dialogues for the themes in between can be read rhizomatically (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), weaving in and out, not necessarily in the order in which they are written. This representation is directed towards depicting the dialogical space that characterises AD, its actors and their engagement with their contexts.

4.3. Café Dialogues

Café *Spiralina* is abuzz this morning.

The liveliness of spring

Fills the room

People are

Reading, chatting

Working on laptops

Working (or socialising) on cellphones

Writing, doodling and,

Sipping on hot and cool drinks

In the far corner of the room

where,

it is slightly elevated

is Nalini

Looking out through the window

At the vast expanse of,

Community dwellings²⁶

Homes with blue sparkling pools

Side-by-side

Let us enter...

²⁶ Community dwellings within the South African context are shared residential arrangements, often as a response to economic constraints. They are usually informal settlements that are developed as community-based living arrangements and where the residents share resources e.g. water and even electricity. In many community dwellings in South Africa, residents do not have running water supply or even electricity. In some areas in South Africa there exist community dwellings on one side of the road with larger, well-resourced homes, nearby. This depicts the inequities that exist.

phases of academic development in South Africa, more generally. What are your thoughts on how ASD emerged?”

A thoughtful silence hung in the air for a moment. Sally, gently stirring her tea, was the first to speak. “Well, it’s interesting these terms ‘academic development’ and academic staff development’,” she mused. “When one says academic development internationally, it means staff development; you don’t mean student. We inserted the *staff* in academic staff development.”

She took a sip, then continued, elaborating on the unique South African context. “When I say ‘we’, I’m referring to those of us in the early days of South African higher education. For us, academic development was an all-embracing term. It was designed to include all kinds of development initiatives – staff, student, curriculum, and institutional development. It reflected the complex, interconnected challenges we were facing all the time.”

“Furthermore,” Sally continued, “ASD is, I think, a relatively new field. And the reason for that is, for all the hundreds of years that universities have been around, it has not been on the radar that academic staff need any form of development whatsoever. They have been the sort of top people in their field, and the PhD was a kind of license to teach, you know, to be an academic, which included teaching. It was always a very elite field, so that the students who came into higher education didn’t need any special pedagogical arrangements.”

Nodding in agreement, Mary added, “South Africa has had a very different way of doing it, and I completely understand why, as you’re alluding to Sally, due to our history, we started with student support and moved from student support into staff development.”

I understood that shift very well, too. I spent at least the first 7 or 8 years of my AD journey in student development – tutoring, tutor training, core curriculum, academic literacy – till 2005 when I was asked to step in for the academic staff induction programme by my colleague, Kim, who was taking a short sabbatical for her PhD study. But on returning from leave, Kim requested that I continue with the programme as she was then promoted to a management post. I did and that began my ASD journey.

“Yes, Mary,” Sally added. “But, more the staff development happened when, certainly in South Africa, when we started to realise that the problems were not all of the students’ problems; a lot of the problems were the under-preparedness of the staff, you know? They had not been taught how to teach at all. I mean, like in a school, you couldn’t imagine in a senior

school that you would let a teacher in there that hadn't understood the methodology of teaching English or the methodology of teaching maths, you know? And, that sort of idea started to come into staff development, that they needed pedagogical support.”

Jane took the opportunity to jump in at this point, “Well, I can add here. I think much has been written about the AD movement, as you have said, Nalini. Where that's come from and where that's going et cetera. Chrissie and Kathy²⁷, I think they've done a good job of historicising it and it is important to understand the iterations. I think these different turns reflect something about what's happening not just in the sector²⁸ but in society²⁹. So, on a plus side, one would say that if academic development looked the same as it did in the eighties, we'd have something to worry about because life has changed. So, it tells us that the research that the field has done and people in the field have done, it's speaking back and it's being responsive. The question of how responsive and whether it's answering the right questions and asking the right questions; I think that's up for grabs.”

That's really deep provocations that Jane is prompting – what have we in AD/ASD been responsive to? What are the right questions that we should be asking about our work in AD/ASD? Knowing Jane, I know that these questions will surely be discussed throughout our conversations. I take out my notebook, though and scribble them in.

John was busy all this while; he had just finished something he was doing on his cellphone, and as he put it in his top shirt pocket, I invited him to join in.

“You've been around for quite a while, too John. What was it like then when you first started?” I asked him.

“Yes,” he commented, “I have been involved in this game for a very long time. And, when we started, the impetus for the work that we did, was the preparation for the deracialisation of higher education. So, we're talking about the eighties, the writing was on the wall, there was a huge pressure for institutions to allow black students in. I'm talking about historically white institutions³⁰. The language at that stage was very much about academic support, disadvantaged background...” after a long pause and a deep breath... John continued,

²⁷ Reference here to South African academic developers Chrissie Boughey and Kathy Lockett, who have both written extensively in the area of academic development and academic staff development

²⁸ Higher education and Academic development sector

²⁹ South African society

³⁰ The reference here is to the five historically white SA universities that first opened their doors to non-white students: the four English-medium universities that included, University of Cape Town, University of Witwatersrand, Rhodes University and University of Natal (now part of the University of KwaZulu-Natal) and the Afrikaans-medium university, University of Pretoria

trying to select his words, “you know, black students can't learn calculus, female students can't learn engineering drawing, these were the kind of languages. A lot the staff that were brought on to do that were outside staff. They were people who had teaching backgrounds, like me and some of our colleagues here.”

I often quipped that my entry into HE was by default. I did not have any teaching background like John or our other colleagues here today. I was a chemistry graduate and joined the chemistry department on a short-term contract in the early 1990s. And I was ‘transferred’ into the academic development unit when my contract that year was coming to an end.

John continued sharing, “We didn't use the word transformation in those days, we used like deracialisation. Staff had very racial perceptions of what students were able to do. And I mean, very crude racial views! So, we began in that first phase of the eighties and the nineties with ad hoc workshops, seminars and reporting on the experience that we were having in the academic support programs. But it was a very difficult time and it was, like I say, it was really stereotyped. The transition was when people realised we needed to work beyond the small group -- that it was actually institutions that needed to be developed and that's where the whole question of academic development rather than academic support.”

Oh yes, I still remember very vividly going to a book launch at one of our neighbouring universities, where the thinking, as reflected in the book, was the shift from underprepared students to underprepared institutions... I'm not sure why that event has remained etched in my mind. I recall Professor Michael Samuel did the sum up and reflections at the end, with his diagrams. He loves using diagrammatic visuals to tell his story. Was it that interesting closing presentation from him that caught my attention, I wonder? As I reflected more, I realised it was one of the first discussions at the book launch that really provoked me to confront my own assumptions about academic staff development. I was already engaged in staff development for at least six or seven years, but admittedly, I too practiced with a deficit framing. Considering where I am positioning myself currently as a staff developer, encouraging my colleagues to disrupt their taken-for-granted assumptions. I felt almost embarrassed to ascribe such uninformed choices in my earlier encounters as a staff developer. I assured myself that the journey is certainly one of becoming (enlightened).

Just then, Linda and Cindy joined us. But as they were busy with staff development workshops, they indicated that they would stay for a short while. After we filled them in on our discussions about the emergence of academic development and ASD in South Africa, Linda

continued the conversations, alluding to academic development as addressing systemic issues and involved working with staff and the curriculum.

“In order to change the system and have sort of broad-level changes, you had to work with academic staff, and the curriculum had to be the focus. And so, we organised semester-long programmes and we had weekly seminars, about various topics. We knew that we were offering generic ideas that needed to be applied in particular contexts.”

“You know context really, really, is crucial,” added Mary. “And I think that any staff development initiative that doesn’t very carefully take into account what the context is in which the work is being done might set itself up for failure. So, the way one would do staff development in a University of Technology would be different from a Comprehensive, from a Research-intensive³¹.

I think we need to also be cognisant of the different disciplines and the different knowledge structures....and a whole lot of other things. So, we cannot ignore changes in higher education, like calls for decolonisation and so on. I think those all have to be part of the terrain in which we work. I think what makes it so hard is that the terrain is very changeable and very different.”

Thanking Mary for raising the important aspect of context, I asked Cindy to share her thoughts, very cognisant that Cindy had quite an eye for the context.

“I think I came in when John was mentioning that many of us were called in to work in this area due to our educational backgrounds. But I also knew that you can’t just go on, go in and upset the apple cart. You have to move very slowly, very strategically. So, Quality Assurance was coming in and so I sort of knew quite early on that strategically I could pick up on that. So, I worked very slowly, strategically and discursively and we were able to use the quality assurance story to get things established. So, that was one thing, sort of, what is going on in context you can draw on, to get staff development going, I suppose it’s quite Machiavellian, but I’ve always been good, I suppose, at analysing context,” shared Cindy.

“So, from what you’re saying, there were drivers that facilitated or shaped staff development in particular ways,” I kind of rhetorically asked and saw the nods all round.

³¹ The restructuring of higher education in 2005 resulted in a differentiated higher education systems. Universities are designated in one of 3 categories: Traditional university (research intensive university offering professional programmes); University of Technology (vocationally oriented programmes and applied research) and Comprehensive university (a combination of both).
<https://www.dhet.gov.za/Gazette/Policy%20Framework%20on%20Differentiation%20in%20the%20South%20African%20Post%20School%20System.pdf>

“Yes, curriculum was a big driver,” added Sally. “Linda also just mentioned a little while ago about the focus on curriculum. I think there was a realisation that it needs to become more systematic, not just offering random workshops that we think as academic developers would be helpful. But, really trying to figure out what it is, that the staff need support with, in order to support students’ success in the programs. I think the whole mentality started to shift from a deficit understanding of students to an understanding of, but if the students have a gap here, what do we do to address that gap? Rather than saying: Oh well, it's the students’ problem, you know, they need to take them off somewhere and train them up and then give them to us.”

Sally’s comment created a shiver up my spine. I recall all too well the many conversations and debates and frustrations my colleagues and I have had about this very aspect of the deficit understanding of students. We often struggled to convince our peers about the integration of, for example, academic literacy, which involved working with the curriculum. ‘Language is a problem, let’s fix that’. ‘Send them to Academic Development’ or a language lab’. These were some of the deficit framings that my colleagues and I encountered. But these were not just our peers in academic departments, but these were some of the practices in academic development too. However, from our reading of the literature and engaging with colleagues in AD, we knew that the decontextualised approach to academic development could not meet the transformation goals of higher education.

And as Sally added, as academic developers, “we were rethinking - and that’s where I think curriculum came into it. Before, academic developers would never touch curriculum, you know? That was sacred ground for the faculties; we didn’t presume to know what should go into a curriculum, absolutely not, that was for the faculties.”

Pointing at his watch, John signaled that he needed to leave shortly and continued the conversation. “Our colleagues here have all highlighted how the academic support movement changed into the academic development movement. Now, we were focusing on two things: the work we were doing was now expanded to ASD and institutional development. With a big focus on curriculum, on teaching design and that kind of stuff. So, that's really what kicked off the staff development, and then, in that phase, we began to see the formation of like institutional projects of staff development.”

John describes the various turns of the ASD spiral with the impetus on the outcomes-based approach to education in the 1990s, followed later by another phase focusing on external accreditation, which became the new vehicle for raising the profile of curriculum and staff development. The next thrust he explained, was the need to professionalise AD work and teaching in higher education. This was the phase of research-based work at the PhD level that involved research-based seminars and publications contributing to the credibility of the field of academic (staff) development, which John claimed was very important. In the early 2000s, John explains, the next turn was central government (the Department of Higher Education and Training – DHET) with its plans to re-engineer the HE landscape. There had to be a merging of staff and curricula, and this provided the new impetus for ASD, placing teaching and staff development on the agenda again. This was a forced phase and didn't work well.

As John relayed the unfolding of the events, my attention was once more drawn to April 2001 as my institution (a disadvantaged Technikon – we were not a 'university' then) was to be the first to merge with the neighbouring (historically advantaged) Technikon. There was dissatisfaction rife amongst staff and I recall joining my colleagues in a protest a day before the merger was to be official. The merger did take place! Now we are a University of Technology.

John explained further that the next phase of reviews and audits promoted the notion that staff needed skills and exposure to language and tools that they don't have. So, many institutions began small projects for new lecturers and PGDips. Next, the DHET came on board with money in the form of the Teaching Development Grants in the early 2000's and more recently the University Capacity Development Grant has been a strong driver to shape the nature of teaching projects. While many of these turns John remarked, were specific to institutions, he explained the next generation of staff development work, which involved collaborative projects for example, the TAU (Teaching Advancement in Universities) project and the NATHEP (New Academics Transitioning into Higher Education Project).

“The other big thrust”, added John, “has been the student protests³².”

Linda leans in, “I think that many of us experienced many of these turns. I can clearly recall the assessment turn at my university. The other way in which staff development

³² See chapter 1, section 1.3.6 for an overview of the student protests

happens, but it's in a sort of roundabout way, is through institutional projects like curriculum review, for example. So, involving whole departments and whole faculties in a project like curriculum review, opens up the space for ideas related to curriculum design and teaching and learning, to be inserted into departments and faculties."

Jane came in with a thought on professionalisation, "There's no doubt about the need for it, for in my opinion, I think even if we weren't in a situation like South Africa where literacy rates and skills et cetera are so, you know, they need much support. Because I think staff development then is connected to the whole issue of professionalisation."

That's an important aspect of our discussions that I informed colleagues I'd like to move to next, on professionalisation and the varying possibilities of ASD. John offered to share a few thoughts about this before he leaves as he will not be able to join us tomorrow. He spoke about the next phase – the research-based phase, research seminars, and publications – which he added was about "building the credibility of the field, which was very important. It also meant we began to have doctors, we began to have associate professors, so senior lecturers and associate professors began to emerge in this field, which positioned us differently in the institution. So, the whole question of credibility and of being listened to, playing the game, that's been a big thing and it's a big thing now."

Well, playing the game' caught all our attention and we were all eager to hear more from John and what this meant for him.

"Well, many of us arrived without an academic identity; we had a teacher identity, and people tolerated us because we had something that they didn't have, and they wanted access to that, and so for many years, we were a resource. So, you'd often be in a committee, and somebody would turn around, they still do it sometimes, and comment like, 'what does the teaching expert say?', 'what is the teacher's perspective on the committee?' They would label us and contain us to a particular input, you know, that's what we were providing, or they would ask us, we would be the specialist in black students; I'm sorry, I mean, this is like how crude it was... We'd be considered the experts in that kind of thing, and it really labeled us. We've shifted that field completely, I mean we are now right in the centre of issues of transformation, issues of curriculum development and we talk with a very... research-based informed academic voice."

I drifted into deep thought and wondered: Have we shifted the field completely? I don't think completely. Are we at the centre? Not yet. Do we speak with a research-based scholarly voice? I think that we are beginning to get there, albeit slowly.

The contributions by John and colleagues brought to a close our discussions for the day. All agreed that it seemed like going down memory lane, sometimes even scratching a bit deeply to reveal or even keep at bay that which we didn't want to go through again. There were some painful memories as we spoke about the hardships of trying to 'shift the field'.

4.3.2. ASD as a continuum of possibilities with multiple purposes and roles

Doing the formal and the dogsbody work

I was engrossed in reading
'Holistic academic development: Is it time
to think more broadly
about the academic development project'

-Sutherland, 2018

Enters Linda

"Hmmm"

Have you read it, Linda?

"So academic development is everything, and
the kitchen sink,"
she remarked!

Kathryn Sutherland's (2018) article was used as a prompt today for our discussion on the roles, purposes and possibilities for ASD. Jane and Linda joined me this morning, carrying with them a wake-up coffee each – you know, that strong black coffee. Like that deep, strong coffee, Linda already seemed to have strong views about Sutherland's provocation in the article. "So let us consider *our* context, South Africa. Is our role, our focus in ASD, on the teaching role, or do we have a role to play in external engagement and research and in leadership development, as Sutherland posits in the paper?" I asked.

"Preparing for the teaching role, I think, is the kernel, at this point," was Linda's immediate response.

"Kernel?" I asked, surprised.

Jane continues, “In South Africa, because of our history, our high failure rate. Because of our history. Because of how our students are. I am aware that HE systems in other countries in the world are also high attrition systems. But the difference between our system is that it’s both low participation and high attrition and that’s the problem.”

Jane nods, agreeing with Linda, “So I think, doing staff development, say in Sweden, might not have these sorts of attachments. They might have their own, whatever. But in this country, AD in particular came about as a movement to respond to the fact that black students were not allowed to go to universities. I think there's been poor leadership in staff development thus far and so it looks like we don't know what we're doing for a lot of the time because it seems like we are quite faddish. So, if it's fashionable, we all get on that bandwagon, and we do it for a year or two. So, while that is good because it keeps it alive to an extent, it doesn't seem to be a depth or a deeply theoretical, an ideological position that drives this work. And each person in a sense creates that for themselves and they sort of find a reason to make it meaningful.”

Just then, Lionel waves from the entrance to signal his arrival and soon joins us in conversation. Lionel plays a key role in the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in the University education branch. He has been instrumental in overseeing the implementation of the National Framework for Enhancing academics as university teachers³³. I recall attending the workshop in 2018 when the framework document was being developed. Enhancing academics as teachers is the key role of academic staff development. But what are the various roles of the academic in higher education? And which of these roles is ASD enhancing?

“Certainly, I think there is a recognition across the whole sector that the development of academics is an important element. We have to have a focus on strengthening, enhancing, building teaching capacity in a system. I mean, intentionally, the national framework document wanted to foreground the teaching, but not in isolation from the others. It has been a concern in the national system about the tension between the research role and the teaching role and how does the research role and the teaching role relate to the community engagement role. So, for us, developing the academic is about developing the academic across the range of identities. It’s about developing the teaching role, developing the research role, and developing the role

³³ As a national DHET document, it lays out the guidelines for universities in South Africa for enhancing academics as university teachers. It is not a policy, but it provides guidelines.

that engages with communities through teaching and research. I think with the understanding that the teaching role has been undermined.”

I was curious about the use of ‘enhancing’ in the national framework document. Is enhancing middle ground? I would have assumed that such a document that seeks to bring about change in/for the academic project, learning and teaching would have been positioned in a more critical stance. Would it then promote a mediocre approach to one’s practice rather than a critical, transformative approach? I asked Lionel and he explained that this approach was necessary for a national document, so that people are not excluded from the beginning. So how do we build people? Because that’s where the sustainability is.

“Well,” with a slight chuckle, Lionel says, “we could have titled it, ‘transforming teachers as social justice practitioners’. Imagine that, you shut off everybody immediately. Enhancing was chosen as a very strategic word. It is about recognising that a lot of work has been done. That you are not starting from a blank slate. That people transition into teaching roles in universities along a range of pathways and along those pathways they develop capacity and experience. It wasn’t about imposing a policy. I think there is a strong idea that equity, social justice is about recognising people, is about building people, is about working with people, is about taking people along, is about building communities. So, the thinking is how do we work with people rather than on people. So, how do we build people? Because that’s where the sustainability is. A critical part of this role with academics is the centrality of the curriculum. We can’t be enhancing academics as university teachers if we ignore the curriculum. Curriculum is the sight of engagement for learning. That’s where students and teachers kind of come together. Students have to have input on the curriculum. I think they have made that quite clear” [laughs].

“I think ASD is about creating an understanding about the nature of student learning and how teaching and assessment and curriculum influence the quality of learning. We have not hit the jackpot, you know, we’ve not solved the problem,” added Linda.

“What’s the jackpot, Linda?” I asked, surprised.

“Well, the jackpot,” Linda adds, “would be when we have understood more about the kind of curriculum, the kind of scaffolding, the kind of assessment that will result in greater student success than we currently have. What do we know about those things from research that’s being done? And it’s not about any research, it’s about robust research.”

“So, considering what Linda is saying, I think that staff development is some kind of opportunity to expose lecturers to the theories, the concepts that have emerged through decades of research into HE teaching and learning, curriculum, and assessment. To help them, to give them the wherewithal, to give them the theoretical lenses to critique their practices. And hopefully then, improve their practices,” was Mary’s contribution.

“We all know most of our lecturers come in without an identity of being a teacher. They come here thinking, well, I’m an expert in physics and all I need to do is stand there and give my expertise to the students. But for many, it takes really quite a long time to take on that identity of being a teacher. So, I do firmly believe that the better staff development work is the immersion, where people are prepared to put in some effort and time over an extended period. It’s in-depth engagement; it is immersion, it is the developing of the gaze. So, if you come and do my course, it’s about what you do as an academic developer at (your university). I don’t want just a theoretical story. I will give you those tools...That’s what you have got to do with my tools. So, it is very much the theory, practice, praxis story,” Mary added further.

Sally offers a slightly different view. “That it’s a very practical field, is only partially true. Because I think that there is an epistemic base to pedagogy and curriculum, and I don’t think there’s been sufficient expertise built in that. I think that the field is dominated by the methods of the social sciences, that it often doesn’t look like a strong knowledge base.”

“Colleagues, for me, ASD is about enhancing the capacity of academics, as educators, as you have all so rightfully said. The ability to work in classrooms. But I think the ability to work in the classroom that itself is also, is not generic. It will be informed by the discipline, the institutional type, the institutional culture, if you like. And I also believe very, very firmly that it’s got to be informed by critical social theory. Not what I would call soft educational theory. So, you’ve got to be able to draw, for this country and now I think globally but, you’ve got to tailor it for context, and you’ve got to draw on critical social theory,” said Cindy.

“Please elaborate Cindy,” I urged.

“You’ve got to understand teaching in higher education to be culturally, socially and politically implicated. You can very easily just slip into drawing what I call soft learning theory and an example of that would be for example, the typical use of ‘approaches to learning’ research. So, for me it’s about getting the academics to understand that and to understand how they can work to make things more fair, more equal. And that’s hard.”

I added that the field of AD/ASD is evolving. ASD, from what we understood it twenty years ago, has evolved over the years, and it is still in this process of continuous change.

Linda ushered in, “Yes, it is in the process, and I also think it will continue because context changes, because students change. And I don’t think we have a clue about how our current students learn, you know, and we haven’t done the research. And I wanted to add also, that it’s not only about who our students are, it’s also about who our staff are.”

Building on Linda’s contribution, Lionel adds, “So, context becomes quite an important thing in how we approach the work around enhancing academics as university teachers. It might mean different things in a different context. So, we try to put a framework together that allows for contextual variation. So, that didn’t dictate, but that’s allowed different universities in different spaces to give expression to the framework in different ways.”

“And so, part of what we need to do as academic developers is to initiate the research projects. So that we can develop strong theories for our students now, the way they learn and to feed our staff development,” suggested Linda.

“Yes, research is important”, agreed Jane. “So, in my view, enhancing teaching is more about changing people’s mindsets than actually changing it on the ground. Because again, your stalwarts are going to teach the way they’ve always had; all they have now is a greater elevation that people can see; ah, what you do is important. It’s not going to change. Until you start paying teachers those points for whatever, and we shouldn’t, but research will always have that edge over us; that’s why people go to NRF (National Research Foundation); they don’t go to NTF, teaching, there’s no such thing.

“But I’d like to go to an early point based on the Sutherland paper. If that’s okay?” Added Jane.

I scribble again in my notebook as I remind everyone. “I’d like us to hold on to the thought of the research aspect of our ASD work and as our colleagues here have mentioned, the idea about building knowledge and drawing on theories. I’m making a note of this so that we can discuss this more tomorrow. Thanks, Jane, please go ahead.”

“So it was about the different roles that ASD can play external engagement, research and leadership development. To demarcate is to understand how we can support each of those pillars and to have something unique that can talk to each of them. I think it’s not about becoming invisible in each of those pillars and trying to work there. But rather to say: This is our take on research, when we get involved with research or whatever, we bring this to the

table, you bring that, you bring that, but AD, we bring this - and, that's our signature. When you bring us into a teaching conversation, you're going to hear us say this and we're not confused about it. When you bring us into the community aspect, we're going to say that."

"That is an interesting perspective on the multiple roles that ASD could facilitate, within the broad spectrum of roles of an academic in higher education," I added, to which Jane continued further.

"So, we could talk to supervision capacity building about feedback, about how you relate to your student, the relational stuff, there are lots of AD things we can bring into the supervisory space. So I think it's also about time that AD gets into the institution, gets its act together and they start putting proposals in, instead of waiting for handouts, we say we're running a supervision course, bringing in academic development. So, all these ideas need to be actioned in ways that show your university; we are leading, and you can benefit; look at what this will do."

"So, to touch on an earlier point from Jane," added Lionel, "I do concur, teaching is mind work. Teaching is not only about hands. You can learn teaching in a technical way, but to be a good teacher, it is kind of mind work. So, I think it is about working with people, bringing people together, who can critique, who can contest. Because I think it is in the debate and the deliberation and the scholarship where the mind shifts take place."

Cindy thanked both and offered a thought on supervision and our role in staff development. "As staff developers in South Africa, we are involved with supervision and in some universities, we are involved in teaching in these formal programmes like the PGDips, the master's and doctorates as one of our roles as academic staff developers. So, here it is, as academic developers, you've got to hold two things. You have to hold in the formal qualifications, that is, teaching for the Doctorate and the PGDip, but at the same time, you've also got to hold in the institutional support work. So, you have got to do the consultancy, you've got to run the new lecture orientation programme. You've to be available to somebody who comes in and says 'oh things are going wrong in my class' or 'the student feedback is revealing the problem.'"

Speaking very emphatically and with much concern, Cindy continued.

"You've got to do both of those things. It's easier just to slip into the formal programmes, it's dead easy. But holding them both in and at the same time ensuring that you yourself get the academic credibility to go up the ladder, that's really hard. So, you increase

the academic status of the academic developers. You go for the formal programs, but at the same time, you have to hold in, let me call it, the dogsbody work. Actually, centres are now under attack and that's because they have let the dogsbody work go. You can't afford to become too precious, about your formal programmes. It is nice, it's nice to supervise, it's nice to teach on a full programme. Everything's sort of like bounded, you know."

"Why is that a problem?" I asked Cindy.

"It's neat, it's nice, I can do this, I'm safe. But if you go there, you open yourselves to attack. You have got to be shown to serve the institution because otherwise, the critics come in and carry on. Don't forget the institutional support. If you do, you put yourselves at risk. You've got to do the donkey work. You've got to hold in the studenty type stuff, those formally curriculated along with the staff development," added Cindy

Our conversations shifted to professionalisation with Lionel asserting that "it comes with heavy baggage, regulation, certification" and Mary cautioning that, "it will end up being another compliance" and Jane suggesting that it is "necessary, absolutely necessary."

Jane's take is slightly different from Lionel's, and she prompts us to think about all the courses we've been offering in staff development as professional development. "It's not just academic development; it's academic and professional development. So, when you have a group of chemical engineers and accountants, et cetera, they start talking educational language, then you're professionalising."

"So, I think we need to keep a lot of options open, and I think we need to understand professionalising and professional learning in a more open way than just getting a qualification. It's not just about getting your PGDip," remarked Sally.

"Aah, okay. So, professionalising does not necessarily mean having a qualification like PGDip or a certificated course for academics?" I asked.

"No! Professionalising is just becoming aware and conscious that I might be a doctor, but I don't know how to teach, so give me some ideas on how, and that's, I'm becoming more professional. You can teach a professional discipline, but you are not the architect when you're in front of the class; you're the lecturer," added Cindy.

"I think it's about trying to find an appropriate professional learning path for all academics at the level at which they're teaching and for their trajectories. I think the field is going to start to disaggregate, have more specialised programmes. I think as the field grows, we should know more about, not just talk about, ASD as one thing. It should be starting to

disaggregate - ASD for ECP lecturers; teaching undergraduate research - a lot of the literature is telling us those undergraduate research things are huge impacts for students' identity into professions. Teaching in the laboratory is very different from teaching in a classroom. Likewise, teaching in a studio is very different," suggested Sally.

"So, a continuum of possibilities," was my response next.

"Yes, I think we've got to have multi-pronged approaches," agreed Sally. "So, I think that one of the ways forward is to really look at the different forms of teaching and the ways that university spaces are changing, also. And I think that one of the ways in which HE is also changing is that the classroom is becoming, and especially the lecture hall, is becoming a bit of an anachronism. Who knows what the next wave³⁴ is going to be.

Having spent much time immersed in a faculty, Sally shared a thought about the generic and discipline-focused ASD work.

"I'm in such sort of two minds about the generic and the discipline focus. I think we're more comfortable in the generic space, certainly, much more comfortable in the generic space. And, that the discipline-based spaces are difficult... And then you can only go into that space with partners, with faculty partners. But, there are things that you can bring from the generic space, because the generic space we've got all the high semantic density³⁵ stuff that we can use to explain what's going on there, we can pull that across to the faculty, discipline space."

"So, again, ASD is on a continuum. So, you're using the generic to spark up the ideas and you're going more in depth as you would work with faculty colleagues," I concurred.

The loud chimes of 5 pm fill Café Spiralina with a melody, signalling the time for us to bring the conversations to a close. Sally's thoughts on academic developers and academics as co-learners and co-travellers were a good spot to stop as we consider our collaborative role traveling together through the sometimes smooth and sometimes striated terrain (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) of higher education. I thanked everyone for participating in today's discussions and bid farewell to my colleagues for the afternoon and early evening as they head home.

³⁴ The next wave – little did Sally or any of us, for that matter could even anticipate the great calamity that would befall our world, and indeed higher education, through the COVID-19 global pandemic. I explain further in the Postscript section - the impact of this pandemic on higher education and staff development.

³⁵ Sally draws on the work of Legitimation code theory by Karl Maton (2014b) to explain the more abstract and sometimes generic nature of the academic staff development work as compared to being more contextualised when working in a faculty or discipline.

I stayed on as Michael told me he would join me in the afternoon. Linda opted to keep me company whilst I waited. And as we engaged in casual chitter chatter, the always smiling Michael entered Café Spiralina and joined us at our spot, in the corner of the Café. Linda and Michael exchanged greetings and she left.

Michael is the CEO of a HE organisation in South Africa. Although we have not spoken on many occasions, he is no stranger, having served as a guest and keynote speaker at many events. He has always captivated me with his passion for HE praxis, transformation and leadership. On one occasion recently, within the context of enhancing academics as teachers, he spoke about the systemic interventions needed in HE and that there have been lots of gentle nudging and no hammer blows. He went on further to say that staff development has been doing the nudging and asked whether that is enough. So, I asked him what gentle nudging is. What are hammer blows? What do we need in Higher Education?

"I think it is a very pertinent time to ask about this because I think that clearly we have had many years of experience of staff development in our country. We have had many years of it and I think there are lots of lessons to be learnt. Starting out at the old historically white universities, where an attempt to really kind of get the academics to start thinking about the fact that the student body was changing. The problem is that, is it was this model of nudging because you are still saying to people if you have an interest, you know, come and let's try and get you... I think that this nudging issue is really, it's still important because what you don't want to also is to make staff development a kind of have to do."

"Enforced?" I asked.

"Yes, enforced. Then people kind of put their backs up. So, I think there is still a lot of nudging to be done, but I think there is also a need for a major kind of national interventions that the DHET has instituted through the UCDP."

He went on to add that he did not think that the UCDP is being used optimally, although the programmes may be well set up.

"I don't think there is enough concentration on trying to understand, well, how to optimally really get institutions to galvanise people into understanding the teaching enterprise. To get institutions and individuals to understand that improving teaching is not simply about what you do in front of the classroom. But it is really about the knowledge project. It is about saying what is the knowledge project of the system. How do we try to ensure that people can really take on that kind of challenge?"

“So, universities have to kind of really focus on what makes them special. So, does that become part of an identity? You know, in which case I think that you have to start getting academics to start thinking about what the implications are.”

“And you think it’s more than working at levels of pedagogy, Michael?”

“That’s correct, exactly that. Because that only takes you up to a point, right? It doesn’t kind of really force you as an academic to start thinking more critically about pedagogy. Because actually, models of pedagogy you can keep changing. You can keep like... pushing the boundaries, but it’s not going to have...what you call...a disruptive effect. So, it is not about pedagogy; it is more about the kind of work at the edge of epistemology. What’s the nature of knowledge?”

“I think we should be looking at an integration of knowledge. So even if you have somebody who is trained as a physicist, that person should also be seriously engaged in the ideas around the humanities and social sciences. That is a very risky thing for people to consider the idea that they are insulated, if you like, from other disciplines.”

“And linked to this is to really focus on what occurred in the last few years. I think that one of the things that’s emerging is that this idea of reviewing and rethinking our knowledge project. It’s something that has to be kind of really at the centre of engaging academics about their Teaching and Learning. So, in other words, it is really about saying to them in their engagement with the fact that we’ve got such a major change in the student demography. But at the same time, we also have to understand that we come from a very divided society. So many of us, like you know grew up in circumstances intellectually you know grew up in circumstances that were very kind of cocooned. Sharpened by our radicalised past and so on.”

“So, and thirdly of course, there is just the national and the global context within which HE is embedded. We have to be completely clear that the South African universities may be defined as South African universities, if and only if they are seriously engaged with South Africa. These are all global institutions, but they are also embedded within the context. And the challenge for our universities is to understand how to generate intense amounts of knowledge, intensive knowledge around the local context and then embedding that in the global system, if you like. So that’s what kind of really makes us a South African university. And understanding that universities by definition are both local and global.”

“So, one of the things that I think that we have to get our academics to engage in, is this idea that there is a growing need for us to consider engagement as a site of knowledge

production. That has huge implications for the epistemology, because it is telling you that it is not enough for us to just take up ideas that have been produced in other parts of the world and just see whether they apply to South Africans. But rather it is about saying, can we, through engagement, begin to identify stronger and stronger approaches to theory building.”

“So, what we have done is, we’ve considered engagement as a kind of...like something good to do and we consider it simply as community engagement. But you know, there is engagement with the government. There is engagement with the private sector. And there is engagement in industry, engagement with the NGO sector, with communities.”

“Thank you for raising this because traditionally, engagement was synonymous with community engagement, and as you rightfully said, this was considered something good to be done. I have to admit that I did not really consider engagement as an epistemological pillar,” I added.

“Well, having said all of the above, we can’t at this point in time, notwithstanding what some students are saying. We can’t ditch the scientific method because... What we know is that the scientific method allows us to understand how to design aeroplanes that fly. We don’t have any other system at the moment that allows us to do that. That might evolve over time, but at the moment we just don’t have it.”

Michael is often described as a wonderful raconteur. I had witnessed this skill on many occasions when I listened to him, be it at a meeting or presentation or an address. And again today, as he relayed the story of his childhood. He explains that every time he became ill as a child, he would be taken to a traditional healer to be treated. So, he raised the question about what other knowledge systems could co-exist with science.

“Is it possible for us to begin to contemplate the notion that there might be ways of interpreting our work, our research and so on from a different perspective, taking into account the kind of Indian philosophies and African philosophies and so on. So just saying, but let’s be clear it’s really important to train physicists and engineers and so on and train them properly in the methodologies of scientific methods and so on, but what about these other...”

With these last points, we concluded our discussions on the Knowledge project of the university, connecting that to the decolonial agenda of the country’s HE and viewing engagement as one of the sites for knowledge production. What do these mean for the role of ASD is what needs further exploration. I thanked Michael for his willingness to share his insights. Smiling once more, he thanked me and left.

I packed up my laptop and notebook and made my way to my car for the drive back, full of thoughts to ponder for the night ahead.

4.3.3. ASD as building knowledge, developing theory and being academic

We work in academia. What counts? Academic work
Legitimacy, credibility, status

As I sat waiting at café Spiralina, deliberating on the days gone by, my thoughts drifted to my earlier days in ASD

Some day in 2004

‘Imagination is more important than Knowledge’ (Albert Einstein)

I first encountered this excerpt during a departmental strategic planning workshop. We had lots of fun on that day, doing creative things with the bag of goodies brought by Jean, my colleague who was facilitating the session. I have considered Imagination or Envisioning important for my practice as an academic staff developer. More recently in South African higher education, the idea of Knowledge has been at the forefront. However, knowledge about what, who, why, and how...?

November 2019

It was the HELTASA conference – an annual gathering of academics, academic developers. During our conversation, I asked Sandile, a colleague from another university, what he thought we, as an ASD community, need to do to enhance our practice. His response was, “We need to do what they do...teach, publish, research”. By ‘they’, he referred to the academic staff in universities. As I walked back to the conference venue, I thought about the influence and hegemony of academia on ASD identity. Should we be like them? Should they be like us? At the venue, a critical dialogue was commencing and one of the participants raised a question that reflected the, us-them dualism. My contribution to the discussion was for us (academics and academic developers) to possibly think about partnerships and co-creation of knowledge about learning and teaching, drawing on Cathy Bovill’s (2019) work in this area of co-creation...

Mary and Cindy joined me first and I relayed the above thoughts to them. I shared my concerns about ASD being on the periphery in some (most?) institutions. Mary suggests that it differs because contexts are different, she said, but acknowledging that some ASD units do remain on the periphery.

Cindy offered her thoughts on this, saying, "I see the only way for us to move out of the periphery is for us to get that academic credibility. But at the same time, hold in the work,"

Establishing and maintaining the legitimacy and credibility of the growing field of ASD has been challenging.

"So what do we need to get this academic credibility?" I asked Cindy.

Cindy quickly adds, "Easy! Get a PhD. Publish, supervise, research. Do all that. And at the same time hold in the other stuff. Well, if you have to establish your status as a scholar...For somebody to listen to you. I am going to work with you on your academic teaching...But I am a real specialist on that, look, I publish on the best journal. I have got a PhD. And my publications are such that there I am, on the research list. Then people will listen to you."

"I have to agree with Cindy there," said Mary. "My colleagues and I didn't even have a master's. So, we have, if you want to go to Archer³⁶, we have worked very hard to build our own personal emerging properties. And we've done it in the currency that counts, at university."

"Which is research?" I asked.

"Degrees and research. We publish. Some of my colleagues are quite often in the list of top 30 researchers. I did too this year," was Mary's response.

Jane and Linda join us and I fill them in on the conversations.

With a deep sigh and much concern, Cindy continues, "people [in AD] have got to take their own AD seriously. And it means sacrifice, hey. When my colleagues first started, they didn't even have a master's. But they worked on it, got their PhD and published. They understood that they had to increase their own status, be understood as academics, if they were going to be able to claim the status to work with academics. And that's equivalent to anybody lecturing in Sociology or some other discipline. They've got to teach the Sociology undergraduate curriculum. And then you've got the postgraduate supervision on top."

³⁶ Reference to the work of Margaret Archer's (2007)

“We’re a growing field and still young in SA and internationally too. Have we sufficiently built ourselves as a field?” I asked, though I knew the answer to that.

Linda nods her head to indicate we have not.

“And what does that mean to be a field? I mean, is theorising our work - there are lots of talks of late, papers on it, on building the theoretical spine and the epistemological backbone in AD. Is that the same as building the field? What does it take?” I asked.

In a way, we are building a discipline, aren’t we? But my argument is that if you do that, you can’t afford to slip into the soft learning theory. Because that won’t explain our student performance data. I think that’s it. If you theorise your work, you build the field. You have to theorise as you practice. So, it is sort of like a cyclical thing,” was Cindy’s response.

Cindy excused herself for a meeting and promised to be back later.

“I mean, Cindy has left, but I agree with her. We work in academia. What counts? Academic work. Being able to argue things using strong evidence and theories and that’s what we have to do, I think we need to do in AD, generally and particularly for staff development. It is an important role, you know, we can’t just like be doing Mickey Mouse little kind of nice ice breakers and, whatever. I think what we do in staff development needs to be substantial and it needs to be based on strong theory,” adds Mary.

Listening intently, Jane provokes us... “Well, let's look at that. What is theory? What is this hang-up with building the theoretical spine? I mean if you want to take that conversation into Africa, and the African centeredness, when you look at Ndebele art, that might not have been theoretical or documented in ways that you can pull it up in a journal. But there's knowledge there, there's wisdom there. So, I agree that we are in an academic organisation, and therefore the scholarship of our work is important. But we can't get so fixated on that that we can't see the wood for the trees. So, legitimacy is not in journal publications and reproducing Biggs and all the North and East doesn't make us strong; it makes us weak because we have not yet come up with our own theories... because we're not looking in the right places.”

“Where is legitimacy, Jane?”

“It's in the people... because if you are fully present as a staff developer, you know what you're about, how to do it, why you're doing it; there's your legitimacy. NOBODY can argue with that,” Jane affirmed.

“I think we're busy trying to kind of build the field to give it more legitimacy and credibility, through using the theory, or as Jane says, ‘coming up with our own theories’. Knowledge is our currency at university. Feels such a cliché to say this, actually, but I think that the power is in the knowledge. I think if you have the knowledge and you can use it and you can argue for things, that’s what gives you power,” adds Mary.

“Yet we are considered a weak field. We do not have the credibility of other fields. Why is teaching and learning always the one to take the back seat, whereas research is prioritised?” I queried. This has been an age-old question throughout higher education.

“It's important that staff developers actually claim a space for a practice that is well theorised, recognised et cetera. So, there’s a bit of activism that is done there, some advocacy role that staff developers play. I think the tension in the sector is deciding whether you are servicing or whether you are advocating, whether you’re leading or servicing. And, that is something I think that staff development units and practitioners haven't quite worked out for themselves. This is partly because many of the units are marginal to the mainstream project. So, their existence is threatened, their status as a unit for some time is, you know, not legitimised by the university. So, these mitigate against AD people standing up and claiming their space as much as they know that they’re doing such good work. So, one can with that kind of disposition fall into; let me do what you want me to do,” added Jane, and continued.

“When we fall into the trap of that, it is dangerous in that as the trends change according to policies that the universities are taking up and funding projects. The requests are going to be flung at the AD units and they themselves will not have a chance to say: That's not in our ambit, we do not subscribe to that neoliberal policy, therefore, we will not, this goes against our values and beliefs. So, we are not yet in that strong position to be able to talk back. One might argue that we not there yet because people haven't published enough, because the currency at university is the research you've done. And so, AD people are so busy standing up and delivering in workshops and facilitating, there is the benefits of taking research days and, you know, focusing on the research, they don't accrue for staff development people.”

Linda comes in, “I would like to offer two thoughts here, building on what Jane is saying. The first is, as you mention, the research aspect. That’s part of the answer. We have got to do the research that’s necessary; research aimed at moving the field forward. It’s not only about researching our practices necessarily, or AD research. It is also about researching what’s happening, researching the context that has an impact on our practices. I’m talking

about learning research, I'm talking about curriculum research, I'm talking about research about the purposes of higher education. We need to be asking the question about why the hell are these students not going to class? What's happening in those classes where they do go. And so, what does that mean then for academic staff development, and so on? One of the things that I think would be really useful would be to do, to conceptualise like big collaborative research projects around key issues. So that we can really build national knowledge."

Linda next prompts us to think about the idea of a 'field'. "What is a field?" she asked. I recall a paper by Suellen Shay (2012) in which she argues, 'we are not there yet' ...as a field.

"We can recognise our field by a set of practices – academic staff development; student development – and these practices are based on particular bodies of knowledge. I think that the reason our field is contentious is that we don't draw on as a big field, we don't draw on a coherent body of knowledge. And part of the reason for that is that the field does not have a school," ...pausing a bit to get her thoughts clear, Linda continues.

"Somebody spoke about a field and its nurseries. So, ASD does not have a nursery. This may sound a bit contentious, but I do believe that we need to be drawing, to some extent, on similar ideas. And this is because certain ideas are stronger than other ideas of what they can explain. People come into this field from all over. How are they supposed to know where to look for the most appropriate theories? So, we do need a nursery of some sort, or several nurseries, but if we have got several nurseries, then those nurseries have to talk to each other, you know. And then once we have got that, then it's fine to have offshoots."

"Building a field," Jane comments, "does not mean that people don't have to have their own interpretations. We don't need everybody singing from the same hymn page and everybody homogenised, but yes, you've got to have a baseline of what you're interpreting. You can't have people who, 500 people have their own ideas and are doing their own thing and it's manifesting in ways that are giving mixed messages. You can't build a field like that. So, we have to agree in principle. What is our pedagogical style? And, it doesn't have to be ABC, but it can be A with variations. What is our theoretical stance? What is the power dynamic in our classrooms? So, I think for me that is helpful to build and grow and strengthen a field, but it can't minimise you, that you don't have that creativity."

"I don't even think that AD people in a department share the same vision – they could be going out to different departments saying different things. And ideologically different – you can't then build that strong spine. You can build it in the research, but we don't have that

practice; we have a sense; we do a lot of group work, we know how to get people to talk et cetera, but I think I'm talking about a deeply pedagogical intervention. That now, if I connect to the decolonial moment we should ask if we were set up to help black students and if we are at the edge of the university in terms of seeing the problems that exist, why is it that AD came under fire for not being able to respond to students' concerns in the teaching and learning sense?

"Have conversations like decoloniality contributed to now centralising of academic staff development?" I asked.

Jane takes a deep breath and chooses her words carefully. "Well, not until ASD or AD can own up to its complicity. We can't suddenly be legitimised because you're having a conversation about decoloniality. So, all these years of navel-gazing and blind spots, I mean, you've got to account for that and own up to it and admit it as a limitation. The other thing is that it has become more central and this is it -- I mean, these are all the things that we don't see because we don't perhaps have the lenses to do so -- but when you have a huge focus from the DHET and the outside world or the ministry on student at risk rates. The big question some minister is going to ask: what's being done about it? And the answer is; we've got AD."

"So, the answer is not about the quality of the AD or the nature of the AD; it's that we have an intervention in place; get them to do their work. So, that is a reason why it's become centralised because it looks like it's a solution, and maybe it is for people, policy writers. It's like, oh, well you're equipped, you've got all the people, why are you not doing it? But, they don't understand the complexities on the ground. They don't understand that students don't want to go to an English support class and how that stigmatises them. And, the fact that they have to do English anyway when they have five other languages that they are absolutely proficient in, is demeaning! And, no matter how you think about it, why are the Afrikaans students not going to an Afrikaans support class? So, these are the things that AD has to think about; it's not just a deficit, it's about positioning. So, it's bringing that into equilibrium."

So, knowledge production, curricula and pedagogy are the areas where we develop knowledge and theory with our academic colleagues. "Sally, you mentioned a day or so ago about our approach to ASD and especially with regard to curriculum, about it being, as you said, 'a sacred ground for the academics' ".

"I know that a lot of them don't like that and from that sort of happier more marginal relationship that we had; Oh, we'll give you some workshops and we'll help you, we'll all have

fun, we have a cup of tea, we have a budget for lunches and it becomes a very happy thing. We started to get really serious when you start messing with their stuff, with their curricula, with their assessment, doing assessor training. Assessor training was another biggie that, you know, because assessment is so key; it's the life or death issue in academia. And so, we started messing with assessment and saying: no, no, you need accreditation as an assessor, you can't just do this, and we started introducing new discourses of rubrics and formative and continuous assessment and different things. And so, we really messed with their stuff... big time! Sally remarked.

And Jane adds, "So, AD people have never really questioned in the past the epistemologies of what people teach. So, they're called into a department, they take the knowledge for granted, they never talk back to the disciplinary lecturer and say: Hey, don't you think you should... Maybe we're starting to do that now."

"You're right, Jane", added Sally, "I also think there is a need to be critical of our teaching and learning centres. The whole fees must fall and the decolonial turn has really pulled the rug on us because we've been so focused on epistemological access and we haven't paid attention to epistemological justice. And, so that's made us, I think, just in the last couple of years, certainly since 2015, 2016, become more introverted and questioning our own practices."

"Yes, Sally," Jane responded and continued. "As you've also mentioned the decolonial turn, so, if I had to pick just some ideas that students raised, i.e., who's silenced? Who's marginalised? Whose hands go up and who answers? Who sits in the groups? Are those racial groups in the classes?"

"Why haven't we chipped away at that in 25 years? Are we going in with a script and continuing, we think we're doing good work, but actually not seeing what's right in front of us? So, that self-reflexivity, I think, as much as we write about it and we talk about it, we don't have that deep ability to reflect because reflecting might mean that there are consequences. And, being on the slippery slope as many in AD/ASD are, nobody wants to admit that because already your position is tenuous, so let's not go there; let me just continue doing what I'm doing. I think that's the tack that leaders in staff development have taken or AD, they just say: Let's get on with it. But, in the long run, that's really not going to build a cadre of, you know, AD people who can stand up anywhere and say: We know what we're about."

Mary, who joined the conversations again, added that, “we have to ask more critical questions. I think one of the knower attributes for many academic developers and for us is very affirming and bend over backwards and very respectful of our academic colleagues and I still believe that that’s very important. But I think that we also have erred on the side being too nice, and being too afraid, and maybe lacking the courage. I think now we have to be prepared to ask much more challenging questions.”

Our conversations are deeply reflexive, forcing us each to dig deep into our AD practices. What have we been doing? Why? What’s driving these practices? And in our conversations, we reveal some of our blind spots. We take some much-needed moments of pausing, knowing that once we’ve entered this reflective/ reflexive space that these conversations will grow. Some of us grab more coffee, have a snack, others catch up on email...Cindy joins us after her meeting.

I tell of a time when recently, I was at a workshop where the speaker claimed that AD has been compliant in the sense of aligning its work to globalisation and vocationalism. I asked whether AD or ASD has been complicit in these normative worldviews, or have we been transformative towards the social justice imperatives that we claim our work is about.

Cindy responds first. “I don’t think in SA we’ve been critical enough. I think that the general trend has been to fall into those normative positions about the roles of higher education. And it’s about understanding teaching and learning as social, cultural and political and that we haven’t been hard enough on ourselves. In the sort of things that we read, in challenge our own beliefs. You have to read social theory. And not educational theory. You recall, I’ve said this yesterday as well. You’ve got to get in with the heavy social theory and I don’t think enough people, enough of us have done that. The soft learning theory is easy to read the other stuff is not so easy and it discomforts you profoundly. So, I think we are not hard enough on ourselves.”

“And I concur with you, Cindy,” said Linda, sitting at the edge of her seat, making her case for strong theories. “I think we always need to be looking for the strongest theories, the theories with the greatest explanatory power and potential. And as you’ve said yesterday and alluded to again today about critical social theories and not soft theories, like for example, influence of learning styles. This is not enough. I think we need to go for the jugular.”

“The jugular,” we all exclaimed, at once!

“So, what are the *real* issues?” Linda emphasised. “It can’t be lightweight stuff, because the lightweight stuff, they don’t get us anywhere.

“But we have come from that lightweight stuff, right?” I asked.

“If the lightweight stuff is a starting point and if it grabs people... then you can use it, but that’s not where you end. It’s like the hook and once you have got people hooked, then you have got to feed them with the real food, not the baby food.” Linda explained further.

Sally agrees with Linda. “I think the real hard transformation work in the challenging subjects where students are failing, and in their droves needs a more focused approach. And, because I think we don't know enough about those, it needs research, a subtle type. Instead of those lecturers going to hundreds of generic workshops and feeling: I'm not getting much out of this. But rather work with them more in doing classroom-based research, or curriculum research and stuff like that. We've got a lot of useful tools, we've got a lot of useful tools that they can use, also that we can adapt them for them to use for understanding where the sticking points are and where things are difficult. I think we need to claim our space, we're too recusant in our claims, which makes our knowledge base seem weak.”

“Why would that be?”

Sally provides her view on this, “I think there’s more respect for the scientific disciplines and the experimental method. We hold back; we don't say it proves this. But, we need to start talking a stronger language of strengthening the social sciences reticence about wanting to make claims. And, we need to make the claims and back the claims up with the data that we have. I think part of the problem of the weak epistemic base is that, people don't keep data on their interventions. We train lots of students and staff – what is the impact of these? They don’t know, they never asked, never found out. That is why AD is considered a practical discipline. So, we do all this ad hoc and we never gather the data from that and analyse it and start building a stronger base for what it is that we do, and I think we need to. I think we totally need to build the knowledge base of AD and especially staff academic development.”

“So, in essence, then ASD as a field can use the research focus to bring about the kinds of changes we want to see.”

“I think it's the only way, we have to, we can't just suck it out of our thumb. It's got to be research-based, yes,” adds Sally.

“And as I mentioned earlier, research aimed at moving the field forward,” contributes Linda. “I think that’s really important. I’m not talking about AD research, I’m talking about learning research, I’m talking about curriculum research, I’m talking about research about the purposes of higher education. Therefore, one of the things that I think would be really useful would be to do, to conceptualise big collaborative research projects around key issues. So that we can really build national knowledge.”

“So, in a sense, we are modelling the scholarly focus that we are asking our staff to engage in by bringing in the research focus in our ASD work. Rather than going only with our gut!” I stated, but kind of asked for confirmation.

Sally confirms and cautions, “Yes, and we shouldn't go with our gut, we need to go with what the research is telling us and especially when it's a discipline that we're not familiar with. We need to be very sure of ourselves before we go in and tell people in the highly specialised disciplines how to do their teaching and learning. And, have respect for what Shulman calls the signature pedagogies.”

“So, we have been promoting research-based teaching, but now we’re talking about research-based ASD, or AD for that matter. So, it's about walking the talk.”

Everyone nods in agreement. “Walking the talk, absolutely,” affirms Sally.

I thanked everyone for their thoughts and contributions and reiterated my interest in the notion of self-reflexivity and about the field of AD actually bending backwards on itself and asking: what are we as academic developers doing? Why? And perhaps our inability to do that.

“I think that is complicated by the high stakes environments in which we work so there's a lot to lose, so one needs to understand that.”

This is an important cautionary note from Jane with which we close our conversations as Café Spiralina fills up for its lunch-time patrons.

4.3.4. ASD and strategic leadership

We need a join-the-dots person

Some day in 2019

*Centres of Excellence
are Custodians,
Ambassadors;
of Excellence*

Thandi and I were in early this morning. We were both at our foyer area, where we'd usually gather for coffee and lunch breaks, or if we wanted to work on something together with a few colleagues. We chatted while we both had our breakfast of yoghurt and fruit

As we spoke about Centres of Excellence (such as the one in which we both worked), she told me that such centres must be 'ambassadors of excellence' and 'custodians of excellence'. I have always admired Thandi. Not only, was she elegant in her appearance and dispositions but in her deeply thoughtful comments.

These words have remained etched...and I considered Thandi's words to imply that such custodian/s would be leaders in the field. What does it mean for the field of ASD to be custodians of excellence? Given also that the notion of excellence has been a contested term in our inequitable HE context in South Africa.

As the offices on the ground floor filled in...kettles plugged on for early morning wake-up coffees, Thandi and I wished each other a productive day ahead and made our way to our respective offices.

While waiting for colleagues to join me this morning at Café *Spiralina*, I drifted to thoughts about what our Professor Ndlovu referred to our AD unit at the university – as the engine of the university. By this, he meant one that drives, leads teaching and learning. As a unit, we were very much under fire, accused of the opposite, of not leading, and threatened to be closed down. This picture did not portray us, our AD unit as being custodians, or

ambassadors of excellence. We have though, weathered the storms a bit, not completely out of it; I would think as many AD units in the country or globally are still under threat. More recently, at a strategic planning meeting, the term 'thought leader' was included to describe our position or strategy at the university. Not just ambitious. This is about leading, about being the custodian or ambassador of teaching and learning excellence.

I was jerked back to the present moment at Café *Spiralina* as glass coffee mugs met glass table. Linda and Cindy carried a third mug for me, too, and I was super grateful. As we deliberate today on our conversations from where we ended yesterday -- on the high stakes environment in which we work as AD, the slippery slopes of AD, we considered our precarious positions, and what enabled and constrained them.

Just then, Jane joined us.

Linda shares with us about the enabling environment of having a VC and DVC Teaching and Learning who understood and supported teaching and learning.

"This has been really helpful for our work. And yes, this does give us some power. But we have got to be careful about how we use our power. You know, we hide behind and let the academic take the credit. We hide behind the DVC and the policy and the 'we are supporting - that's our mantra. We're supporting, we're preparing, we're not it. Although we have also, you know, it's like a tight rope so even though we are not it we have got to show that in some spaces we are it. So that people can believe that we can be the supporters and the assistors."

"Voice does give power. Having done the research, getting the citations, getting the title, being a professor, all that helps. But we must also remember that these things take time. One problem in the field is that people want to get to places quickly, you know, chasing after, titles; not necessarily chasing the depth and the breadth. I think what gives you deep knowledge is being immersed in a context for a hell of a long time and really understanding it and getting to know the people and building trust. And building your credibility with your people wherever they are. I think this hopping is very very bad for the field."

"I also think that power - the depth and the breadth comes from specialisation. I don't think it's wise to spread ourselves too much. For us to be spreading ourselves too thinly. And I mean, I think that's what we do and we have been doing that for decades and I think it hasn't been good for us, you know, because it has taken us longer to you know, get to where we need it to be in terms of knowledge and expertise and the titles and the stuff. And part of the

reason has been that spreading ourselves too thinly and doing everything for everybody is not good. So it is finding that balance between specialisation and breadth, which is hard and I think every person and every AD unit you know, has got to decide for themselves, for him or herself, how much is enough and how much is too much. We struggle with that here.”

“Speaking of power,” added Cindy, “you have got to understand how power works structurally. You know, to a large extent, you go on power immediately, once you get a title. You also go on a power by playing the system. You have to know how the governance system works, you have to know how to insert things; you have to know when strategic documents can be played with, that sort of thing. You need to know how the system works. So, if I go back to what I was saying about when I came here, for some reason, I sort of twigged that the way to work the system was through the quality assurance, okay. Machiavellian if you like. But I sort of knew how the academic governance system worked, but I worked on finding out how it worked and then worked the system. You can get power if you know how to work the system.”

“So, yesterday or the day before, I did mention that I think there's been poor leadership in staff development thus far. I think that the other mistake that happened is that in, and this might all be related to our past and how universities and people tried to survive [in AD], is that they started developing signatures according to the universities and a brand. Now, that creates a national hierarchy of AD and people lower down on the rung find it hard to find their voice because there is another power dominating and because they've been able to accrue enough resources to strengthen that particular angle they look like the leaders. Here again is where AD leadership and support become important.”

As Jane shared her thoughts, it's about collaborating to move the field forward, I thought. It's not about competition, or is it, I wondered. Survival...of the fittest? Most powerful? I shake myself out of these thoughts, though not entirely convincing myself.

As if she could read my thoughts on power, Sally, who slipped in a little while ago, shared that “academic developers probably have more power than they realize. I think the faculties don't particularly respect us, but I think HE management is very dependent on us because of the way that things have changed and the priorities of the DHET, for example, the growing importance of teaching and learning and the need to report on teaching and learning.”

“So, I think that while a lot of academic developers in the past, their jobs were, that they were very powerless because their jobs were soft-funded. Nobody had much time for them and the only reason we were tolerated is because, you know, whatever group was funding us. But now, that funding is being mainstreamed through things like the teaching development grants, which are long-term, you know? And, our power base is more secure because they have to report on these things.”

“But, I still think we lack power in doing our daily work in the faculties and that's why I think we need to strengthen the epistemic relation.”

“And you have successfully, Sally.”

I can tell you that it's taken me many, many years to gain any kind of credibility in there. I think it definitely came through research and publications, but not my research and publications. Co-publications with them, working with them with saying: let's figure this out together and let's see. So, at the moment I don't see any other way of getting the sort of legitimacy and respect of the faculties without really developing good relationships, because you have to have a good interpersonal relationship.

“Building that rapport”

“You start to build a rapport and work with them in figuring out how to make things better and improve things, but without that, you know, if you're just coming in as with my expertise is educational; I'll tell you what to do, I'm not actually interested in your discipline - then the battle is lost. The credibility - I think that the credibility that we have within our field is reflected in our publications and our research that we do. But the legitimacy that we have in the departments is also reflected in the kinds of research that we do in those disciplinary areas with those staff, and in a way, it's similar to what an academic has to do. We expect them to both have expertise in their discipline and to have the expertise in teaching and learning and we'll say to them: you have to come into my field, I don't need to go into your field. But actually, that's not right. We need to say: you have to come a little bit closer to my field and I can come a little bit closer to your field, we need to find out about each other's areas of expertise. And, that's how it's an interdisciplinary project.”

“I agree with all the discussions so far,” said Cindy, “about building rapport, credibility and legitimacy of our work. I also believe that we need a join-the-dots approach. You need someone very, very, very strong, either as the Dean or as a Director for Teaching and Learning Centre and that person...has to be, firstly, a strategic thinker. Yes, at that level, there may be

lots of politics. Leave that to the DVC, dealing with students, staff, national bodies etc. This person, secondly, has to be a scholar. Understand the system. Be on board. And, of course, that means that person has to know Critical Social Theory – it is the only thing that will make sense of South African data – and to be able to join the dots and come and advise. And the DVC has to be willing to listen to that person.”

We all agreed that this was a good point to pause and pick up tomorrow.

4.3.5. ASD as recognising the South African context

Context, community, belonging, becoming

Our last day of gatherings, deliberations;

sharing, introspection

Gazing out the open window

At the vast expanse of,

Community dwellings

Homes with blue sparkling pools

Side-by-side

Context is important

NATHEP, a collaborative project I joined in 2018

reinforced for me, context

how empty my practice has been, I reflected

as I succumbed to the neoliberal agenda

numbers, throughput, success rates

technocratic rationality, utilitarianism dominated

Time to ask harder questions of our contexts

Developing theories, building knowledge;

for our contexts

community, belonging, becoming

As we reflected on our conversations over the last few days, I asked next whether we have focused on a narrow view of ASD for example, focusing on assessment or pedagogies? This certainly dominated much of my practices in AD. How does AD help to meet, realise the purposes of higher education? I kept asking this question in my practice, but I think that I, too still struggled to move my/our practice much over the threshold on utilitarianism and technocratic rationality. The hold of the neoliberal beast was still strong. I realised that it will not serve toward recognising a truly democratic South African higher education, society and world. My participation in a large national collaborative project revealed how narrowly focused and empty my practice as an academic developer was, especially with regard to contextualising to our SA context. To consider how our socio-historical legacies have shaped

and continue to shape educational and ASD practices. Yes, I offered multiple spaces for critique in staff development sessions. Yes, I aspired toward transformative education, sustainable development. I knew the theory of it, subscribed to it, but I, too, to draw on my colleague Jack Whitehead, was a living contradiction. But I remain in-becoming, open to infinite possibilities and potentialities. I agreed with what Jane said next.

Jane takes the proverbial mic, “I think we do need to think about our work in the context of transformation and I think sometimes that's peripheral because people think, I don't want to get involved in that and it's too political et cetera. But, I think that's at the heart of it and that is why we are struggling because we don't understand the project, we don't understand why we do what we do.”

“So, I think we've done a lot of the generic stuff, we need to change tack and start contextualising. So, staff development in, I'm just selecting randomly... University of Zululand, right? Should be and must be different from the staff development at UCT, but it doesn't mean the principles are different. It means that the principles we can read on Google every day. It is the ability to translate that into contextual practice that we don't have the skill to do. And, that's where the staff development should focus... it's not about; teach me a new method. And, I think a lot of staff developers go to this thing of the tips and tricks because somewhere they've internalised; the more ways I have to do this, the more I can sell myself and therefore secure myself. And, this sort of seduction, you know, is faddish; it doesn't go to a really deep place and that is why we haven't come up with our own methods.”

“It is really important who the person is, and you can't come to the method until you know who you are. And, how do you access who you are? Well, you look at where you've come from. And, I think I'm more concerned about the fact that in 25 years we have not, well, maybe I'm over-generalising, but we haven't come up with a South-African way of doing this, isn't that surprising? You know, for the richness I can see, why doesn't our staff development include drumming, or music, or dance, like whose standard are we living up to? We can do this easily; it's so culturally fitting. So, there's some gold standard that we have in our heads about what counts as legitimate and we look to the North and the West to give us that approval to say: Yes, this will work. So, when you extract yourself from this situation and don't go through the North and the West, and you go somewhere far-flung, suddenly you say: Hey, you are doing it and you are honest, and it's working! And, you get so shocked like why were we not doing this?”

“But you can't have the South-African again if you don't know who you are. And, you don't bring yourself to it. And, that I mean in a totally non-egotistical way, in service of the academic project; what is your role? That is what knowing who you are is.”

“I rest my case,” Jane adds, sighing deeply.

“The challenge is that we use so much literature from the global north, you know, and I still haven't made a lot of progress on that because actually I don't think there is a lot of literature from the global south for us to use. But I think we should be working harder at finding it,” says Mary.

“And from our conversations of the last few days, we should be working at developing our own literature, our own epistemologies,” I added.

Linda's contribution was her suggestion that ASD has been a project of maintaining...two things – the Teaching and Learning stuff, the research stuff, the discourse stuff, all of that; and of Transformation.

“What that transformation means is shifting, you know. So, for the longest time, the transformation has been...you know, working...thinking about the fact that the HE has become a mass system that in SA it has, that massification has meant more black students, more working-class students, more students, you know, not perhaps as well prepared for HE as we know it. And then, but also shifting, you know and saying that if HE is to contribute to the transformation of South African society. It means that we have got to recognise who the students are that we teach. And find the best ways to teach them. I mean I also think that our role is to think about what are the contemporary debates in society? And one of the issues in our society currently is around the decolonisation of universities. And so, we have got to be able to contribute to the debate about what that means for the nature of higher education, the purposes of HE and then what it means for staff development. I don't think we have come to any conclusions about what is the essence of higher education. And what are the things that we need to absolutely hold on to?”

Lionel joins in the conversations at this point. “I think people are starting to ask much harder questions than before. The whole pace of transformation in the South African university system has been very slow. And probably because we haven't asked the right questions. So, for example, I think one of the big things that's hampering transformation is the issue of not whether we have sufficient numbers of women and blacks in our institutions...And whether our student profile is changing but what about institutional

cultures, is perpetuating the past and what about it is enabling us to move forward. I think people are starting to ask much harder questions about institutional culture. And maybe that's a key question that we have to engage with as teachers. In our role as teachers, how are we perpetuating or transforming I think that is a critical question.

"Yes, and as part of our institutional culture, as you mention," added Jane, "I think we do need to think about the dire poverty situation in South Africa, the fact that students are not getting through. That they can't go home, they don't have studies and they don't have... Think about all the contextual things that prevent students, how would that change our teaching in the classroom if we factored that in? Not in a charitable way, but would it affect the reading and the overload and the passages and the help we would give if we just brought that into the mix? That's what transformation is about. So, it's not by getting the good students to do excellently, it's about bringing that ground up. So, SA then is stronger, that every child is literate, you know? We've got to make that a project, each of us has to take a slice of it and say: That I want to work with and I will make it mine, last 10 years; I'm focusing on that. But, doing this generic stuff, et cetera, I think there is a blind spot there, there's an elephant in the room all the time.

"What's that blind spot, Jane?"

"The lack of bringing that to the fore, with the fear that it overrides everything. You see, because people sometimes are caught between the we are all human beings, and that's important to an extent, right? But, it is a very naive kind of way of looking at our situation because we are not all human beings. Who you are as a human being is totally different from who I am, you know? And so, to essentialise what a human being is, is to say: I am not there yet, you have that model, you know? It sets up a whole lot of other things. So, in moving away from that reductionist kind of thinking, we can just deal with the real stuff and come up with interventions to work with the real stuff that will transform us."

Sally. "Yes, I like epistemic justice and epistemological justice as concepts in preference to decolonialising things. I do feel that it's kind of an area of study that we need to start tackling, right, but I think we focused so much on epistemological access and not enough on are we being fair to the students, to the profession? Are we hearing the students' voices? So, I think with the socially just pedagogies, like some of our colleagues who worked in that space. There's also the issue of ethics too, about considering what the profession has done and how this can change with the new generation of students. So, it's about opening up these

bases for the recognition of others and of those areas of justice and ensuring what Nancy Fraser calls participatory parity and that everybody has a voice so that they can speak and that they can ask questions. There are many such things that we need to do.”

Sally shares the conversations she had with her engineering colleagues about how engineers, for example, were complicit in demarcating the land during the time of the Group Areas Act.

“So, for example, we discuss how disciplines are constructed. They have particular identities, some are male-dominated and predominantly white-male-dominated. So how did it come to be so? What is it that we do in HE that just says white males are welcome here and everybody else isn’t? So, there are things that you need to ask about that discipline, but is it in the pedagogy? Is it in the way that things are taught? Is there a culture? What are the things that go with this discipline to make it this kind of...? How do we make that change? So, those are the things, those are not easy questions to ask. I don't think that the academic developers should presume that we've got the answers to these.”

“And, we don't have the answers. But we can create the spaces for conversations. Critical conversations on these, I add.

“Yes, the critical dialogues of that,” responds Sally, reflecting on her conversations with her engineering colleagues.

I enquired what these debates mean for us as academic developers, what we do and how we work? I really welcomed what Sally said next.

“I recall the last conversations with Brenda Leibowitz regarding this notion of ‘development’. She thinks it's about professional learning and co-learning. That it's not about us developing, and that's hugely presumptuous on our part. And, that it's really about, that they need to be responsible for their own professional learning, but we are there as sort of co-travellers, we're also learning. So, every time we work with a person or with a group it's not that we're developing them, it's that we sort of co-learning because I think in the research that I've done in academic staff development, which are now in scare-quotes, it has been more about collaborative learning, you know? We first, before we offer any form of advice or anything we really need to understand what their difficulties are. And so, we become kind of co-learners.

Cindy also picks on the co-traveling theme, but with some cautionary notes.

“So here’s my take, colleagues,” adds Cindy. “We haven’t been able to sustain the field, have we? Your group of colleagues, Nalini, has been one of the few that have stayed together. But at most institutions here today, gone tomorrow. And I mean, look at the way Directors of Teaching and Learning are jumping around the country.”

“We haven’t managed to hold the field, we haven’t managed to hold the field. We’ve got to help each other, yeah. My colleagues will always help each other. We’ve got to work at it as a national endeavour, which is why the HELTASA stuff is really really important. We’ve got to be prepared to get up out of our own comfortable spaces and go to another university and help each other and it doesn’t mean any consultancy fee. It’s about being collegial.”

It hit me then that we are so caught up in the intellectual endeavour of shifting the field and transforming and so on that we missed something. “I mean, I have never looked at it in that way before, but there is something about building the field not just intellectually, but it’s about building the field with the heart, which...is perhaps missing. Shifting the field in a loving way. We’ve taken the emotion, the self out of it.”

“That’s exactly it. And it’s this commitment,” says Cindy, and continues. “Yeah for me, it’s even more than the heart; it’s the whole identity thing.

“So having the identity is about having the sense of belonging. And belonging is an important part of a field.”

“It’s having a community. And a community that talks the same language,” comes in, Linda.

“Yes, and as AD, we must be a voice that can talk back to things. We can talk to the things and we can talk *back* to them and we don’t have that ability or the gravitas. So, gravitas is not something you can buy; it’s earned. And, it earns from involvement in the right projects with the right people. So, we are not flashing for international, but we’re going back home and saying: Can we go to the Limpopos³⁷ and that and do the work there”. Jane

“We’re not only interested in ICED³⁸ and all that stuff; we don’t need to convince anybody there. If we start getting that right, we then build gravitas, a legitimacy. So, when we talk to DHET, we say: We know what’s happening in the rural universities, now listen, because you sit in that office, you might not know. We need to build that link between the ground and

³⁷ This is where one of our rural universities is located.

³⁸ An international organisation – ICED: International Consortium for Educational Development

the people in charge and to articulate, like always be so on point with our theory that when something comes up, we're able to add a critical voice to it." Jane

"I am so hopeful that the field is developing and there are immense interesting possibilities."

"For sure," echoes Linda. "I am very positive about the field."

"We live on a hope and prayer," adds Mary.

With Mary's hope and prayer, we conclude our Conversations at Café *Spiralina*. I thank our colleagues as we all make our way out, with lots to contemplate.

4.4. Synthesis

In this chapter, I have focused on the conceptions of academic staff development. I engage in dialogue with AD pioneers and other key contributors to elucidate 'conceptually' what ASD entails – what was, what is, and what future possibilities exist, for ASD in a changing HE landscape in South Africa. The conversations occur broadly around these perspectives. The narrative conceptualisations constituted the first data set. In the next chapter, I zoom in to individual university contexts to explore discursively and operationally how ASD was produced.

CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVE ASSEMBLAGES – UNIVERSITY A

Narrativising the experiences of academic staff developers

5.1. Introduction and Overview

In the previous chapter Four, I presented the Café Dialogues that highlighted the varying conceptions of ASD in a changing HE context. This constituted the first data set and was presented as conversational dialogues between key contributors, AD pioneers and key participants from national HE units and me. In this Chapter Five and in Chapter Six, I zoom into three diverse university contexts (Institution A, B and C) and present the narratives of academic staff developers and managers of teaching and learning centres/ units. This is the second data set and presents the narratives of eight individuals from three universities.

The narrative assemblages (Feely, 2018) of the three universities offer glimpses into the lives, the thoughts, emotions and even imaginations of those tasked with ASD or leading such centres. Such narratives are entangled accounts of human and non-human actants (Latour, 1996) that construct subjectivities and configure and reconfigure ASD in the changing South African HE contexts. The narratives are presented in university categories. However, each narrative does not follow a linear chronological narration but rather rhizomic weaving into past, present and imagined futures, which are themselves entangled and bound to the varying contexts within which the universities are located. The narratives centre around participants' background and entry into AD/ASD and their philosophical underpinnings, the structural context, mandate, scope and role of AD/ASD, the various iterations of ASD, and the multiple forces that have influenced and shaped it.

Each presents snippets of nuanced accounts of the days and lives of academic staff developers and the non-human actors with whom they engage. In other words, the narratives present both the discursive landscape and how these features construct and shape the material world of academic staff development, iteratively or as Barad (2007) posits, intra-actionally.

5.2. Assemblage A

5.2.1. Institutional Context

University A is referred to as a Traditional or Research-intensive university according to South Africa's university differentiation categories. University A is the result of a merger of a historically advantaged and a historically disadvantaged university. The historically advantaged (white) university that made up University A was also one of the five universities that first opened its doors to 'non-white' students in the 1980s. University A is an urban university located in one of South Africa's large metropolitan cities.

An examination of institutional documents, audit and other reports, strategic plans and policies and guidelines has provided insights into the university's attempts to align teaching and learning on par with the already well-established research, foregrounding professional staff development and evidence-based practices for student success, innovation and scholarship in teaching and learning. Grounded in research and policy driven the professional/ ASD structures and initiatives attempted to provide the framework and an enabling environment for pedagogical and curricula transformation.

We hear through the words of Simon, the Director of the Teaching and Learning unit or office, as it was called, what was the rationale for the establishment of the unit? These will be revealed as Simon's story and those of the staff involved in academic staff development unfold. How did a unit or office like this facilitate ASD at the university? As Simon explained to me further, this office is part of an "entity that is managed through a Teaching and Learning strategy group. This group meets monthly to develop and implement a strategy. There are various sections or subunits that are part of this entity, each with its own established structures.

In university A, there are four protagonists – the Director of the Teaching & Learning unit and three experienced academic staff developers - who narrate their personal journeys, experiences and perspectives. Each is introduced in the introductory poem below, followed by a powerful quote that encapsulates a central theme from their story. These quotes serve as the entry point into their full narrative accounts.

Four Protagonists: Positionality, Perspectives, Roles

A Director, leading change,
And three Staff developers³⁹?
All Senior lecturers
Shaping higher education studies

Simon: The Return of a Visionary

A teacher educator,
A meticulous researcher,
A scholar of policy studies
Returns after a decade
as Director of a new Establishment. His conviction resonates deeply:
“Without institutional support, professional development is
Meaningless”

Virginia: Navigating the Tides of Change

She takes us back to yonder years
To a time when universities stood at the cusp of profound change,
Her wisdom, over three decades, reveals a key strategy
“Go along with the official story, but subvert from within”

Sue: Championing Inclusivity

For Sue, it’s about ‘democratising education’,
A profound belief guides her every endeavour
She sees staff development as inherently transdisciplinary,
Emphatically declaring
“No silos!!”

Bongani: The Critical Lens

A true critical theorist, Bongani dissects the layers of policy
He cautions with sharp insight
“All this legitimacy that comes from policies
comes with a catch.”
“Quick fixes – is all they want.”

³⁹ In conversation with the participants in this university context they indicated that they were senior lecturers and not academic developers.

5.2.2. Simon

“We adopt the approach that without institutional support, professional development is meaningless.”

I was enjoying myself in another province in South Africa, having fun. Some time in late 2008, I received a phone call from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) Teaching and Learning, Professor X. She told me about a new teaching and learning sector that was being formed at the university. She invited me to join the university (again) and lead this new establishment as the Director. I was reluctant at first. I have been at the university previously. My background is in teacher education. I spent considerable time at the university in this role. I left for almost a decade to work at a research institute. There was no reason for me to come here, but the prospect of starting something new was seductive. So, I agreed.

I re-joined the university in 2009 in the post of Director of this brand-new establishment. I came back into this merged university in this brand-new position. I suppose I came in without any baggage. All the merger story had settled. It had already happened and when I came into this office, it was brand-spanking new, not a single page and the DVC Teaching and Learning gave me carte blanche. Okay...so, she gave me one document, which was a justification for why this unit should exist. Before that, this was what was called the access office. The focus of that unit was basically managing foundation programmes⁴⁰. They were involved, to some degree, in staff development, but there are very few historical records to give any insights into what actually happened. They did initiate the Teaching and Learning conference, which I then continued for ten years. And the focus of that conference was largely staff development. The Vice Chancellor, then, was very conscious of the kind of overreach that the research was receiving at the expense of teaching. He might have had a different understanding of teaching from us...But he certainly provided the means, the institutional means, mechanisms and resources. This unit is one.

When I took up the position, the DVC Teaching and Learning and I had a pact. The pact was that she would protect me from the politics and allow me to get on with the work. Moreover,

⁴⁰ Foundation programmes were alternative access programmes that allowed students entry into study programmes, even though they did not meet the minimum criteria to register for programmes. Support and development opportunities were provided for students.

that is what gave me the energy, the zest and the freedom....well....for ten years. Until the DVC left. As you know, institutional politics are par for the course. Who deserves more? Why are you privileging teaching over research? These were ongoing debates. Well, actually, more like a ping-pong thing [teaching-research or research-teaching] and depends on who is making the case.

And yes, certainly, a lot depends on who's making the case. One of the highlights of this office was the Teaching and Learning conference. The scholarly approach entrenched through the conference was the approach that we had taken to develop, enhance and lead learning and teaching at the university. The conference started as a small domestic conference when I took it over in 2009 and it was a 50-person conference. When it ended in 2016, it was an international conference with 50 per cent of delegates as international delegates. So, it became truly an international conference. That in itself indicated how Teaching and Learning have been valued.

Over the years, we responded to the context, the university context and we steered away from a deficit paradigm. My initial teacher training, being a teacher educator and then later a professional researcher, gave me the tools to reconceptualise what AD is. We, the DVC Teaching & Learning and I, formalised and concretised it and we did it on the basis of research. This was a move from conceptualising development from the perspectives of student deficits, to moving towards entertaining the possibility that the deficit lay institutionally, at the systemic level and possibly at the level of professional development. I come from a policy background. My earlier work was in education policy. The DVC Teaching and Learning also had a strong policy background. So between the two of us we used the policy process to drive institutional change. We adopted a policy-driven approach to change. And policy driven on the basis of research. It wasn't just somebody's whim that we responded to, 'oh, I think we need a new policy on a Monday morning.' Every time we conceptualised an idea, it was first grounded in research.

Our research forced us to revisit our *raison d'être* as the unit and to shift our focus from pathologising students to asking academics to revisit their praxis.

My function straddled both student support and academic support - academic support in the context of professional development. And we did it via critical engagement of various

activities through the lenses of the access programs, foundation programs. We started by re-examining student support, which we found through our research to be erratic, inconsistent and sometimes very loosely conceptualised. So, through a Senate directive, we introduced a student support programme, which is now institutionalised, such that our support is systematised, consistent and solidly funded, with professional staff. Not ad hoc staff, like in some universities. We developed a checklist that faculties ought to have for student support and following this over the next 3-5 years, as the boxes were being ticked off, in other words, we were enabling that kind of support, we eventually reduced the items on this checklist as the university moved to a more mature conception of academic support.

So many of the items were largely student focused: mother-tongue⁴¹ instructions, bilingual tutorials, psychosocial support, adequate teaching and learning spaces, integration of technology, amongst others. Part of this process was ongoing professional development for staff. Over the years, I adopted a model for continuous institutional professional development. The *institutional* aspect is quite deliberate so that we adopt a position that, without institutional support professional development is meaningless. This model aims to bring together in a coordinated, coherent manner a variety of different professional development activities. This has changed too over the years. We have a very aggressive seminar series, colloquia, workshops and of course the Teaching and Learning conference which was brought to an end.

Our current approach to enhance professional competence is through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). We start at the level of praxis in the classroom. Academics identify a problem, a limitation, a shortcoming, identified either by themselves, their peers or by their students. Or through the evaluation process. Our focus has been on creating an evidence-based culture. We think of problems as opportunities and we conceptualise a project. A research project. Invariably, the academic will have limited to no understanding of educational research. So that is where I come in, in helping to conceptualise the project. We do run a workshop or series of workshops on proposal development regularly. And provide mentorship opportunities as well.

⁴¹ mother-tongue instruction is an educational approach where students are taught in their native language

So, it happens at different levels; it happens at the level of the discipline, writing for grants for research grants and it happens at the level of writing for SoTL grants. So the grants are another mechanism we use to drive the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

We have a number of different types of grants. Once they have conceptualised the research idea, then to enable and operationalise that they can apply for one of the grants. So there are individually identified research projects but also discretionary grants where I would identify projects based on what our institutional data is indicating and we commission these projects that our groups of academics undertake.

So, we see the grant process as a catalyst and a driver for professional development. It's competitive but it gives freedom for academics to experiment...with ideas, with innovations. It gives them space to try out ideas, with the prospect of failing. The only obligation is that you have to submit a report and at that stage they were forced to present at a conference. This was the Teaching and Learning conference that was hosted by this office. Many projects have emerged over the years, I'd say about 500 projects over the last ten years. So, on Monday this new grant will go out. And simultaneously another call will go out to invite them to a grant writing workshop. There's a panel of us that sit together. We look at merit, we look at things like theory, methodology etcetera and we provide advice and we attach mentors. Many not have ventured into SoTL research. So, we recognise that.

The challenges still exist, though. Because the pressure and the reward still lie in research. And university executives still pushing for the more tangible and research is more tangible than Teaching and Learning. The purpose of the university is knowledge production. It is knowledge production at the level of theory, at the level of expanding traditional knowledge boundaries. We must preserve that. So while keeping a focus on teaching, we should never dismiss or undermine disciplinary research. What we don't want is the pendulum to swing in the opposite direction and that's why we say, adopt the middle ground, use your disciplinary teaching praxis as the way to enhance the quality of your teaching. We are building a community of practice around teaching and learning and scholarship and it's flourishing. But we must be careful not to overemphasise it. I've heard this in an overseas conference, too, that SoTL is a social movement. I've noticed in many instances that in many contexts, it is at the level of advocacy, it's atheoretical and unscholarly – hence why in some contexts it's a

social movement rather than scholarly. So we have to be very careful, everything we do is grounded in research.

Obviously, we could not do this work alone. This unit has always been a very small unit. Tiny actually. Typically, it would be me, a researcher and two or three admin staff. This office falls within the ambit of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Teaching and Learning, together with four other units, forming the teaching and learning portfolio. This entity is managed through a Teaching and Learning strategy group, which comprises of the directors of the five units and we have Teaching and Learning Deans for each college, who are part of this group too. We meet monthly to develop and implement a strategy. We exist at the level of conceptualising and enabling. We recognise the need to have both institutional and context-specific interventions. These are based on the contextual needs of each college, and we provide the support for Deans to initiate that. And we also recognise and promote multidisciplinary.

A few years ago, there was a Senate mandate, to ensure that all staff had minimum exposure and some qualifications in higher education. This was the responsibility of the Teaching and Learning Development unit that offered this programme to all staff below senior lecturer level. This programme is underpinned by the principle that university academics are not trained teachers. They have disciplinary expertise, which is insufficient for them to be effective teachers. So, this programme comprising four core modules enables an academic with disciplinary expertise to begin to engage effectively in the classroom. So, it's like a beginner dipstick engagement. The intention is to arouse the interest of the academic so that they continue professional development activities in the form of a formal postgraduate diploma, a master's or a PhD in higher education, which are offered by the school of education. This Teaching and Learning unit does not exist anymore, and the staff have moved to the School of Education but they continue to contribute to a key component of staff professional development, which is mainly an induction programme for staff.

One of the programmes that we are currently piloting is a mentoring programme. This includes Teaching and Learning, Research, Career and Personal Development and Community Engagement. So professional development at each of these different facets of an academic's life. So this program is voluntary. The one thing we've to be very careful about is not to foist it on anybody. I don't believe in the big bang approach.

There must come a time when all academics have an intuitive, inherent sense of the importance of sound teaching approaches. There must be a time when this office must seize to exist. This office was designed in order to provoke, initiate, promote the shift to SoTL. I hope in ten years this office doesn't exist because academics don't see the need for it because they are inherently, instinctively driven towards that kind of thinking, that philosophy.

Why should it not exist, if learning and teaching remain in potentiality (to draw on my colleague, Yusef Waghid's argument)? I asked Simon if he really believed that there would ever be a need or a case when such an office or structure would not be needed.

I certainly hope not. But this office must morph with the changing reality. The office that this was in 2009 is very different from the office that it is today.

--oOo--

This fifth subunit that Simon referred to was the Teaching and Learning Development unit that was established primarily to provide ASD support for academics at the university, in the form of a compulsory training programme as per the university Senate mandate. As we will learn from the narratives of Sue and Bongani, unbeknownst to the staff of this unit, this unit was established for a particular time period to serve a particular purpose.

Virginia, Bongani and Sue were staff members of the Teaching and learning development unit. They share their narratives next.

Sue: In 2012, there was a re-organisation of the university structures, and a Teaching and Learning sector was formed as part of the DVC Teaching and Learning's portfolio. This created the Teaching and learning development subunit that was tasked with a compulsory training programme. We were also teaching in the other educational programmes, Postgraduate diploma in HE and master's and PhD in education and were part of the School of Education. And some of us were transferred into this teaching and learning subunit, whilst still also teaching in these postgraduate programmes.

Bongani: The DVC Teaching and Learning decided to bring academic staff developers, whatever we're called, kept us infused within the School of Education, but attach us to the Teaching and learning office, which was within the portfolio of the DVC Teaching and Learning.

And, when you look at it really, it tells you quite a lot. It tells you about issues that deal with power. It tells you issues that, probably, the DVC was looking for legitimacy.

Virginia: And now in our current situation, we're back to being disassembled. The Teaching and Learning Development Unit is dissolved. We're moved back to the School of Education. The power is being undercut because it's being moved to different spaces and different places.

5.2.3. Virginia

“Go along with the official story but subvert from within”

My background is in linguistics. Most of us who joined in the early days of AD came from an academic literacy or linguistic background. In those days we worked within faculties, that's where we were appointed. And working in a faculty can be quite lonely. I was in a very empty building, which had been the library, and the library had recently been rebuilt. It was completely empty; there was no furniture, nothing. That was my home. There was only one other person in a very similar position, in an office down the hall...and that's how we started.

Virginia and I have spent a relatively long time at our respective universities, she for about thirty years and I was 2-3 years behind. While my entry into academic development was slightly different to Virginia's, we both had our beginnings in student development but we took on different paths or lines of flight, thereafter.

I actually began in and was appointed to something called student support.

So, for those of us who've been in the field for a while, the change of name has been an ongoing thing. We've been called several different things: from student support services to AD to education development and I think each one of those reflects a particular view, a particular understanding of what it is that we were supposed to be doing. I'm not sure that those of us in the field actually always went along with that, but you have to play along. So, there is the official version; these are the labels that you get given by the institution. Then there's also the labels that we ourselves use and our own understanding.

So, when I first joined the university, it was seen in those days just at the cusp of change, when universities were first opening their doors to a very different student group, that students needed support. But as practitioners, we understood quite quickly that actually it was the institution and the staff that needed to change to this changing body of students. Of course, you could not say that you have to go along and hide yourself within the official story and yet subvert from within. I think it will always be a philosophy that I've worked with. So, go with the flow, but actually work below that to see what other changes you can introduce.

I recall, in one of those early days I was in my office. I heard a knock. It was already late afternoon. I wasn't expecting anyone.

A rather frustrated colleague entered. After a brief chitchat he said,

Colleague: You know Virginia, I've got a degree from Oxford

Virginia: Yes, that's really great. I'd love to hear more about it

Colleague: These people can't meet muster then they must just get out

Virginia: Let us talk more. You will recall the project I mentioned the other day....

We knew what he was alluding to wasn't going to happen, students, whoever they were actually needed some kind of support. So, we looked at that. What do I do with that particular individual? I gave him money to operate a project, and in those days, the project was academic literacy. So, he became the motivator and the champion of the writing process and because he had money and the money was going to be there for two or three years, it was very interesting to hear him change his 'tude. This, for me, is how we can subvert the process - can you draw people in, rather than attack them, rather than put them on the defensive, try and see if you can't coax people.

I would start with where they are and I try and find an interest that they've got or a problem that they've got, that they genuinely want to deal with. I go back to this story; "I'm not a writing expert, they don't know how to write, they shouldn't be here".

Carrot! Find a carrot. People, and ourselves included, we like to have our egos massaged, we like to feel we're the centre, we like to feel we're being clever, so pander to it. Try and draw them in, try and hook them in some way.

Right from the beginning, the notion of academic, or educational development or professional development [or academic staff development]⁴², was not something academics would associate with. Because they saw themselves as already trained, they were experts in their field, they were the discipline experts. They saw these little upstarts who were really, being on the outside, being outside the castle walls. Being on the periphery was always our position. This, I believe, had an impact on professional development. Actually, it was not called professional development - you dared not even say the words staff development or professional development without causing huge ire in your spaces. Because these were academics, they knew what they were doing, that's what they'd been appointed for, how dare we tell them anything else, particularly when there'd been there for a long time, they saw themselves as, well, entrenched and they knew what they were doing.

⁴² Throughout her narration, Virginia uses the term 'professional development', which is often used interchangeably by many for 'academic staff development'.

And to a certain extent I have some sympathy with that, but, unfortunately for them, the student body was changing and changed very quickly. You're no longer getting the young lads from Kearsney College⁴³ or wherever. They were now getting a huge mix and as you open the doors to university and as you massify, you actually do become a little less elite. You have to take account of the fact that you have a multiple sense of abilities, of ambitions, of knowledge in your class and differences that you have to take account of and you can no longer simply be just the discipline expert.

I think this area that we work in is very much an area of contestation, in so many ways. Practitioners in this area, I think so often felt on the back foot. I started in a position where we were expected to raise our own funds. I was lucky in the sense that my post was funded from funds found internally but many of my colleagues raised their own funding for their own positions. So, if they didn't find the funding they didn't have a post. We're like in the Cinderella⁴⁴ position, in the fact that you're often on soft funding. The funding is given grudgingly, if there are funding cuts, guess where it starts first.

I was lucky I was appointed to an academic post always. I've always been an academic but many of my colleagues have not been in an academic post, they've been seen as non-academic or administrative. That's also a death knell because now your academic staff look at you and say,

“Well... so you're coming to tell me what to do?”

“Who are you?”

“What do you know about it?”

The same was with positions. The level at which you were appointed was always an issue. I went straight from a tutor's position to a senior lecturer position. The position I was appointed to was a senior lecturer and it wasn't done on the basis of how many publications you've got and how much lecturing experience you have. It was about your experience in a whole range of other things. Not least of all was academic literacy for students because they really saw us as coming in to help staff support the students. It was a privilege to be given that senior

⁴³ Kearsney College is a private boarding, English medium high school for boys and reserved for the privileged and elite and predominantly attended by children from wealthy families

⁴⁴ Cinderella: the children's story book character

lecturer position, but it was so that you at least had a level of equity when you were talking to people, when you were organising things.

I didn't deal with the students directly. I was putting together projects to help students. And so, often it was a tutoring program, an additional tutoring program or similar. The reason it very quickly became staff development was my question to people,

"You've appointed this person, he may be a third-year student, so what does he know about teaching?"

"Nothing"

"What does he know about the program?"

"No, he's just been through the program."

So, that notion of because you've been through a programme you can teach the program.

You can't do that!

We began by running tutor training workshops and helping tutors, who really appreciated that because they were very much out of their depth, they were simply told that they had to go and train the new students. And so, they were just simply repeating whatever had happened to them.

My insistence was that it wasn't our job to train the tutors if they were in a discipline. Where were discipline experts and why were they teaching the way they were teaching? We were pushing them. So, the way to inveigle people into the process was to ask them to come run workshops for the tutors. While we put the project together, we invited them in as invited speakers.

For us in this field, it has also been a very lonely process, so for many of us, we've been appointed as individuals, in faculties, and you look around and quite often you have no support at all. There is a little team and you build teams. And, of course, even within your disciplines and your faculties, there are people who are more likely to support you. But is very much like the comrades runner⁴⁵; somebody hands you a drink of water and then you've left

⁴⁵ The Comrades Marathon is a long distance race that takes place annually in South Africa. Along the journey fellow runners and supporters support the runners, providing refreshments (water) or even support to complete the race <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/comrades-marathon#:~:text=noun,Often%20shortened%20to%3A%20the%20Comrades> <https://www.southafrica.net/gl/en/travel/article/the-comrades-marathon-making-friends-along-the-road>

them behind - they're not there constantly, that support is not a solid support. Therefore, I had relied much on developing partnerships. This has been crucial for our work.

Very similarly, a few years later, having already seen that we needed to go a much more formal route and beginning to think about HE as a discipline, which hadn't really been thought of in South Africa. It had in other areas of the world, but not in South Africa. We started a project where we started training supervisors for postgraduate study. Because we found ourselves once more on the back foot. Suddenly we had to supervise students. What did we do? We asked the more experienced senior staff members, or staff members who were retired, to come talk about their experiences in supervision and then we put the theory to that. That was how you bring people on board and they see themselves as part of the teaching team. Rather than you teaching them, but actually you're doing both. You're drawing from their expertise and their experiences but you're also allowing them to become more formalised with the theory by introducing that theory yourself, that they don't have it. That is professionalisation, not the credentialing that some folks are pushing, where everything becomes a compliance and people don't really want to be on courses when they are forced.

This literally I think forms a basis for my philosophy today,

I never style myself as an expert

I always say this is a conversation, and –

we share expertise..

And that I think came from our very first programme in higher education, which was a regional master's programme in higher education. It was the most amazing project I think I've ever been engaged in; it was also the scariest project I have ever been involved in.

I do believe that professional development really should be about support and supporting rather than blaming and attacking. That it's an ongoing thing and it takes time, though we don't have too much of it. Through my journey, I sometimes think I must be a very cussed person. Just, actually, sometimes grit your teeth and think well - I'm going to do this whether you like it or not; I'm going to do it. But also, I think, colleagues who resonate with me and who have been the same. I can think back to people, both within my own institution - few and far between - but also in other institutions. And I think that's where the programme came

from; we were a bunch of frustrated individuals getting together and going, well, let's try something new.

You may consider this a professional development programme and I thought it was quite an innovative project. It was a postgraduate programme in higher education. We got together from a few institutions in our area and decided we would offer the programme in HE studies. But we wanted to do it as an inter-institutional project because we could see, that we could draw on our own expertise, which is quite thin on the ground. It was taught by staff from different institutions. But it was interesting in that we decided that as facilitators, we were co-learners, we weren't teachers as such.

At the very beginning of a module, we sat down with students and we decided what it was that was challenging us in those areas. So, for us as facilitators, it put us very much on the hot because we then had to find a lot of materials, we in a sense had to bone up on what we thought would be useful readings. We asked our students to come with readings in the area and we invited guest speakers on certain topics.

We admitted that we were learning along the way, and that sometimes you have more knowledge than I do, as the facilitator. So, it really was taking that notion that you create an enabling environment in which learning can happen. You create a learning environment. And, I think that really, really stuck with me, so even when the project eventually died ... and it died only because the institution wouldn't support it anymore - people, politics and such played role. That has stuck with me and has really been the basis for my notion of staff development...that you never tell them, that they don't know, that they come as an empty slate. I think that's so vital as never to put people in that position because that's where the resistance comes from.

So, I get told, unless there are 10 or 15 or 20 people in your class... You don't offer it. That's the death of a discipline. That's where the death of things like classics et cetera came from, they didn't have sufficient numbers. Whether it's an important discipline or not, in terms of intellectual development, is a different ball game.

In our early days, ASD wasn't even on the agenda; our staff development people sat in Human Resources (HR) and they tried to run odd programs and do workshops et cetera. HR offered

some teaching and learning workshops and things that the institution particularly wanted, but as AD, we often ran workshops around curriculum, around teaching and learning. I've done workshops in all kinds of different ways; assessment workshops, teaching and learning workshops, supervision workshops, all of them. We knew that the workshop thing didn't really work. When you can't inveigle people into coming into a course, you offer them a lot of workshops. But, the issue with workshops is people quite often just see it as time out from their work, either it's annoying because they've got a lot of work to do or it's just a jol⁴⁶ and you come for the free tea.

It is really interesting thinking through our earlier days, that we had moments where things have really worked for us. So, as much as I really don't like the regulatory nature of the CHE and SAQA, they, because of their audits, have meant that you got to have a teaching and learning policy. And you've got to have an assessment policy, you've got to have a staff development policy - suddenly we're on the map. Yay! We have a label that we can work to. Even terrible things like performance management and key performance areas, the fact that people have to have a personal development plan, allows you a space to be able to step in there if you're quick and clever. And, so that propelled an interest in the workshops. I just think that for us, the field had a visibility that it didn't have before.

As we progressed through the years, we really began to think and question – are these doors of opportunities opening or closing for us? And I get a sense that it's all a balancing act and we've had to play this all the time. I feel it's the utility versus the intellectual that you're playing all the time. We're very much in education development, in professional development, playing that game. The mere shift from an intellectual engagement and a pursuit of knowledge to a utilitarian space, I think it's so undercut what we do.

And, when I talk in my workshops, because I run postgraduate supervision workshops, and I say to them, “if you're still trying to expect students to come in there with love of knowledge, aint going to happen”. In fact, the world is against that; students are being told to go and get a job. So, that discourse is entering very forcefully and if we're using a different discourse, we're shooting ourselves in the foot. Sometimes we're swimming against the tide, we are not necessarily what we say. If you're doing it from a genuine theoretical position is not always

⁴⁶ jol – a colloquial term - to make merry, 'party', have a good time
<https://dsae.co.za/entry/jol/e03506>

what's wanting to be and you're working within the constraints and the enabler. I think also it's about the issue of activism, it is about being the voice. I'm aware of it in myself. I'm not here to teach somebody to get a job. I'm here to teach somebody to be a critical, engaged thinker. Somebody who can challenge the status quo, they can argue whatever you'd like. Eventually, we managed to push and say we wanted the postgraduate programme, which was the first formal program for the university. We put together the courses and we looked at the modules that we wanted. It was very much what my colleague called a cafeteria approach. You go and you choose what you want from the menu.

Gradually, we worked our way into a more formal position and our posts also moved into the School of Education. Which of course was another debate. Do you want to be associated with the School of Education? There's always that debate because Schools of education, and I'm sorry to say that education is always looked on as one of those iffy subjects that anybody can do.

I think it is interesting that we've got a disciplinary home, even if it is in education. I think it's important that HE sees it as a discipline in its own right. It's not only about teaching and learning, but it's about people understanding that HE is a system that they fit into. It has both an academic bent but I think it will always have a key element of professional development within it. It's never going to be just an academic discipline. So, the disciplinary home I think is important because it does give us the theoretical base and it allows us to engage with academics on their level.

There are many things that influenced our roles, including having a disciplinary home. If you look at your own positions, you're not in a faculty, you're outside a faculty, you're outside of the structures but you're not administrative, or you're administrative but you're also academic. So, all of these things constantly play and I know it's different in different institutions. But, I think at some time we all face those similar differences and in the thirty years, I've been through it all. That you're a staff member teaching other staff members, but you're not the same...so...You're always in that awkward position. I think we are so multifaceted and we've been on this move, I'd say, for professional development. I think this about the field...I think our own job, our own identity within the institution, is so multifaceted, it just defies being fixed, neat, and clean cut. You're not a neat square and you're not a neat

circle. Think of a hexagon – multiple sides, multiple facets. A hexagon can squish and become difficult...hahaha.

When the restructuring occurred at the university [in 2012] we were moved to the teaching and learning development unit, offering a compulsory course that the university mandated, but we continued teaching in the postgraduate programmes.

Here we are now...six years later....
in our current situation and
we're back to being disassembled.

So, the power is being undercut because it's being moved to different spaces and different places. We can lose an identity very quickly. It all depends on how you got the power, and who you've got behind you and if that power changes, you can very quickly find yourself in a very different situation – as we have.

AD or education development needed a Knight, a champion and quite often that champion sat in that Deputy Vice Chancellor's office. Those people very often really didn't have an educational background. In this sense, not a formal education background. So they didn't understand education as a discipline. But, if you don't understand what it is you're dabbling in sometimes you do the wrong things. And so, I think very often, the institutional pressures for “fly the flagship” becomes what is financially viable, what are the flavours of the day...and...and... and... I find it very difficult to work with this notion of branding and of having mission statements because I think they're a lot of window dressing. And we in HE play to the window dressing and it's a façade and it's a dangerous façade, because we forget what's real behind it. And so, very often, I think particularly now, there's a lot of lip service given to teaching and learning. “Teaching and learning have to be at the forefront” - because that's very much in the international and national policy documents. But actually, the old pulling between research and what the institution wants to spend money on and really wants to do in teaching and learning and what it thinks teaching and learning is all about, are very much at odds with one another.

And so, who's leading that role becomes important for academic development. Who makes the decisions and who has the power? So, you might think you're in a position that's good and

solid. It can change overnight, just depends. I suppose that's true of any discipline, but most disciplines have a power basis and I'm not sure that AD or professional or staff development has.

The regional collaboration, which we tried out years ago, has really been a highlight of my 30-year journey in professional development and a rebirth of a similar approach would be useful. I think you spread things very thinly on the ground and academic staff are busy, so they're only going to come in, in small numbers, whether workshops or more formalised postgraduate programmes. I also think that a discussion betwixt and between different kinds of institutions, different staff and different spaces is really enriching. I think as practitioners ourselves, it would give us a much better mass, as it were. We would be the support for each other. If you want a critical mass, that's what you have to do.

*“I think it's a deep psychological, emotional, effective support as well as support in classrooms”
Virginia*

5.2.4. Sue

“I believe in democratising education”

Professionally, I was not in the field of academic staff development; this is not my field of profession, which I started off with. I joined the university in 1999; I was in the health sciences. I realised that for me to progress into academia, I needed to update my own or develop my own qualifications. At that time when I joined, I just had an honours. I thought that I needed to skill myself to be able to lecture at a university level and to lecture to university students. So, in the year 2000, I registered for the postgraduate diploma in higher education, which was my first teaching qualification. This gave me the foundational knowledge that I required to practice as a teacher at the university. I really enjoyed undertaking those modules and I related the assessments and so on to what I was doing at my department. I immediately went on to do the master's in HE and I graduated, cum laude, with my master's. I immediately went on to do a Ph.D. in higher education. So, although staff development or ASD wasn't a requirement for me, I took it upon myself to upgrade myself. I just fell into the same staff development kind of cycle, being a student in this program and having an interest in developing myself as a university staff member.

One day I received a call,

“So, having gone through the modules and gone through the qualifications at the honours, master's and PhD, why don't you now move over from health sciences to this and rightfully take on your place, since you're the only person that has done all the courses. There is a vacancy in the Teaching and Learning Development unit, so why don't you apply for that? Or can't we second you into that position?”

I was approached by the DVC Teaching and Learning at that time, who asked if I would prefer to, having now done a Ph.D. in higher education, want to work in this area. I thought it was exciting. It would be a new opportunity for me to progress and eventually get my professorship in the discipline of HE studies rather than remain in health sciences with a limited number of students for supervision and research

So, I agreed and took it up in 2014, I taught in the postgraduate diploma in higher education, master's and PhD programmes and I was also tasked with leading this compulsory university-wide staff development programme. I've been part of the unit then from 2014 to current, well

now that we are not a unit anymore we are, now, been integrated into the School of Education within the discipline of HE studies.

In 2012 there was a re-organisation of the university structures and a Teaching and Learning sector was formed as part of the DVC Teaching and Learning's portfolio. This created the Teaching and Learning development sub unit that was tasked with facilitating a compulsory programme. We were also teaching in other educational programmes; Postgraduate diploma in HE and master's and PhD in education and were part of the School of Education. And some of us were transferred into this Teaching and Learning subunit. This arrangement lasted five years. There was a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this regard. I had no idea about this arrangement and that it was a time-bound one when I was appointed in 2014. And so we had to move back to the School of Education upon its termination. Our staff at the university did not know that such a teaching and learning unit at the university existed, except if they were interested in postgraduate education programmes.

Prior to 2014, the university had put out a policy that ALL staff at lecturer or up to senior lecturer level had to complete the mandatory staff development programme that consisted of four modules, as part of their performance management processes. To date, we've trained about 700 staff across the university who have done all four modules successfully. Currently [2019] it's being offered as an AD program, but it's not as mandatory as it was. It's mandatory now for new staff as part of their induction to the university, but in terms of existing staff, they're not going to be held to ransom to say, you haven't done it. This was the vision of the DVC Teaching and Learning where they, at that level the DVCs believed that all academics should actually have some basic knowledge of education principles. And, be inducted in education theory and be aware of the literature and to have an opportunity to critically engage or to critically reflect on their practices as university teachers. So, in terms of teaching and learning, assessing learning, supervising research in HE and curriculum design. It was an opportunity then for staff to critically reflect on their current practices. That's what the modules aimed at doing; giving them an opportunity to reflect critically on their current practice. But, also to possibly induct them on theories of teaching and learning, theories of curriculum, theories of assessment. Where they are not engaged in these theories previously, because as a requirement to be a university lecturer you are required to have a master's or a Ph.D. in that discipline and not necessarily have any educational qualifications.

So, I think that was the rationale for offering and making the staff development programme mandatory at that stage and then international trends and even nationally, I think, institutions were moving to creating some compulsory HE modules to be able to equip staff to deal with the current teaching and learning practices at university. Because fingers were too quick to blame the students. It's either the students are bad, or the curriculum is weak and not covering things, but little did they realise that the lecturers themselves were not trained to be able to transfer the knowledge that's required, in their own disciplines. So, you can be the head of neurology or neurosurgery, but it doesn't mean that you can teach that to medical students or whatever the context is.

But that thinking has changed now. Leadership within the DVC Teaching and Learning changed. The acting person [DVC] took it upon himself and had meetings to say that the course is not necessary or mandatory for all staff. The performance agreement then changed. So, we have a business arm of the university, they offer all short courses to staff but also the public. This programme was facilitated through this entity. They do the admin; we teach the modules. So now it's only compulsory for brand new lecturers. Our jobs have changed too. Previously, we were part of a Teaching and Learning development unit and were mandated to offer this programme. Now that we have been transferred into the School of Education, we don't have to teach these modules, but have been invited to as we had done so previously.

People did have negative perceptions of this compulsory programme, but from our evaluations, I must say that every single course that was run, we were receiving like 90% positive evaluations.

But when they engaged with the facilitators and with the material, then they themselves realised the benefits. Being mandatory, the first day of the course, even as a facilitator, you'll see like 30, 40 of them sitting there, glum, like somebody has just forced them to spend three days in this particular course against their wishes. As you engage with them, they realise it is quite a unique space because you're meeting with lecturers from different parts of the university, different disciplines. And, it's the only opportunity really to get to know people, to network, to identify with issues, similar issues that they are experiencing at the grass-roots level, in the lecture room, because there's no time for sharing those experiences. Who you going to share that with, except for your close colleagues that you're working with?

I facilitated the assessment module of this compulsory programme at the university. Here there were like 30 or 40 people from across the university also coming with similar experiences of dealing with students, large classes and assessment practices, having policies where they've got to mark 200 essays and be able to give it back quickly. They don't even have a proper committee structure within their own disciplines to set assessments, to discuss issues of feedback, discuss issues of innovative teaching and learning practices. There's nothing in the disciplines and in the schools.

Previously we had an undergraduate committee that looked after the undergraduate programmes and as part of the undergraduate committee, you would discuss teaching and learning issues. So, there was like, you know, a committee structure that looked at curriculum issues, teaching and learning issues in the classroom. We did away with this structure in 2012 when we became the college model and it became schools and disciplines with teaching and learning committees which were made up of academic leaders for teaching and learning. The business of the day was more administrative and didn't deal with real teaching and learning issues that the lecturers were facing on the cold face. As a result, there was a distance to the teaching practice at the university and then this 'compulsory' programme came about and that was like the only kind of platform where lecturers were given an opportunity to share their experiences and vent. The modules were assessed with a portfolio, and I think it was a cathartic moment for them when I assessed those portfolios. You could see that they are reflecting on their practice and it's an opportunity for them to vent and narrate their stories and somebody's reading it, somebody's listening to it and critiquing and hopefully this person who's reading it can take up their cause.

So yes, they have been a bit dismayed when they start but there is certainly a shift. The way that I organise my courses is that I ask them about 10 to 12 personal questions at the beginning. By the first hour or so, they are so totally relaxed and they're in like a safe space. The rest of the module is a breeze because they want to engage, they want to learn about these theories, they want to know what literature is available in terms of innovative teaching methods. I come from a feminist background and I believe in a democratic classroom and a democratic space. So, wherever I go, issues of power and control are something I'm very aware of and I want to extinguish those immediately. I really believe strongly in feminist pedagogy and the whole notion of democratizing education. I prefer a flat structure.

Regardless of whom I'm interacting with, the structure is flat, and we are learning together and we're shaping that space with everything that we know and we have experienced. So, the centre of the conversation will be the experience of the participants in that space. I make it overt that that's my philosophy. I flatten the space so immediately whomever I'm working with, they understand that I am privileging their experience and using their experience as the start. We are in the game of knowledge production together so when we leave the space, then all of us would have been equal participants in the knowledge production agenda. I would have learned as much from them as they would have learned from me in this very sharing and caring model.

Staff development happens in little pockets across the university. I've participated and facilitated a number of sessions on various aspects when invited. These especially when there are changes happening, e.g. when the medical school is changing to problem-based learning, they needed guidance.

Currently, it's not organised, and it's left to people, as they see the need. I don't know whether it becomes a requirement at the school level to say there must be so many staff development workshops. And then, who's to follow it through? And, you see the academic leader for teaching and learning at a school level has got so much administrative burden that you cannot ask that academic leader, although they are called the academic leader of teaching and learning.

What does that mean: Academic-leader-of-teaching-and-learning? ACADEMIC LEADER?

[Emphasising]ACADEMIC.....leader-of-teaching-and-learning should be the person that is responsible for the teaching and learning engagement in that particular school. But, that's not it, they're not looking after the teaching and learning integrity. They do all the administrative, performance management, dealing with all the rules and policies about the qualifications. They're not dealing with the individual lecturers and what they are going through in terms of their teaching and learning and their assessments.

I'll tell you....that title is wrong. They are not leading academically

They [are required to] lead administratively

And then, you get cluster leaders who are responsible for the cognate disciplines that make up a cluster. Even their function is more administrative line management function, but they're not interested in your story as a lecturer; you're dealing with 500 students, and what should be my role as a lecturer, and how should I be teaching, and how should I be assessing, and how should I be looking at my curriculum? They are not interested in those aspects, they're interested in the administrative aspect of how many students are passing and failing and the admin issues around it.

Nobody is interested in that lecturer who's got a class, who is just coming with his Ph.D. in engineering, and he's thrown into a class with 500 students doing engineering. Then we have this compulsory staff development programme for lecturers.

From my experience, the power was contained at management structures where even this staff development programme became a mandatory thing. The institution is asserting its power and saying it is a mandatory module and within this time frame, all the lecturers have to be able to take these modules; otherwise they're not getting their performance management points.

Although this programme has got this power where it's being imposed from up but, yet you are asking the lecturers and giving them the power to critically reflect on their practice and giving them the power to shape that practice with the theory and the literature.

And our staff members tell us,

“Although we thought that the power to do this was imposed on us but we are leaving this now, more powerful than the institution itself, because we've grown in terms of own knowledge and knowledge production related to teaching and learning.”

It's that balancing act and that is why I believe that it shouldn't be ultimately controlled at the top. Every single level or layer of this institution should have staff developers integrated into the practice.

The staff developers are not people of power; they are not people in authority to say I'm teaching you how to teach. There shouldn't be that power. It should be about democratising that education space where I have some experience in teaching and I've gained some knowledge in the qualifications that I've taken in terms of HE qualifications. Can we share,

let's talk about how the practice is in reality, in terms of how can I help you or assist you in like some evidence-based practice of teaching and learning when it comes to your discipline or your school.

It's important that people understand that there are no silos. It's about being transdisciplinary.

Staff development is trans-disciplinary.
When you're going into the discipline, you're transforming
that discipline.

When that discipline knowledge is coming into staff development, it's transforming
staff development;
that's the whole notion of a trans-disciplinary agenda.

So, the knowledge is trans-disciplinary knowledge, it's not even inter-disciplinary. Because inter-disciplinary means that you are drawing on methods and theories from one, and you meeting it, and there's like a common space.

I'm saying it's trans, because it's transforming each discipline, whether HE is seen as a discipline, and professional development is located within that discipline. The discipline of engineering or science or whatever it may be - it's a transdisciplinary process because when I take theories and methods of HE into the discipline of engineering or accounting or whatever, it must be transformed in some way and vice versa. So, you leave both, when you're leaving the space you transformed both as a discipline expert in engineering and you transformed as a discipline expert in HE when you are dealing with the staff.

My vision for staff development is that we should have an overarching staff development programme. But it then needs to be filtered into the colleges and into the schools and into the disciplines to continue the process of staff development. There should be an operational link to the DVC Teaching and Learning reporting somehow to a university teaching and learning office, like a dotted line function. But, should be based like in disciplines, in schools, in colleges, and across the university. My broad vision of staff development is for it to be filtered in and integrated into the micro, macro, exo, systemic level and be able to get through the cracks and the crevices in an organised way. The staff developers should be designing current and relevant programmes, workshops to enhance the skills of lecturers. The literature is showing that to be a lecturer you just need your master's or Ph.D. in your discipline and yet

to be a school teacher you got to do a four-year B.Ed.⁴⁷ degree, before you are let loose in a classroom. Here, you are, the first time you go into a lecture room with 500 kids after you finish your master's or Ph.D., you have had no teaching practice, nothing, nobody has observed you. And you're going in cold face, and you're facing a diverse student body: not only race, class, gender, religious backgrounds, political affiliation, a massified diverse student body but also more recent issues around decolonising the curriculum and higher education. You don't consider all that, but you go into the classroom wearing your own hats, with your own philosophy. Therefore, a concerted effort is needed, given that teaching and learning are the business or the order of the day, is going to get lost.

Teaching and learning always came second to research and even the way the universities in South Africa are structured – and this university – a research led university.

[Emphasis]...just by the fact that it's a RESEARCH-led-university puts research on top of teaching and learning. But, I can't see that separation. It's about identity formation. So, when you call yourself an academic, what is your identity? If you ask some people, they say I'm a researcher, I'm not a teacher!!!!

I think a centre of excellence that deals with aspects of staff mentoring, tutor training, and continuous professional development is required in terms of housing, or formulating a hub of research and teaching and learning. It must be seen as an integral centre in the middle of the different schools and colleges and not on top of anything. Not something that's going to have any hierarchical power and control of anybody. So, within this centre of excellence, there can be research... scholarship of teaching and learning in engineering, scholarship of teaching and learning in agriculture and so on...but that there is a need I think for a centre of excellence, when it comes to ASD and scholarship of teaching and learning.

⁴⁷ B.Ed: Bachelor of Education degree, a compulsory qualification for schoolteachers

5.2.5. Bongani

“All this legitimacy that comes from policy....comes with a catch”

Let me start by explaining my lived experience of academic staff development. I will use the example of cars waiting at the robot and people crossing at the pedestrian lines...as in my picture⁴⁸. You see the three cars and then you see the pathway there, you see people walking and so on, but you see order, isn't it? These cars are stopped, people are going to cross, this one has stopped but you also see kind of an order. And, in fact, that's how I look at or how other disciplines within the university, in general, tend to look at most disciplines as this; as organised, as, you know and so on. But, that's not the best perception they have of academic staff development.

So, other academics will see, okay, we in physics, we are sociologists, we are so-and-so, whatever we are, they have this understanding that their disciplines are ordered. We don't get that in academic development. ASD seems to be something that is always an additive.

I came here in 2014. But before that, the DVC of Teaching and Learning, decided to bring academic staff developers, whatever we're called, infuse us within the School of Education but attach us to the Teaching and learning office, which was within the portfolio of the DVC Teaching and Learning. And, when you look at it really, it tells you quite a lot. It tells you issues that deal with power. It tells you about issues that, probably, the DVC was looking for legitimacy. But, in fact, if these people come from the School of Education they might even be less and less respected, as opposed to when they're coming from a DVC teaching and learning office.

So, we have had to combine our jobs. You're employed as a senior lecturer in higher education, it means you can run your courses, the traditional courses, as in Postgraduate diploma in higher education, master's in higher education, Ph.D. in higher education. But, then you also do staff development, university wide staff academic development. I think that was in a way to try to legitimise the whole thing.

Something that has happened at this university and I think most universities also, is about policies. We begin to see that there's so many policies. Government policy for example, that

⁴⁸ Bongani was one of two participants that submitted a visual representation prior to his interview – see Appendix 15 for the visual

actually encourages academic development. Although there is resistance, although it seems like AD is an additive, although it seems like an extra load, universities are beginning to actually develop AD because it is supported by the policy arena.

Of course, it's very interesting that the policy arena is anchored by several discourses on its own. The policies are probably informed by either the student or staff deficit and you'd hear... 'we need staff who can teach properly' or 'the students who are coming to the universities are not prepared yet'. So you have these discourses of underpreparedness. Therefore, we need staff to really know how to handle underpreparedness. And, then in South Africa, very interesting, this has been intertwined with all these issues of access, equitable access, oh epistemological access and, of course recently, serious issues to deal with decolonization. Now, this is very interesting for us as academic staff developers in SA because what it means is that the university, whoever it is, although we are seen as peripheral in some ways they expect answers from us.

But...and here it is. Unfortunately, most of the answers they expect from us are quick-fix answers. And that for me, is where the problems come in for academic staff development. Here's an example. In staff development, I'm mostly involved in issues to deal with curricula. I facilitate a module on curriculum that is part of the university programme for new academics. I focus on how to design curricula in higher education, how to evaluate curricula in HE and so on. There are many debates on decoloniality, decolonisation of the curriculum. People think that I can stand there and just give them quick fixes on how curriculum should be decolonised. I know as an academic that that's not true because these are complex issues, these are issues that need a lot of reflection. You cannot just go to staff members and say: Oh, you're doing physics, you do this; you decolonise, you do this; you decolonise. And, that's wrong!!!!

You see, these are kind of the expectations that they will expect you to do and if you don't do it, then you probably don't know your job. You then begin to see that academic developers begin to feel this hopelessness or this worthlessness, because we are probably viewed as people who just work in a positivist, quick-fix, measurable way. And so, people can usually say: "No but, you see, we have been talking about decolonisation, nothing is decolonising here". Why? Because academic staff developers have done the quick-fix!!!!!! That's a

problem and so you begin to feel, of course, overwhelmed, because obviously you can't, do quick-fixes. All these things are very stressful. It's very stressful because sometimes you start thinking; why am I in this space? Why should I be in this space when I know what I am.

And so here's another example, I remember when I started, having this conversation with a colleague.

Colleague X: You know this is ASD so no theories, no theories, you just go there and tell them what to do.

Bongani: This is a problem, the curriculum itself is a theoretical issue. There is no way I can go there and talk about curriculum without talking about the historicity of curriculum or about changing of this curriculum, without considering how different theoretical standpoints will influence what kind of curriculum.

Colleague X: Our staff are not interested in that.

I cannot be reduced to a technician who just has to tell people little shallow things in the name of academic staff development.

So my unit was a teaching and learning development unit, which was mandated to do staff development. This was essentially through a policy from the DVC Teaching and Learning that stated you must attend.

[Emphasising in louder voice]: the policy states you HAVE to do this. Hence this resistance.

There was a lot of resistance from academics because they didn't understand why they should participate in academic staff development. A lot of AD is seen as extra load, something that is always an additive. We would not even start and you would hear them say:

'Why should we do it?'

'I am a physicist',

'I'm a chemist....I am whatever'.

'Why are we here? Why do you guys want us to be in your classes?'

'We are mathematicians',

'Oh, you should go and tell your DVC.....we don't want this'.

So, they feel that in their own field which looks orderly, they don't need someone to disturb that order. And, in fact, that's how I look at or how other disciplines within the university are - as organised. But, that's not the best perception they have of academic staff development. So, other academics will see, okay, we in physics, we are sociologists, we are so-and-so, whatever we are, they have this understanding that their disciplines are ordered.

We don't get that in academic development. In fact, the whole perception is fallacious.

They see themselves as experts in their fields. It changes with time, but most of them don't see the need for ASD in the first place. But it's a surprise that once people have gone through the courses, you begin to see a different picture. You begin to see people being happy, you begin to see people, seeing the relevance of what you do and you begin to see people coming, writing to you saying: "Oh, Dr B... I attended your curriculum course, your induction course and so on and I want you to come and do the similar thing in my department in law because I think even my dean needs this."

So we've experienced it, that staff development is seen as an additive; something not required. And therefore, if the government said: We're not giving any money for staff development - this will just completely die because, we are doing it because probably the government says it, sees the relevance of it. Unfortunately, the way the government sees the relevance of it is not necessarily the way I as an academic look at it. The government probably looks at the relevance of staff development very much as something in the neoliberal sense. As something in terms of achieving the knowledge, your knowledge economy. And therefore, seeing that the funding and those issues are all enveloped in all this. What happens is; if we have better academics who can probably understand the unpreparedness of students or whatever, then we can have better throughput, and all that. So, it's all intertwined within the neoliberal thought of view and I think to me that's problematic because then we begin to do the numbers.

We have seen how we have begun to do the numbers...

I have always been amazed to see colleagues say they are supervising 20, 25 Ph.D.s

Knowledge production, no!

It's a joke.

I seriously think that AD has lost direction. Seriously!

People in power tend to use power and,
connive or collude with the policies, that simply
want quick-fixes

But, at the end of the day
we might actually be doing a
disservice to the nation and, a
disservice to global knowledge

production;

We need to seriously rethink the direction of
academic staff development. Especially in terms of -
who do we involve in the debates?

Are we really going to continue taking higher education, staff development simply?
as an additive

to the so-called ordered disciplines?

Are we going to be able to pursue this as a serious discipline on its own?

We need these debates.

We know that many of the debates are not just national but have been framed globally. These are very global discourses that are at play at universities. Literature does say the importance of people understanding, for example, theories of learning, for them to be able to teach. There is a lot of global literature, there is a lot of scholarship that tells you that there is a need for people to be able to understand pedagogical issues, for people to understand the context in which they're working. So, they need to understand the policies. Understand how policy gets propelled, especially how it gets propelled as discourse.

While I do agree that in fact we do need such kind of things, my only problem is if that need is reduced to neoliberal positioning, then it defeats the purpose of staff academic development.

Much of my work is in critical theory and this really worries me. The whole structure of the university has to change. I mean it. If our universities are still going to position vice-chancellors

as chief executives, nothing will change. Because our vice-chancellors are chief executives, they really have very little time for academic work. They have very little time to enhance quality, they have time to look for funding, they have time to look for how many Ph.D.'s the university is making, they are out there to talk about rankings of the university. The whole idea of the university being an industrial kind of entity, to me it's totally wrong.

Secondly, it's not just the structure, it's the whole mentality of, for example, like government. Because how does it fund? The whole funding formula, encourages, in my view, mediocrity. I was at a conference recently, a Quality Assurance conference. I met a professor there who was talking about how SA has put in its policy to have so many number of Ph.D. at a particular time and how that is great and glamorous.

And I just thought ... same policy that is probably bringing mediocrity in South Africa. We are churning numbers. It tells you how we have diluted knowledge production.

What's really interesting is how this played out at this university. So, every time there is a new referee, the instructions change. That's the biggest problem we have in academic staff development. What's happening is the DVC's Teaching and Learning or directors of teaching and learning, usually have varied, views about teaching and learning and about staff development and each one of them will propel you to what they think. Now, what is the danger with that? The danger for me is that most of the DVCs here probably have not even done a degree in education. But they don't understand it, they are very powerful, they listen to the discourses that are out there in the national or global space and they say: "Okay, fine, this is how we're going to do it." We [higher education] should be thinking about involving people who know the field, who read about the field, who are interested in developing the field and not necessarily because somebody is powerful. So, what's happening here because these policies tend to be enacted mostly by the DVC Teaching and Learning offices, we get a flavour of staff development that comes from the DVCs.

So, when I joined here in 2014, I joined this teaching and learning development unit and our focus in addition to teaching on the formal courses, was academic staff development. Our DVC Teaching and Learning at the time was very strong in academia, who knew what needed to be achieved and would defend a position and say why we are doing particular things in particular ways, and that just stopped when the DVC left the university.

And then we begin to hear discourses that say, 'these people are useless', 'can we move them out because we don't see their relevance', or 'put them back to the School of Education.'

If the discipline of academic [staff] development is not well developed, anybody else thinks that they fit in there, in one way or the other. That's the major problem I see for academic staff development. It's people who have power that really want to influence the discipline and unfortunately, most of them really don't have the knowledge that is actually really required to lead.

I think there is a lot that you need to assist academics. But the way the whole setup was, I think there was no flexibility and it was a lot of work. We had to do the staff development, at the same time, run our normal courses; PGDip, master's, PhD. Lot of students who actually enrol in these are academics. When you look at the PGDip, it's staff development. Some universities put a policy in there that you can't get promoted unless you have a PGDip in higher education. This has more legitimacy because it's a full-blown course. It has gone through the process like accreditation. And these students will get qualifications as opposed to a certificate of attendance from attending a short course or module.

So, our courses that we do are basically staff development. Because we are dealing with people who are going to teach to work in the university. And, they need that development. But, you'll see that in terms of discourse, some people will not accept it. They'll say no-no-no, I'm not a staff academic developer and so on. And, they say: Oh. All because of the negativity that surrounds the field. So, people think if you say you're an academic developer or staff developer, then you are lesser than a lecturer. This plays around in people's thoughts and yet what they're doing is basically doing great work in terms of developing staff. So, it's a very interesting thing, how we can get caught up by the discourse and think in particular ways and think we are little, because people say so.

We have lost the idea of knowledge as knowledge... And therefore, when you come with academic development, they also want to see what your boundaries are, where are your boundaries? And, it's very difficult to bring those boundaries I think, because the nature of the job is that we deal with people from different backgrounds and therefore we have to know several other things and we draw from multiple disciplines.

So, it's the whole traditional understanding of discipline that in fact, fallaciously makes the field here feel less important. It's ideological, it's very ideological. Because it's a bit loose, everybody else feels they can just encroach on this field. And, encroach it with very, sometimes with very mediocre background or understanding of things that matter in higher education. And so, we are being judged to say: Can you show us your strict boundaries, where are your strict boundaries?

Then, somebody who has been put here, who is probably, he studied entomology, or whatever and then he thinks he's in power and therefore he's now going to tell you what you need to be doing here. And, if you say: But this is it... No-no-no-no-no, if that's the case, then probably find another university. So, it's power.

So as a field of academic development, staff development, we need to nurture and support each other. What we need, I think, is to do a little bit more of collaboration amongst universities with people who are working with staff. I think we need a lot of interaction, regional collaborations.

If we don't do that, then nobody will recognise us, nobody. One of our other major problems is that we work as silos. When there is a force that has come from people who call themselves staff, or academic developers and in their own university, they share the experiences and they're producing knowledge that is shaping the universities, then something will happen! And it will assist us to be able to understand what could be the steps that could be taken, what kind of agency could we do to be able to, bring some legitimacy that comes from within, in terms of staff development. Because all this legitimacy that comes from policy, comes with a catch. It comes with quick fix understanding.

We know that you need more substantial legitimacy that must come from the field itself.

5.3. Synthesis

In this chapter, I have presented the narratives about ASD at University A, the first of three university case studies. In chapter 6, I will present University B and C narratives. These descriptive level analyses of the field of ASD present the multiplicity of forces, which will be further diffracted in chapter 7 to reflect the relational nature of these multiple forces -- the discursive and the material -- and how they work to produce ASD at the universities.

In this chapter, the narrative explorations reveal that ASD within the institutional context of the research-intensive university remains a complex and evolving field with marginal status that is struggling to establish legitimacy while it works to transform university learning and teaching practices. While the challenges highlighted resistance from discipline-specific academics and neoliberal pressures prioritising quantitative metrics and quick fixes to complex educational issues, the narratives also demonstrate ASD practitioners who are committed to supporting academics' pedagogical growth and not merely imposing technical solutions.

In the next chapter, I present the narratives of Universities B and C.

CHAPTER 6

NARRATIVE ASSEMBLAGES – UNIVERSITY B AND C

Narrativising the experiences of academic staff developers

6.1. Introduction and Overview

In Chapter Five, I presented the narratives of four participants from one university, a Traditional/ research-intensive university. In this chapter, I present the narratives of participants from two further university contexts, a University of Technology and a Comprehensive University. In chapter 4, I presented the Café Dialogues that highlighted the varying conceptions of ASD in a changing HE context. This constituted the first data set and was presented as conversational dialogues between key contributors, mainly AD pioneers and me. In chapters Five and Six, I zoom into three varying university contexts and present the narratives of academic staff developers and managers of teaching and learning centres/ units. This is the second data set and presents the narratives of eight individuals from three universities. In this chapter, I focus on University B and C.

In each of the university contexts, there are two protagonists. University B includes the narratives of the Senior Director and Deputy Director and in University C, we hear from the Director and staff developer.

As with Chapter Five, the narratives centre around participants' background and entry in AD/ ASD and their philosophical underpinnings, the structural context, the mandate, scope and role of AD/ASD, the various iterations of ASD, and the multiple forces that have influenced and shaped it. Each narrative presents snippets of nuanced accounts in the days and lives of academic staff developers and the non-human actors with whom they engage.

6.2. Assemblage B - University B

6.2.1. Institutional Context

University B is referred to as a University of Technology according to South Africa's university differentiation categories. University B may be regarded as a peri-urban⁴⁹ university located in one of South Africa's large metropolitan cities.

An examination of institutional documents, audit and other reports, strategic plans and policies and guidelines has provided insights into the university's attempts to develop capacity and promote excellence in teaching through a dedicated teaching and learning centre where the professionalisation of teaching is emphasised and supported through a range of professional development support. This includes a teaching and learning conference that is gaining national recognition as well as growing support for the scholarship of teaching and learning.

In this chapter, we first focus on University B, where two distinct voices offer their perspectives. They are introduced below, each followed by a powerful quote that encapsulates a core belief or experience from their narrative.

Two Protagonists

Vusi: The Architect of Influence

Vusi, a Senior Director of a Teaching and Learning centre, embodies a strategic philosophy, *"Work hard in silence, let success make the noise"*

He keenly understands

"The dynamics of how universities function
how university structures function
how to leverage on that."

His approach has been consistent:

I've never failed to behave and act like an academic in the institution, and getting closer to what academics do

⁴⁹ Peri-urban are areas located between urban and rural areas and usually on the outskirts of major cities

Sipho: The Advocate for Cultural Shift

Sipho, deputy director of Staff Professional development, sees his role as fundamental:

“Staff development is about capacitating”

His powerful call to action echoes:

“We need to change the culture!

We need to change the culture!”

He warns against superficial engagement:

“Compliance, surface learning will not assist anyone

it would not assist the system,

it would not assist the university,

it would not assist the teacher, the student, the industry.

Or society at large”

6.2.2. Vusi

“Work hard in silence, let success make the noise”

I arrived a bit early and waited in his secretary’s office for Vusi to start our meeting. Vusi is the Senior Director of the Teaching and learning centre at his university. I knew that it was a really hectic week for him already. He was hosting a major teaching and learning colloquium/ conference the next day. Having hosted and convened many conferences, I knew exactly how much work it entails and just how stressful it can be. Yet, he made time to meet with me.

As I waited there seated on the light brown chair on this really hot day in January, in the secretary’s office, these words in the pinboard caught my attention, ‘Work hard in silence, let success make the noise’. There are no author details, but the words are indeed profound. As I would usually do when I come across something profound, I make a note of it in my Notes app on my cellphone and then I tried to Google it to find out who the author was. By that time, Vusi came in and asked me to join him in his office. He was calm, I thought to myself, for someone who was hosting such a large conference the next day.

I asked Vusi if that was his philosophy...

This is my philosophy. We do a lot of work. We don’t make a lot of noise. But we do a lot of work, which is impossible to ignore. You will not always get people who support you. There

will always be detractors. But they can't say much because our work speaks for itself. Now, what we have done is grow small from our professional development interventions and put them on a national platform, like we do with our colloquium that we host annually. Tomorrow we are hosting the Teaching and Learning Colloquium and I'm having more than 15 universities attending. Those who attend, that's another source of third-stream income for us. And, when that money comes, the university is fascinated because no other unit is able to do what we do or even raise the amount of money that we raise for the university.

We are a Teaching and Learning centre and we have a dedicated unit for staff professional development. There was a vacuum at the institution on staff professional development, that function was happening in an ad hoc way and there was no structure in the institution to coordinate professional development. Mostly in the past, the professional development was done by Human Resources (HR) in the absence of any kind of structure to support academics. Staff would approach HR in cases when they needed funding to attend certain courses and to attend workshops and seminars and conferences. But then, all of that was just happening, all over the place, in an ad hoc way and it was not coordinated, and it did not follow a particular line of thinking in terms of why we are doing this and who the target is of this? So, it was just done to anybody who was asking for it at any time. It was uncoordinated until our 2011 institutional audit, which identified that as a gap and subsequently recommended the establishment of a teaching and learning centre whose responsibility, among others was supposed to be staff professional development. That is how we then moved from that part where HR was mainly responsible for this and that function was now located in the teaching and learning development centre, that's how it evolved.

How this happens now is, on an annual basis, we send out a needs analysis request to all departments and to all individual staff members to indicate to us what it is that they would like to be developed in, in the given year. And, what skills profile they have and what skills do they like to acquire et cetera. Based on the requests that we receive, we then compile our response in terms of okay, this is what we will do, especially if you realise that there is a need which has been identified by several staff members. We then attend to that. But over and above that, as a centre, there are also areas which we focus on. Well, not so much because we just want to focus on them, but because we also are connected to what happens nationally and internationally. We are the ears and the eyes of the university as far as understanding,

scanning the HE landscape, the dynamics of the landscape and what is current, what is topical. Then we focus on those issues and expose our staff to those without them having to say: This is what we need. We suss it out and we say, given the current national discourse on these issues, we feel we need to occupy this space as well. Be it on legislation or on just national topics like decolonisation et cetera, we don't wait to receive requests on those. We just get into the area and we provide an opportunity for staff to be exposed to such discourses. So, in a sense, our development interventions are informed by staff themselves, but they are also informed by our awareness of our national and international context as far as teaching and learning in HE are concerned.

The approach we took was not a stick approach to say, you have to do this. We create the need for people; people have to see the need for them to do that. So, I speak to them in various environments, either in faculty boards or in the senate. And, I make people realise that if you haven't done this before you'll always have a gap in terms of how you understand teaching and learning to be taking place in a HE environment. you may be clued up with your discipline, but you may not necessarily be clued up in how to bring that across to your students. So, if you didn't do that you need that. So, we create the need and when people see the need they respond to the need. But, obviously, in any HE institution, you'll have people who always think they know because they have been in the system for too long. There isn't anything that they need to know.

The only space that we can influence academics is when we meet them in workshops, in faculty boards and in the Senate and all that, and we talk about issues of teaching and learning, and we debate that. We also have, what we call, SoTL seminars inside the campus two to three times a year. So, we get together around the table and we talk about how we teach students. And, a whole lot comes out of that and people come out and share. Recently, another way in which I influence that. Recently, we've been adjudicating for our teaching excellence awards and we've been asking colleagues to share with us by way of their portfolio, how they teach students, what their teaching philosophy is. We also ask them to present themselves to a panel to explain their portfolio to us and that space as well is an important space for us in terms of helping our academics to think fresh about how they engage with students. So, it's those small spaces where we can get in and find an opportunity to interact with academics and share with them and let them share with us what they think.

I make a conscious and concerted effort to connect with academics and my peers. Annually, I give a public lecture at the university and I talk about important teaching and learning issues. Recently, I discussed assessment and focused on academics' conceptions of assessment. I conducted research using a survey of what their conceptions were. I invited them to the talk, it was a FULLHOUSE, I had close to 100 people attend. We're a small university with 200 academic staff. I presented the research. Our academics were fascinated. I have the advantage of experience in the sector. I also think that's what makes people to respond when I ask them to come. Last year, I did a public lecture on what makes a university a university. And, we had a similar response as well.

Not the title per se. But, I think when you know what you're doing, and you earn the respect of your colleagues, which I think I did over time, being in the quality directorate. It worked for me and for us here. Once people respect you, they respond to what you do. And, I always say to my colleagues, in higher education, you don't deserve respect; you earn respect. You earn respect with your work, not with your job title. Your job title is inconsequential and that's what people pursue; people neglect the actual work of an academic. I've never failed to behave and act like an academic in the institution and getting closer to what academics do and they know I have an interest in what I do. I walk to their offices almost all the time. After this, I'm walking to their offices now and I carry my box of chocolates and I walk there, I interact...in different faculties. I interact in their spaces. When you do that, people will never resist when you call them into your space and say: Okay, can we then meet and let's talk about this. They all flock there. Those who can't come are genuine; they apologise they can't come.

Protecting the integrity and image of our centre is of utmost importance. Some may think it's micro-managing, but it's not.

My colleagues here are fairly very young.

In the field and age-wise, too.

It does impact because then I have to teach a lot of things.

Rule of thumb in the centre

No one can write and publish anything to the university

Unless I've seen it

This is important because....

So here's why...

I take responsibility and accountability for everything.

When people write emails to the university, I, unfortunately, I have to see them

The reason for that is, one, I edit the language

I'm interested in the image of my centre.

I know that English is not their first language. So, people would write an email and even when I see it I'll say: Oh-no-no you can't send that, you can't send that. Most of the time, it happens just like that. You can't send that and then I work it out. It does add to what I do, but also it protects the image of this structure. It may seem that I am micro-managing. But sometimes I have no choice. Because if I don't micro-manage, then there's going to be all sorts of criticism coming and it won't come to them, it will come to me. So I have to protect the integrity of the unit.

If you read anything, whether it's our publications, we have an annual teaching and learning publication, it was top-class, it has to go through here. It has to reflect our ethos and our principle: EXCELLENCE! Excellence to us means everything we do, we do it to the best of our ability. We don't nurse mediocrity by any standards. And, if I have to achieve that, I have to be there, with my colleagues, with our academics.

I think that generally, AD has been complacent because we did not go out there to really show how important what we do is to the university. That's been passive – an AD unit that reacts and responds to staff but does not go out there to project itself. We are aggressive in our approach. We write. We publish. We put our publications to the university. Our Vice-Chancellor is new. But he's like, "wow, do you do all these things." So we are all over the place. More so now, we are even in the national space and we're making significant inroads – not just with this one colloquium that we are hosting, we have two events and next year we will be adding a third.

Although we may appear small, we've had many highlights. The first is our ability to start a centre that was not there and put that up. Our centre is not only about staff, it's about student support. The fact that we were able to put up student support interventions and formalise them and institutionalise them across the university. Our highlight has also been the colloquia

that we've hosted annually over the last few years and this includes a technology one as well. We've transformed many classrooms into smart classrooms, very sophisticated learning environment. We lead those projects and we funded those projects as well, and we're continuing to expand and to even grow into other spaces in the university. We've started an annual in-house publication where we publish the work we do. We have also created the space for academics to write reflective articles on teaching and learning, we publish those too and we say: You can use the platform to try out what you want to write. And I tell to academics, "develop it, you have the space to develop it, we have the funds to help you to develop it."

We're not in the periphery.

You can't ignore us

We are in the centre.

we are recognised as being key players in transforming the
university environment and in
transforming how this university operates
and is resourced

So I believe if you have clout, you have power.

Clout comes from knowledge, strategy, influence and,

I think also being smart.

understand the dynamics of how universities function, and

how university structures function,

how to leverage on that.

Cliques, universities thrive on that; some people thrive on cliques.

I'm in no clique,

not interested in any clique,

But if you put me in a space where we debate issues and ideas, I will go for it. That is how I get my clout, in an open space, especially in the Senate. The Senate is a power-play structure.

I don't **miss** my Senate for anything and it just shows you how much of that you have if you are able to go in there and put your position across and get out with what you want.

As we both shared our dreams for the future of AD, Vusi told me that we really need a rethink of academic [staff] development in the sector.

As I imagine AD and ASD for the future I really think that there is a need for a rethink of how academic [staff] development is done in the sector. I guess we've been too passive. AD has been too passive and on the receiving end of events and developments in universities. AD has just been an add-on; just do this for tutors – just do this for tutors – but they are not seen as thinkers, as influencers of the thought directors of universities. The same for our staff development programmes. I think that on a national basis, there's a need for a coordinated rethink of our AD work.

There are some spaces we need to occupy. There are some spaces we need to create if it's not there, and there's some thinking we need to influence. There are some directions we need to influence in terms of being out there. There are some key people who have been influencing AD in the past (the Chrissies, Brendas and so on), but they are fading out of the system. What is happening to that space? There is a gap because we are constantly navigating back to these people to help us think where to for AD. These people are checking out of the system but yet we want to hear from them. Where are younger people who are researching the field? What are we saying now? What are we discovering?

What are our experiences in the institutions where we work in? How can we share those? Shouldn't there be a national conference on AD? Get in international experts on AD, get in people from SA from different universities to share what they do on AD across the park. We do need regular conversations. I think we do need it at all levels, but it must be coordinated. It must be intentional, it must serve a vision, and it must have leadership because in any situation where there is no vision, you can try it and meet once and then it collapses.

And, that there won't be any sense.

I think that's a direction we should be thinking about

AD does deserve attention and it does deserve support.

6.2.3. Sipho

“Staff development is about capacitating”

I’m the deputy director of the professional development unit. But it’s basically only me. My key responsibilities involve both academic and student. My unit is responsible for student development, eLearning and curriculum and assessment.

Twice in our conversation, Sipho told me that he is a Deputy Director. A title is certainly important at University B. A title such as Senior Director or Deputy Director is expected to command respect. My own university context is quite a flat structure too, with a director and the rest of us – yes, we do have subunits and a coordinator for each subunit, it’s not a real post like a Deputy Director. It’s rather an arrangement that one of us will oversee, more like coordinating reports rather than really coordinating and conceptualising activities of the subunit. I served as a coordinator for just more than 2 years, but it does not give you authority or legitimacy. In my case, I felt that much of what was coming into the centre that closely resembled activities of my staff development subunit, I was roped in to do. No questions, no declining. I withdrew in later 2020, in the midst of COVID-19, as I navigated multiple staff development initiatives, whilst attempting to ‘write that PhD’. Although Vusi, in the previous section, told me that for the size of their university, they are sufficiently staff, Sipho tells me another story.

[Pointing to himself] We have this one person

It’s basically only me. My hands are really tied, because I’m overstretched.

Our unit is so thin that it actually was possible for us to coordinate rather than actually doing the capacity development for academic staff members. We don’t have enough staff and that has been a challenge. You find that when you lose someone, you take years before you can be able to replace them, so that’s the problem we’ve actually been facing.

Each of the sub-areas have a coordinator except for curriculum. So from the academics’ side we run, actually, most of the time we coordinate. My unit coordinates professional development initiatives for staff. The reason for that would be that we would come from an era where we come from a Technikon then we converted to be University of Technology and

effectively most of our academics are not trained as teachers so they need to be capacitated as teachers.

Up to now, we've been conducting training as well as academic induction initiatives, where we would do it ourselves. But, other professional development initiatives, like teaching in higher education, assessment, curriculum, teaching large classes, we ended up outsourcing. We would get someone from another university to come and assist us. Most of the time, if not all, we've been using the Teaching Development Grant (TDG) and now the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG)⁵⁰.

However, we actually want to change that. We want to shift from that because we understand better the context and because the context is very important. If you leave aside the context, then it becomes a problem because you need to fill in the person from outside. Yet, if we do it ourselves we'll be talking about something that we are part of, the culture that we are part of. So, this year we're certainly going to pilot the new shift whereby we will have to capacitate academics ourselves and then the question will be; what has changed in terms of your thin staff?

It wouldn't have changed that much, but now we have a critical mass of academic staff members who we sent to do the postgraduate diploma in higher education. So, we'll also rope them in to assist us, that's the strategy going forward.

My background is in health sciences and I first joined this university a few years ago as a quality officer.

When I was teaching, I used to think to myself I understand my field, I understand the discipline, but I was so interested in understanding what goes beyond that, how students learn? And how should, what is happening when, before I get a subject to teach, what are the things happening up to that stage? That really interested me. So, I actually then saw it as an opportunity for me to actually understand that, when I got an opportunity to go to quality management. I spent 3-4 years there. When I started there, I think it was the right time. During that time, it was a very critical time because HE is the time when we were busy aligning programs and I got in at the very right time for me to understand what goes behind the scenes.

⁵⁰ the TDGs and UCDGs are the Department of Higher Education supplementary funding to universities to support learning and teaching enhancement and support

I actually did myself a huge favour by moving to understand what goes on behind the scenes. Because when you develop a programme, you start thinking of how do I align this qualification? But when you teach, you focus on, how do I teach this subject? In 2015 there was an opportunity to join the teaching and learning centre and the professional development unit.

I said: You know what, now I understand what's happening behind the development of the programme. Now if I go there, I'll get an opportunity to actually impact my knowledge in terms of developing academics, capacitating academics, as to actually, it's not only the discipline that is important, there are other factors that we need to take into account. So, that's where the interest came in for me to actually be where I am here, as the deputy director.

I think that some of these factors we need to consider are part of what I believe in, too. This includes, for example, understanding the type of students you teach. Because I believe, if you don't understand your students, then you teach for a salary...that's what I don't believe in. When one teaches, it should actually be to understand that I'm not only the source of information, but we can actually, together with my students, create an environment that will allow us, allow a student to actually access learning. Because you'll certainly understand the issue of access alone, that formal access is not enough, we also need the epistemological access for our students, so basically, yes, that's ...

We need to change the culture!

We need to change the culture!

There are many things: access, the fourth industrial revolution?

What does it mean to you as a teacher? What does it mean to a student you teach? And, what does it mean to a student who went to a not-so-good school but managed to get a way to a university? What do you do with that particular type of student? Because that student The fact that she or he managed to get into a university doesn't necessarily mean that he or she will succeed. There is a lot of support that you need to give to students in class and out of class.

I, myself, come from one of those schools. I know what it's like to transition to a university life. I may have managed to succeed, then we didn't have the support that students get now.

I'm very particular about the way we approach the quality of teaching and learning.

Are we actually enhancing, or are we

actually just quality controlling

Or ticking the box.

Compliance mode!

then we're really propagating the surface learning.

Surface learning will not assist anyone

it would not assist the system,

it would not assist the university,

it would not assist the teacher, the student, or the industry.

Or society at large!

In the absence of a senior curriculum specialist staff, I continued to work with quality management and the academics. I hope when the person starts, there will be some value add; in terms of relieving me. So that I can focus as well on other spaces. Therefore, partnerships are important and for staff to see the need.

We have forged a working relationship. I sit in the programme review panel with quality.

We are judging them. And, this time around, we are saying: No, no, no, it's not about judging, it's about assisting, it's about supporting, it's about making sure that we address the issues that may actually impact on quality. And, also appraise the good practices that advance quality. I noticed that the acceptance from academics is actually good. Previously, it was an us-and-them situation. Now, it's a collaborative exercise.

Furthermore, previously as well when our professional development initiatives started rolling out, our staff were not participating. They didn't realise it was important. But with time, that has changed. We issue a call and staff attend. I can actually attribute that to the recognition of teaching excellence. Because the fact that you have a teaching excellence award, the VC's teaching excellence awards, people are realising that chances of actually compiling that portfolio without having gone through these professional development initiatives and still coming top are limited. We also support our staff and fund them to do the postgraduate diploma in higher education.

It means also that our university is not only valuing research but teaching too. This has an impact on the mindset of the people.

Decoloniality: what is it really?

Nalini: So decoloniality has been a national imperative over the last many years, How have you/ or your unit or centre engaged with it?

Sipho: Okay, decoloniality [.....long pause]. I'd say in our setting, it has not impacted much in our work in academic development.

Nalini: And, the reason for that would be?

Sipho: The reason for that, it's that... there is no reason that I can say, I know why. But I know for sure that we have not engaged, we have no position.

Nalini: Do you have a position on it, Sipho?

Sipho: On the?

Nalini: On decoloniality or decolonising of the curriculum, decolonising of higher education, there's been all these calls, what's your take on it?

Sipho: Okay, I have to a certain degree, I have to a certain degree. But it's a space that I've actually not, when I'm trying to understand it I feel like; is it really decolonisation or is it politics?

Nalini: Aah, okay

Sipho: And, if it's politics, then I have a problem because when we decolonise the curriculum, my problem is that decolonising the curriculum, per se, curriculum, it's a huge monster. If we want to decolonise the curriculum it's not only about speaking the language you speak, which is how most people perceive decolonisation, but do we even have the material? Is the industry out there ready or prepared for this decolonial era of our students? If we don't have the material that speaks to our context and you will also pardon me because coming from a science background, it will definitely take some to pull me into the discourse.

Because I'm thinking of how long it would take, I'm now thinking of a curriculum perspective, how long will it take for even us as Africans to develop a science curriculum that will address the decolonisation and Africanisation, you talk of an amoeba, what would I say? In the same light, I also think there's something we can do, there's a bit of something that one can actually do to actually try to embrace, as much as I'm not discouraging totally. But, we also can actually

do something in terms of; when we explain, we can still use our science terminologies, but the way you explain it, you need to contextualise it in an African context.

I believe that professional development is about capacitating the academics to teach in the manner that we're supposed to, that will benefit students at the end of the day. Because, it's not about the teacher, it's about a student. So, if you capacitate someone to be professional in what he or she does, whether I'm teaching maths or I'm teaching language or I'm teaching any discipline, I must be able to do it in a manner that will benefit students. I must do it in such a way that I'll be able to reflect on teaching. I must do it in a manner that, at the end of the day, it doesn't, in my mind, tell me that I'm teaching to assess. Because, it's not what teaching's about, it's not teaching to assess. Capacitate is to actually work with them. To make a person reflect on his or her teaching. To do this I would draw on the work on Margaret Archer's structure, culture and agency. You want an academic to be an agent, but are the structures okay? What is the culture of the institution and what is it that even that agent is believing, what are the beliefs?

It will be remiss of any professional development practitioner not to try and understand the background about these people. If you don't understand them, then how do you support them, how do you work with them? It also helps you to also critically evaluate and reflect on your own practice as an academic developer. Because, these are not empty vessels.

They are disciplinary experts, and you probably don't even know a thing about what they know. But, at the end of the day, as you reflect and draw from their strengths, you also grow as a person - it's a two-way process.

I also find that if you approach it in that fashion, you get closer to them. This, of course, is important for professional development.

ASSEMBLAGE C - University C

6.3.1. Institutional Context

University C is referred to as a comprehensive university on the outskirts of a large metropolitan city in South Africa. From the main city, I travelled for just over two hours to reach the university. As Sheila told me during our interview, “the institution, sadly, has remained virtually the same as when it was built and is more than fifty or sixty years old now. The infrastructure has aged, but the student intake has increased drastically! So much so that there's always an issue about venues”.

An examination of institutional documents, audit and other reports, strategic plans and policies and guidelines has provided insights into the university’s professional/ASD attempts and initiatives to professionalise teaching. This was achieved through a promotion policy that made it mandatory for staff to have some teaching qualification to be promoted. Is this a compliance or could it serve to transform learning and teaching in some way? Sheila and Nathi share their thoughts on this and other strategies adopted by the university’s Teaching and Learning Centre and the multitude of forces that influenced and shaped these initiatives and ASD at the university.

University C concludes the journey through individual narratives. As with the previous chapter, each protagonist is introduced briefly, followed by a quote that captures the essence of their story and perspective.

Two Protagonists

Sheila: Architecting a New Vision

Sheila, Director of a Teaching and Learning centre, grapples with the immense task of establishing its presence

“Our centre is very young – its footprint hasn’t really reached where we want to go”

She understands the critical need for cohesive strategies:

“Staff development here can’t be floating around bits and pieces and is not going to work. It’s going to be to our detriment we need a rethink”

Nathi: The Passionate Innovator

Nathi, a curriculum developer, admits to being

“Easily bored with monotony”

This led him to embrace a significant challenge

“I took up the challenge – far from home in a new Teaching and Learning Centre”

Despite his deep commitment, he expresses a reality:

“I love what I’m doing, I’m passionate about AD”

“But I have no power. The power is with management”

They are the ones playing the guitar and -

We dance !!!”

6.3.2. Sheila

The two-hour-long drive to get to University C from the main city was a welcome break from the hustle and bustle of academic life, more especially, the rush of the first quarter of the year. I opened my car window to take in the fresh crisp air of the countryside. So often, we are stuck in the (dis)comforts of modernity, closing up our windows and switching on air conditioners. Are we missing out on what nature provides so freely? My fellow driver, my husband, who accompanied me on the trip, and I had good discussions. He's always been my sounding board. And we both enjoyed the natural environment, though our hectic lives have left little time for these simple connections with our planet, which we take for granted.

Thoughts of sustainability consumed me. Sustainability of what? Or who are we concerned with? Whose comfort are we concerned and who or what experiences discomfort as a result of our comfort, as humans? How do our actions contribute to or impact sustainability...of our planet? And I wondered what we are doing in ASD that contributes, or not, to any issues of sustainability. Or has the numbers game contrived a staff development culture in South Africa, fit for a particular purpose, of bureaucracy and neoliberal performativity? I remembered a paper I stumbled upon by Meegan Hall (2016) that left me thinking, are we in academic development, or staff development, the players or the pawns? Do we take control or are we played in the process?

As we drove through the boom gate, security checkpoints, a key feature of all universities in South Africa, the security guard directed us to our destination. Luckily, it was not too far off from the entrance to the university. As we made our way up the gravel road, I was still a bit lost. It was the first time that I had been to the university. As we waited in the parking area, scanning the nearby buildings, a familiar face approached in a car. He was Sheila's colleague whom I had met recently at an international conference. We got out of our vehicles, exchanged greetings and just about that time, another car approached with Sheila.

As Sheila had told me, she and her colleagues had a very important meeting with the executive management. I am very aware of how these meetings can unfold and how it can leave one feeling afterwards.

She invited me to walk with her to her office. It was a short distance from the car park. As we approached the office, Sheila told me that we would have to meet in her office. She did not

have a boardroom. What was the boardroom now served as a makeshift office shared by two other colleagues. There is a severe shortage of venues throughout the entire campus, she exclaimed. "There are no venues for workshops and we have to resort to outside venues. As a result much of our UCDG funding is allocated to paying for venues" she added. "this is a problem and management have told us to work smart, have smaller groups for our workshops so that they are on campus...". The numerous challenges that Sheila experienced led her to contemplate resigning. "What really motivates you, to go on?" I asked her. "Honestly, it's to think about when I can resign." I think I know exactly how Sheila has felt...I've experienced it so many times. I wanted to just throw in the towel when my colleagues and I are told 'we cost the university too much', or a comment like, 'burn down the department', or 'show me your impact', or 'tell me, exactly what do you do?' What has really motivated me and kept me along for 29 years is the love and passion I experience from my colleagues, for enhancing their practices, their willingness to try, to transcend boundaries, the sharing and caring, the collaborations, networks and partnerships across the globe. These have continued to inspire me, to motivate and that gives me the strength to know that there is hope that in our collaborations we can move toward a truly transformative and socially just, higher education, society and world....one that remains in-becoming (Waghid, 2017).

"Staff development here can't be floating around the way it is right now...bits and pieces is not going to work"

In 2015, the AD unit was reconceptualised as the Teaching and Learning centre. Around this time, when the Quality Enhancement project (QEP) was a national imperative, the entire centre was restructured and the idea was to establish an entire Teaching and Learning Centre. It was relatively small, just the director of the centre and a secretary and I was involved in quality enhancement. Prior to this, there was a director of the academic centre. The programmes offered involved community engagement and an induction programme for staff. Over time, the induction programme evolved to what we have today, which is different. We've always had a high turnover of staff, with staff staying for a year then resigning. It's been an uphill battle because we've had directors who have been here, and they've been here on a short-term, maybe six months, and then moved on. It was always a short-term contract. Although I was in the centre, I was not involved in AD but mainly quality matters, especially

about managing the QEP project. And then, at the beginning of last year, when they realised that there's a huge need for staff here at the teaching and learning centre, they requested that I'd be transferred here, and that's how I've landed here in this role of Director of the Teaching and learning centre. So, for me, it's just basically a year since I'm here.

It's really sad as we are still severely short-staffed: it's me, two curriculum development specialists, with one focusing more on foundation programmes. And then we have the writing centre coordinator and an E-learning specialist. One of our curriculum development specialists, Nathi, focuses on staff development. We assist him with staff development programmes like induction and portfolio development, but he has been carrying most of the load for staff development. It was to the detriment of other curriculum development work that he was supposed to be involved in, although curriculum development is part of staff development too. This affected his individual performance agreement as well.

There is a need, though, for staff development. If we're thinking of being relevant, current and doing things that make our graduates develop the attributes that are relevant to what society needs, to contribute to the economy, then if we look at some of the things that we do here, it's a shame. Some of us still use old module outlines that are dated, some have not gone onto their email, or even opened their laptops. These are the anomalies we have here. So yes, there are lots of staff development issues that we need to work through.

We work closely with Human Resources for the Academic Induction Programme. They have a database of new staff, but we also send out a blanket call to staff. Induction previously used to be a once-off thing at the beginning of the year and there was no follow-up. But now we're trying to do it at least twice a year and offer other development opportunities. Our staff component, however, does impact on that as we are severely short-staffed.

Staff promotion and the requirement of a portfolio of evidence have seen many people come into the teaching and learning centre. I think that for most staff, it was the first time to have such a request for a portfolio. So, they would come in saying, "help us with the development of this portfolio", "what does a teaching philosophy mean", "what are the different ways of assessment", "how can I make sure that my contribution is as quality so that I can be considered for promotion".

We've tied the portfolio development to the Vice-Chancellor's awards for teaching and learning, which also requires a portfolio. As I sat on the adjudication panel, I felt conflicted. I did feel that I'm playing two roles. On one hand, I'm developing them, on the other hand, I am trying to moderate what they've submitted. It's an area that really really needs lots of attention because it worries me that the kind of academics that we are letting loose into our classrooms they come with their discipline-specific skills, but they don't have the pedagogical knowledge at all!

Especially --

about what is expected of them

how to drive the process

how to interact with their students

how to do assessments

how to do marking and so on..

I've been an academic here as well, and I've been on the ground. And being on the ground, I know what my colleagues do. And then coming up here, and if I look at it retrospectively, and if I reflect on what I've seen as an academic, I'm totally aware of the weaknesses of the current staff. So when I got here as Director, I began tightening the reins, for example, around the tutoring programme and what tutors are expected to do. What they were doing, what was expected of the tutorship programme. When I started making changes, I received a lot of resistance. Staff were up in arms and many of them let me know they weren't scared to let me hear what they thought. When I tried to tighten these processes, I had a lot of flak, but fortunately, I had the support of the DVC Teaching and Learning. Then we started implementing the changes. But, to this day, when I enter into any meetings, all these things that they have against me, they're not scared to voice them.

We do have challenges as well in terms of facilitators where the institution frowns on the use of external facilitators. So, many of these that have come to our institution have not been paid. It's quite embarrassing because these are my colleagues that I meet at all these fora, and then it's so embarrassing that they come to me and I have to always tell them: "No, the process is still...with finance." If we don't have this cross-pollination of ideas from other institutions, how are we going to grow? We've been told to make use of staff capacity, especially with education. Well, it is assumed that they are way ahead of any other faculty.

So it's not a policy as yet, but we've been mandated by our line managers. I do feel the focus within is going to really kill all our programmes. I don't think that we've reached that threshold as yet to say that at our university, everything can happen within. We've got a lot to learn and I think even if we reach that height, there'll be more to learn.

These are battles that we have to fight.

We are severely short-staffed to service the entire university. We've been told that there isn't funding. So, because there isn't funding, we'd have to manage with our present staff complement. There are six of us. I do hope that somewhere, somehow, that he's totally aware of the kind of pressure that we feel. And, staff sometimes feel very very disillusioned. Because we don't get the best type of reports from management, we'd like to get. We go to these meetings and then we're told that we're under-performing. But, the reality of the situation is not considered, that we're spread so thinly and that we're supposed to perform miracles, really, by the small cohort of staff that's supposed to do so many activities across so many faculties across a large number of students that this institution has! Now, how do you do it? For me I do feel very, very badly for my staff. Because I see how affected they get in these meetings that we have with management.

Recently, I've been thinking that the only way to motivate myself is to think about when I can resign. My passion was always, always teaching and what has kept me. I was so thrilled when I came to the teaching and learning centre, because for me it was about getting back into what I always wanted to do. That was being in touch with teaching. But when I got down here and I realised why there was that continuous turnover of directors and staff. I realised the mammoth task that we have and the fact that you don't feel that support that's coming from above. And that, I have to question myself when I look at the number of staff that sit in the research unit as compared to the teaching and learning unit. Are we a research institution or are we a teaching and learning institution? Where do our priorities lie?

Yes, I've raised these debates and concerns and the response from management would be, we must "think smartly and do things smartly". So how could we even do things smartly? I feel that at a very strategic level, management has to decide where is the core business. Is it strengthening the administration and that particular building? Or is it strengthening the core

business -- providing quality to our students, and how best do we do it? I think maybe then there needs to be at that particular level, a re-thinking of what their focus should be. We put people in particular positions [in management], but are they aware of the ground? And, what really happens on the ground? And, how does it affect students and how does it affect academics as well?

We are portrayed as being a weak unit. My feeling is that you need to be recognised for what you do. We need to be appreciated for what we do. We don't get that. So the good things we do are sort of glossed over. Things fail. But the context is not considered and is completely ignored. I feel there needs to be a rethinking and definitely a change in attitude. We're looking at the quality of the students we're going to produce right at the end of this whole thing. Why are we here? We're here to ensure that our students attain the graduate attributes that are so needed in society. And, if we go in into classrooms and do what we feel we ought to be doing, I think really, our students will be short-changed. Really, they will. I believe staff cannot do this just with a qualification, a disciplinary qualification.

We did realise a strong need for academics to get their Postgraduate qualification in HE (PGDHE) because many of them have their discipline-specific knowledge, but not the pedagogical knowledge that's required. I must say that if we sent out an advert, within a few hours it's filled. Since we don't offer the programme, our staff attend outside the university at neighbouring institutions and they are funded through the capacity development grant. A very strong focus of the centre would be to ensure that by the end of the year we are able to offer, next year, at least two modules and then grow on that until we're able to offer our own qualification in sometime in the future.

The qualification is linked to their promotion - they have to show that they have some qualification in teaching and learning. It's part of the promotion policy. There was lots of resistance -- absolutely lots of resistance. But in the first phase, when they may have been excluded, that's when they realised that the institution is taking this seriously. So, there was this huge, influx whenever we asked for them to come on; even the loud people eventually complied. Certainly, I've seen improvements and impact on their teaching. If I have one-on-one conversations with them, it always goes back to what a difference it has made in their

lives. I would say they would enter, to comply, but by the time they exit, there's a change of mindset. It's a new teacher who goes out there and stands in front of the classroom.

We certainly need to have a rethink at our university. Staff development here can't be floating around the way it is right now. Each of us is doing something to say that we're doing it. But it's bits and pieces and it's not going to work. It's going to be to our detriment. So, we definitely need to resource this better. In fact, all the sections of AD at this university need it. I would love to see maybe layers, not so flat as it is now. Currently, we have a director and all coordinators. Maybe a unit and a manager for each unit.

6.3.3. Nathi

"I love what I'm doing, I'm passionate about AD"

It was a short walk across the passage from Sheila's office to Nathi's. We exchanged greetings and he explained to me that his hectic schedule did not allow him the chance to complete the visual that I requested the participants to prepare. After I explained the study further to him, he was excited to have some time to plot his journey. He focused on 3 areas: his prior experiences, where and how he is currently positioned at the university, his many roles and the aspects that have influenced these and lastly what he considered to be the future possibilities for staff development.

Nathi commenced his story about having a technical education and being a trained teacher. Due to not being able to find a placement in a technical high school, he had to teach mathematics in high school. I listened with interest as he told me that he was bored being a math teacher and resigned as he looked for something new. "Going to class every day there was no need for me to prep because I knew that thing from the back of my head," he remarked. The new position was in a non-governmental organisation (NGO) where he was involved in staff training for developing short courses for a literacy project. Having completed a master's with components in curriculum design held him in good standing for this work. It was then that Nathi indicated he developed an interest in staff development. But once more, he was bored after a few years and took up curriculum development posts at two other universities before joining this university. He continues his story about his experiences at University C.

I joined the university in 2016. I heard that the university was restructuring this unit from an AD unit to a Teaching and Learning Centre. I get really bored if I have to do something over and over again and this was new, so I applied and got in. My previous experience has been in curriculum development and so I took up the curriculum post here. But we were a very small complement at the time. Just three, the Director and two of us, but actually doing the work for 4-6 people. We have grown slightly but are still severely short-staffed.

I've played many different roles in this university since then

I've run the centre on my own,

At some point, I was the director,

At some point, I was the manager,

At some point, I was the curriculum developer,

At some point, I'm the staff developer,

At some point, I'm the student developer

because of the shortage of staff.

So, I've been forced by circumstances to take on the various roles that I needed, so that the centre can be functional. I love this. I love what I'm doing, I'm passionate about AD and this has motivated me. Before I came in, there was nobody for curriculum development. We are a comprehensive university in our new designation or differentiation. Previously, our programmes were part of the traditional university and now new diploma programmes are required so staff need assistance with this. So, from 2016, we had to push this.

We also had many learning and teaching policies, but many were outdated, so I was assisting in reviewing and updating them, then moving to working on the implementation. This involved going into faculties and conscientising staff, holding capacity development workshops. Sometimes these could last for about 3 hours or at least half the day. It was a bit challenging – especially because our academic staff, too are overworked. Some of them are willing to accept and participate but there are others who resist. But these are mainly the older staff – there are few of them though. In most instances, the sessions that I hold are oversubscribed.

So, I've done lots of programme design/ curriculum development work and policy implementation. My other activities include slots in the Academic induction programme. I draw up the programme and will also be coordinating it and directing it from start to finish. Then we have the teaching and learning conference committee and the vice chancellor's awards programmes, which I contribute to. Earlier, when I joined, we did not have a SoTL programme, so I initiated one but took on more a coordinating role. We have an external facilitator to assist. But the university has stopped external facilitators, so the programme has halted for a while. The same with other important engagements and conversations that we need to have around decoloniality, 4IR etc. We have to get people from outside – it's really going to affect us negatively because with our university policy of external facilitators, it means that we will be left with internal ideas.

My philosophy here, especially in the work that I'm doing now, is driven by seeing somebody happy. That's the first thing when I'm looking at the lecturer. I didn't become a teacher by choice; I became a teacher by accident. Actually, I didn't want to be a teacher. After having joined teaching it was fulfilling for me to see somebody achieving. So if I see somebody succeeding due to my assistance, then I'm happy with that. We come to the university with different things. For me, I don't care even if I never become a professor. I care about teaching and assisting staff members; that is what I care about. And, the feedback that I always get from staff also keeps me going. So, I don't have to be philosophical about it.

They come back and ask for more. Staff appreciate us. They appreciate what we are doing. Inasmuch as it's difficult for us, they appreciate what we're doing as a team. We are few, but we work as a team, including our administrators. So, our staff appreciate our presence. I can see this and even judging from the number that attends workshops. Recently I held a teaching philosophy workshop. I expected about 20-25. I had approximately 50 attend. I can even judge from the number of staff coming in and out of this door, the emails that we get, even calls, and smses.

That's what has been driving me

As a staff and curriculum developer, I believe -

I don't give them

What I do is, I walk with them.

I shared with my director the other day my dream...my dream centre. This is where we'd have different units within the centre – a student development unit, a staff development unit, an eLearning development unit – all with their own heads and people working within each unit. As it is now, our structure is flat; so, we try to do everything.

As it is now, the staff we have, it's not possible to do everything. I've realised that some things have to drop. Last year I had to sacrifice some important projects like the graduate attributes to take on other things. But this year I decided I would have to let other things drop and pick this up. Management has asked for policy documents on these, but we just couldn't. We have to make sacrifices and my scare is that you end up doing a little bit of this, a little bit of this, a little bit of this and find out that we don't really do a good job. Staffing needs attention; if they increase the staffing here, we can do a good job. We have submitted adverts for posts. But here lies another challenge...this place is far from everywhere. So it becomes a problem for someone to relocate. I am here without my family. I am struggling to go home.

If adequately resourced, it will produce good results...if adequately resourced. Otherwise, if not, it will die a silent death.

[Nathi takes a long pause.....sighs..]

Alas... The power is with management.

Personally, I don't have power,
not at all. All I have to do;
is just implement what I'm being told to.

Yes...yes.

The power is with the management; they are the ones playing the guitar and we dance.

6.4. Synthesis

In this chapter, I have presented the narratives about academic staff development at University B and C. Like the narratives presented in chapter 5, the narrative in chapter 6 reveals a complex landscape characterised by significant systemic challenges but also highlighting passion and resilience amidst these challenges. Both the ASD practitioners and leaders demonstrate a commitment to enhancing the quality of learning and teaching, but are constrained by structural and resource limitations. Both institutional contexts are severely constrained by only one ASD practitioner to work within growing and dynamic institutional contexts.

In the context of University B, there exists a strategic approach to ASD characterised by intentional, proactive leadership and a commitment to meaningful change. The ASD practices are challenged by limited staffing and complex institutional dynamics but remain aggressive in projecting the centre's importance and focus on earning respect through substantive work. University C highlights the passion and commitment of the participants despite the constraints of their context. They express hope for transformation while simultaneously feeling overwhelmed by systemic challenges. This presents a paradox where the centre is critical to the transformation imperatives for enhancing learning and teaching but is constrained by the lack of resources and institutional support. Institutional bureaucracy with management holding the primary decision-making power serves as a severe constraint in University C.

This chapter concludes the narrative explorations of the field. These descriptive-level analyses of the field of ASD present the multiplicity of forces, which will be further diffracted in Chapter 7 to reflect the relational nature of these forces and how they work to produce and construct ASD at universities in South Africa.

Section C

Learnings from the Tales of the Field

Section C

Learnings from Tales of the Field

- **Chapter 7:** Thinking with Theory and Diffractive entanglements
- **Chapter 8:** A Biography of ASD
- **Chapter 9:** Implications and Limitations
- **CODA:** From Bricolage to Assemblage

CHAPTER 7

THINKING WITH THEORY IN ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT: DIFFRACTIVE ENTANGLEMENTS OF A FIELD-IN-BECOMING

Diffraction can be regarded as an ethical and socially just practice in that it does not do epistemological damage, pitting one theory/ position/ stance against one another but carefully and attentively doing justice to a detailed reading of the intra-actions of different viewpoints and how they build upon or differ from each other to make new and creative visions (Bozalek and Zembylas, 2017, p. 120)

7.1. Introduction and Overview

In the previous chapters, 4, 5 and 6, I attempted to answer research question 1, *how do academic staff developers enact their roles in a changing South African HE contexts?* This narrative analysis depicted the experiences of academic developers and from their perspectives, highlighting the evolution, engagements and envisioning in/ of/ for the developing ASD field.

| Chapter 4 | Chapter 5 | Chapter 6 |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Dialogues at Café <i>Spirulina</i> <i>Nalini with Academic Developers and key national higher education executives</i></p> | <p>University A Research intensive/ Traditional University <i>Individual Narratives</i></p> | <p>University B University of Technology <i>Individual Narratives</i></p> |
| <p>Academic Developers (in a range of university contexts) Jane Sally John Cindy Linda Mary</p> <p>Key national executives (located within national HE departments) Michael Lionel</p> | <p>Director (of TL office) Simon</p> <p>Senior Lecturers Virginia Sue Bongani</p> | <p>Senior Director (of a TL centre) Vusi</p> <p>Deputy Director (Profession Dev) Sipho</p> |
| | | <p>University C Comprehensive University <i>Individual Narratives</i></p> |
| | | <p>Director (of a TL centre) Sheila Curriculum/ Staff developer Nathi</p> |

Figure 7.1: Overview of the narrative chapters 4,5,6

While the narratives are written in first person to privilege the voices of the participants, their contributions have triggered my own memory and affective responses, which I have included in the narrative representations as well.

In this chapter, I abstract the data further to answer research question 2, *why do academic staff developers enact their roles in the way that they do*. I do this by engaging in the analysis of the narratives presented in chapters 4, 5 and 6, by invoking an analytical strategy of postqualitative scholars. I draw on Jackson and Mazzei's (2011, 2022) analytical process of Thinking with theory coupled with Barad's (2007) diffractive analysis that weaves multiple theoretical perspectives through the data. Barad (2007) describes the diffractive process like an earthworm burrowing in the soil, turning it over and over as it moves through it, aerating it. In this way the process adds freshness and richness to the soil. This is the crux of a diffractive approach to analysis, weaving multiple theoretical referents through the data that offers

richness and nuances that may not be possible with one theoretical perspective alone. This is highlighted by Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) in the opening epigraph of this chapter. I discuss this analytical approach of thinking with theory and diffractive analysis in the next section. Inspired by Jackson and Mazzei's (2011) thinking with theory I commence this chapter by first thinking-with my initial theoretical referent, Bourdieu's Field Theory. From Bourdieu, I draw on the concepts of field, habitus, capital and 'playing the game'. A key transition in utilising the theoretical perspective through a diffractive methodology is not to layer the concepts over the data to make meaning, but rather to consider *what work* these concepts do in constructing the practices of academic staff developers and thus the field of academic staff development.

I do not deny the theorisations offered by the initial theoretical lens but extend these theoretical explorations within the diffractive process, by drawing next on Barad's (2007) entanglement and intra-actions and a decolonial lens. In keeping with a diffractive methodology in which interference patterns superimpose new waves that are formed, I use the insights from the previous theoretical iterations to build on the following ones. Barad's concepts of material-discursive intra-actions and her agential realist ontology is relevant for this part of the analysis. The emphasis on this theory is to illuminate the entangled agencies of entities/ forces involved in the production of ASD. One of the critical components of this material-discursive assemblage is that of context. Weaving decolonial theories and building on the materialities of contexts, I next explore the relevance of contexts as expounded through the data for ASD in a changing SA HE context. Here, I pay particular attention to the narrative data that question or foregrounds whose and what (knowledge) have been privileged (or not) in ASD practice and scholarship in South Africa, and why. And what this privileging and legitimation has meant for the production of ASD and envisioning new (transformative and sustainable) possibilities.

Finally, as I draw this chapter to a close and taking the cue from Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) in the opening quote of this chapter, I consider the "different viewpoints and how they build upon or differ from each other to make new and creative visions" (p. 120) for ASD in a changing South African HE context. This is abstracted further in the next chapter as the thesis unfolds.

7.2. Exploring new lines of flight for educational inquiry

In this chapter, I attempt to shift from traditional analytical procedures of coding and identifying themes which Barad (2007) and Jackson and Mazzei (2012, 2022) argue result in mirroring and sameness. Instead, I make minor moves “beyond an easy sense” (Mazzei, 2014) by exploring alternative possibilities for analysing and interpreting narrative data. Rather than applying theory to data, Jackson and Mazzei (2012, 2022) suggest thinking *with* theory, which involves drawing on theoretical concepts as analytical tools to examine the data. The idea of thinking *with*, is a performative intention, where “theory is a chance encounter that incites the unthought” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2022, p. 5)

In unpacking the use of theory in educational inquiries and for this study on academic staff development, I found Paul Ashwin’s chapter (2016) entitled ‘Postscript on theorising learning to teach’ in the book *Theorising learning to teach in higher education* (Leibowitz et al., 2016) illuminating in thinking about/with theory for this study. As Ashwin (2016) reminds us in this chapter, theories help us to simplify the complex world, one that is beyond our complete knowledge of it. “[T]heories involve simplification...theories simplify the social world we are engaging with and different theories simplify in different ways” (Ashwin, 2016, p. 225). Drawing on research by Leibowitz (2016) and Hannon et al. (2016) in the book, Ashwin further draws attention to the power of dialogue among different ways of analysing or seeing the same phenomenon from multiple perspectives. An important consideration for this study is Ashwin’s (2016) cautionary note that while different simplifications (theories) may contribute to producing different understandings, merely moving between different simplifications without understanding their relations may hinder building knowledge about the phenomenon.

Thinking with theory shifts from applying or layering theory onto data to consider what work theoretical concepts do. Jackson and Mazzei (2011) draw from Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to refer to the process of connecting or ‘plugging in’ theoretical concepts to data and data to concepts. In this, they view “plugging in as contingent, strategic movements of thought” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2022). Plugging in multiple theoretical perspectives through the data will produce, I believe, a more nuanced account of the developing field of academic staff development: what was, what is and what future possibilities exist for ASD.

I turn next to diffraction, which resonates with the process of thinking with theory. Diffraction is a key concept of Barad's (2007) agential realist framework that focuses on materiality and the entanglement of matter and meaning. Diffractive analysis, rooted in the physics phenomenon of diffraction, involves plugging in multiple theoretical perspectives through data, to enable spreading out of thoughts about a phenomenon, so that theory is used to think-with, and different viewpoints are respected, enabling new and creative visions. Diffraction was first used by Donna Haraway and was extended by Barad (2007). Barad (2007), drawing on both optic phenomena of reflection and diffraction argues that reflection (and reflexivity) is about sameness and mirroring what already exists. "Mirrors reflect. To mirror something is to provide an accurate image or representation that faithfully copies that which is being mirrored" (Barad, 2007, p. 86). This representationalism for Barad suggests that "practices of representing have no effect on the objects of investigation...Reflexivity, like reflection, still holds the world at a distance" (Barad, 2007, p. 87).

Rather than the classical physics phenomenon of diffraction (the spreading of light waves around an obstacle), they draw on quantum physics and especially the 'wave-particle-duality' paradox to argue for the inseparability of the object of observation and agents of observation. This she refers to as the entanglement of the researched and the research apparatus (the researcher and their surroundings). Shifting from traditional research practices that takes into account or cautions on the researcher's role in the research practice, a diffractive approach suggests that as researchers "we too are part of the world's differential becoming...and that *practices of knowing are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world*" (italics in original, Barad, 2007, p. 91).

This quantum physics exploration of diffraction has enabled Barad to develop their⁵¹ diffractive methodology for research that attends to difference (drawing on Haraway), takes into account material-discursive entanglements and focuses on 're-turning'. She draws on the biological processes of earthworms to describe the process of diffractive analysis, where the researcher would "renew ideas by turning them over and inside out...re-reading them through other ideas...queering their received meanings" (Barad in Kleinmen & Barad, 2012, p. 80).

⁵¹ Barad's preference for 'their'.

"the gender-neutral pronoun, "their", is Barad's preferred gendered identity as a non-binary queer philosopher" (Bozalek, 2022, p. 3).

We might imagine re-turning as a multiplicity of processes, such as the kinds earthworms revel in while helping to make compost or otherwise being busy at work and at play: turning the soil over and over – ingesting and excreting it, tunnelling through it, burrowing, all means of aerating the soil, allowing oxygen in, opening it up and breathing new life into it (Barad, 2014, 168).

The implication for educational research for such a diffractive approach is the shift from pitting one theory against another to rather “place the understandings that are generated from different interdisciplinary practices in conversation with one another...to engage aspects of each in dynamic relationality to the other” (Barad, 2007, 93).

Du Preez and Simmonds (2021) refer to the diffractive process as lifting the waft and the weft, making space for each to weave through the other in the production of something new.

This required that we separate the warp by raising and lowering heddles to form spaces where the weft can pass; in other words, we diffracted texts to create spaces where we could pass other texts, in our pursuit to weave an alternative text(ile) (Du Preez & Simmonds, 2021, p. 83).

Thinking with theory and a diffractive approach allows new questions to emerge in the inquiry process, producing new insights about the phenomenon. In this study of ASD, I read the narrative data from chapters 4, 5 and 6 through the concepts from three theoretical referents: Bourdieu’s Field Theory, Barad’s agential realist framework, and a decolonial lens. Through each iteration of reading the theory through the data and vice versa, I am cognisant of patterns of difference that emerge and how they matter (Barad, 2007) in the production of ASD in the changing South African HE context.

As I have already alluded to in the introduction to this chapter, I commenced this study with Bourdieu’s Field theory. I draw on concepts from this theory, for example, habitus, capital and field and explore how power dynamics and capital influence and shape the construction of the field of academic staff development. Whilst the Bourdieusian inspired analysis has focussed on human agency and human centric aspects, namely the habitus and capital of human agents and the various strategic manoeuvres that they undertook to enable academic staff development, the next theoretical referent, Barad’s theory and framework emphasises the agency of non-human actors (Barad, 2007). It focuses on matter and materiality and considers the entanglement of multiple entities, both human and non-human, as essential for the production of the field of academic staff development.

Such an approach “de-privileges human agency, focusing upon how assemblages of the animate and inanimate together produce the world” (Fox and Alldred, 2015, p. 399). Through this relational paradigmatic positioning, the assemblage rather than the individual becomes the point of reference (Barad, 2007; Le Grange, 2020). Such an approach considers “how things other than humans (for instance, a tool, a technology or a building) can be social ‘agents’, making things happen” (Fox & Alldred, 2019, quotations in original).

Exploring how other entities (things other than human) influence and shape ASD is an important consideration for this study. To do this, I draw on Barad’s agential realist framework to explore how the material and discursive factors and conditions intra-act to produce particular practices/ experiences or agential cuts (Barad, 2007, 2014), in the design and implementation of ASD in South Africa.

Next, a decolonial lens enables an exploration of how colonial legacies, and in particular the socio-historical context of SA have shaped academic staff development. Of particular concern, given the challenges experienced in South African HE of slow transformation (Badat, 2022) and success rates being classed, gendered and raced (Mgqwashu, 2023) I explore what and whose knowledge has been centred/ privileged and/ or marginalised/ decentred in the provision of academic staff development, and why.

Through the process of thinking with theory I am cognisant of how each theory illuminates different aspects of ASD in the changing South African HE context. I bring the insights of the theories together, diffracting each theoretical insight through each other and pay attention to new questions or insights that could emerge. This approach could offer nuanced understanding of ASD that could account for power dynamics (Bourdieu), material conditions and non-human factors and entanglements (Barad) and colonial legacies (Decolonial theories), revealing the complexities inherent in this phenomenon that a single theoretical approach may not achieve.

7.3. Thinking with Bourdieu and Samuel's Forces (Biographical)

Examining the structuring of the field of higher education and academic staff development and how this impacts the roles enacted by academic staff developers

"We work in academia. What counts? Academic work."

(Mary, section, 4.3.3)

7.3.1 Introducing the theoretical constructs: Bourdieu's Field Theory

In this section, I draw on Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, habitus and his reference to strategy or playing the game to examine the developing and evolving field of academic staff development. Bourdieu's field theory is used to analyse ASD as a developing sub field within the larger HE context in SA and how academic staff developers as agents navigate the already established, HE spaces, with its own 'rules of the game'.

In constructing the field of academic staff development, I examined what is valued and legitimated in the larger field of HE and the extent to which ASD and its practitioners are able to or not able to legitimate their positions as equitable role players within this evolving landscape of higher education. The latter is made up of other subfields, for example, the disciplinary fields that contribute to what is valued in the HE field. Although the "political events of the 1990s were obviously significant in terms of legitimising the AD agenda" (Kloot, 2011, p. 153), academic staff developers have struggled to gain and sustain legitimate positions.

However, it is impossible to analyse the field of ASD without understanding how the broader field of higher education - within which ASD is located – is constructed, what it values and legitimates, and how ASD as a new and emerging field of practice and scholarship is positioned, engages and evolves. Furthermore, I draw attention to Clegg's argument in the introductory sections, wherein she asserts that the development of ASD as a field is not just about its role in improving teaching but on the "study of higher education as a field" (p. 413) and to a "critical understanding of the power relations of higher education" (Clegg, Personal communication, 2015). In this regard, it is also useful to once more reiterate the notion of the productive nature of power,

We must cease at once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms; it “excludes,” it “represses,” it “censors,” it “abstracts,” it “masks,” it “conceals.” In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth (Foucault as cited in Bhattacharya, 2005, p. 194)

In understanding why academic staff developers enact their roles in particular ways, I examine how the field of HE in SA has been constructed – what is the logic of the field as Bourdieu refers to it, in his discussion with Wacquant (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). This helps to illuminate what is valued and legitimated in HE and how this influenced and shaped the structuring of the field of AD and academic staff development.

In conversation with Wacquant, Bourdieu explains a field as follows,

A field consists of a set of objective historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital)...each field prescribes its particular values and possesses its own regulative principles. These principles delimit a socially structured space in which agents struggle, depending on the positions they occupy in that space, either to change or preserve its boundaries and form (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 16-17).

Within the field of HE, there are other subfields, including disciplines and AD, amongst others. Each field is defined and characterised by its own “ways of doing things, its rules, assumptions and beliefs” (Grenfell and James, 1998) and access into a field is dependent on the amount of ‘legitimated’ capital an agent or institution possesses, as articulated by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) in the extract above. Bourdieu relates this to “an ‘admission fee’ that each field imposes and which defines eligibility for participants...” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 108). Studies in HE in South Africa, drawing on Bourdieu’s theoretical perspective have revealed that “the key structuring features of the field...relate to the valuing of research capital over teaching” (Jawitz, 2007, 137). See also, for example Naidoo (2004), who explores admissions policies in HE during times of transition and Kloot (2009, 2015), who examined engineering foundation programmes in South Africa, with a similar finding.

How ASD as a new and emerging field in HE is able to legitimate its position relative to historical positions of existing disciplinary fields and the extent to which academic staff developers possess (accumulate) the credit or ‘admission fee’ (requisite capital) to be legitimate role players who either maintain the status quo of HE or transform it, is a critical concern of this study. This section on *thinking with* Bourdieu will focus on identifying these specific forms of capital, how it evolve over time to configure and reconfigure the field of

academic staff development, within a changing HE context in South Africa. The proposition that I am making at this juncture, using Bourdieu's theoretical constructs is that the field of ASD is dependent (both) on how the academic developers (and managers/ leaders) as key agents in the field are able to build, sustain and legitimate this field through the symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1998) that they possess as well as how the larger field contributes to condition, shape and influence academic developers and subsequently the structuring of the field of academic staff development. I submit that academic developers with their fluid and evolving identities, positions and positionalities, contribute to knowledge creation in/of/for/about ASD and are integral to building and sustaining the field of academic staff development.

7.3.2. Thinking with Bourdieu and Samuel to analyse ASD

The analytical question (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) guiding this segment of thinking with Bourdieu's theory is as follows:

How does power (as capital and habitus) work to constitute the field of HE and academic staff development?

How do academic staff developers negotiate these forms of power and the 'rules of the game' in HE to enact their roles and shift the field of HE (or not)?

The emergence of AD as a political discourse in attempts to refashion (transform) higher education occurred in the 1980s, "at the cusp of change, when universities were first opening their doors to a very different student group, that students needed support" (Virginia, narrative, Chapter 7.3.2). It could be argued that AD entered HE 'in the middle' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) of an already organised system of higher education, and took on 'new lines of flight' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Why particular lines of flight or approaches were taken or roles enacted will be examined by thinking with Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, habitus and his reference to playing the game.

In his narrative Bongani expressed the following using the images that he provided in his collage during the interview session:

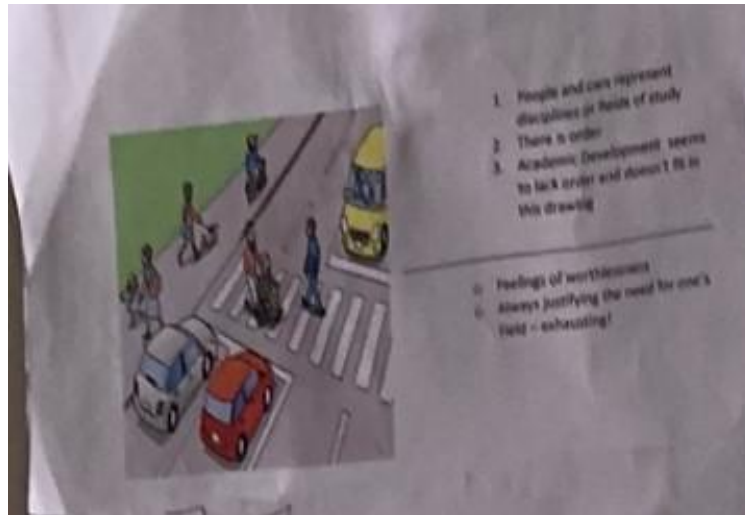


Figure 7.2: An extract from Bongani's poster of his experiences of ASD
(Source: Appendix 15)

You see the three cars and then you see the pathway there, you see people walking and so on, but you see order. These cars are stopped, people are going to cross, this one has stopped but you also see kind of an *order*. In fact, that's how I look at or how other disciplines within the university in general, as this; as organised. But, that's not the best perception they have of academic staff development...Academic staff development seems to be something that is always an additive. Because of that we have begun to see a lot of *resistance* from academic staff. They didn't understand why they should participate in academic staff development. (Bongani, section 5.4) (*my emphasis added*).

Bongani's narrative account has raised crucial questions about what it means for disciplines to be organised and have *order*, how ASD is organised and why the conflict or *resistance* exists for academic staff development. Clearly, ASD seems to disrupt this *orderliness* of the disciplines. Drawing insights from his doctoral study on foundation programmes⁵² in engineering education in South Africa, using a Bourdieusian analysis, Kloot (2012) surmises that the HE field stabilised the equilibrium of massification and underpreparedness of students by allowing foundation programmes that were taught by academics external to the engineering faculty, such that it did not interfere with the time required for engineering academics to develop their intellectual capital.

But this was not the case with academic staff development. As a developing field concerned with change and transformation, ASD was becoming a force to be reckoned with, disrupting the stronghold that disciplinary experts held as *the* legitimate knowers of their field. This was

⁵² Foundation programmes in the South African context are designed to provide academic support to students who may not meet certain direct entry requirements into academic programmes.

quite arduous given that learning and teaching in HE was considered an elitist field. And as Virginia narrates of her earlier experiences, “right from the beginning, the notion of academic, or educational development or professional development (or academic staff development), was not something academics would associate with. Because they saw themselves as already trained, they were experts in their field, they were the discipline experts” (Virginia, section 5.3.2). However, not only were the academics regarded as the “sort of top people in their field, and the PhD was a kind of license to teach” as Sally (Section, 4.3.1) purports, but she added further that higher education, was always a very elite field, so that the students who came into HE didn't need any special pedagogical arrangements” (Sally, Section, 4.3.1). Academic developers were thus not accorded a legitimate position in the HE space by academics who “saw these little upstarts who were really, being on the outside, being outside the castle walls. Being on the periphery was always our position” (Virginia, Section 5.3.2).

Next, I turn to Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus to understand the logics of the HE field, what it has been valuing and how AD and ASD have responded to this context. In his exploration of the French university field that he documented in his book *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1998) Bourdieu discusses the form of capital relevant to the university context: intellectual capital, which is described as scientific renown and academic capital, which is associated with holding a position in the institutional hierarchy (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Kloot argues that “[i]n their interaction with the field, AD staff had to learn to speak the language of the field and wield the type of power recognised by the field in order to bring about change” (Kloot, 2015, p. 972). The following narrative accounts from participants bear testimony to this assertion by Kloot.

Mary purports that, “We work in academia. What counts? Academic work.” And regarding how academic developers could attain credibility for their roles in higher education, Cindy in the narrative extract below, advises:

Nalini: So what do we need to get this academic credibility

Cindy: (quickly adds) “Easy! Get a PhD. Publish, supervise, research. Do all that. And at the same time hold in the other stuff. Well, if you have to establish your status as a scholar...For somebody to listen to you. I am going to work with you on your academic teaching...But I am a real specialist on that, look I publish in the best journal. I have got a PhD. And my publications are such that there I am, on the research list. Then people will listen to you.” (Cindy, section 4.3.3).

Mary's and Cindy's narratives are explicit about what Kloot refers to as the language of the field and what was needed by academic staff developers in their role and purpose in higher education: change. This elucidates the logic and structuring of the field of higher education: a valuing of intellectual capital – research, publications, citations. This led to ASD roles to include research-based activities, as alluded to by John, “the research-based phase; research seminars, publications”, which he added was about,

“building credibility of the field, which was very, very important. It also meant we began to have doctors, we began to have associate professors, so senior lecturers and associate professors began to emerge in this field; which positioned us differently in the institution. So, the whole question of credibility and of being listened to, playing the game, that's been a big thing and it's a big thing now, still is, yep.” (John, section 4.3.1)

Being able to accrue the correct capital to be accorded a legitimate and credible place with status in the HE field has been a key concern for the field of ASD and this dramatically influenced the roles of ASD and how ASD was enacted and evolved within the changing South African context. This is evident in the expansive literature both within national and international contexts (see for example Baume and Popovic, 2016; Boughey, 2007; Boughey and Niven, 2012; Quinn, 2012; Clegg, 2009; Gibbs, 2013). Establishing legitimacy and credibility and enhancing its status as a new and emerging field has featured prominently in the narratives of academic staff developers in chapters 4-6.

Next, I explore the work done by capital in constructing ASD in the three institutional contexts. Using capital to accrue power in dynamic space is also supplemented by strategic approaches (or ‘playing the game’) in order to legitimise the foothold of academic (staff) development in the various university contexts. In chapter 5, within the research-intensive university (University A), Bongani alluded to the policy area and creation of a teaching and learning section within the ambit of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, about assuring legitimacy for the staff development work that lay ahead.

“I came here in 2014. But before that the DVC of Teaching and Learning, decided to bring academic staff developers, whatever we're called, infuse us within the School of Education but attach us to the Teaching and learning office which was within the portfolio of the DVC Teaching and Learning. And, when you look at it really, it tells you quite a lot. It tells you issues that deal with power. It tells you issues that probably, the DVC was looking for legitimacy. But, in fact, if these people come from the School of Education they might even be less and less

respected, as opposed to when they're coming from a DVC teaching and learning office" (Bongani, section 5.3.4).

While Bongani's narrative extract suggests that legitimacy could be attained through association with powerful institutional structures, the narratives of Cindy and Mary, in chapter 4, cited earlier advise that legitimacy and credibility of academic staff developers could be attained through adopting similar roles to the academic staff - teach, research, publish and attain a PhD. This, Cindy (in chapter 4) purports is important if academic staff developers want to be accepted (listened to) by the academics with whom they work.

In University B, we see how power in the form of intellectual capital works to construct the field of academic staff development. Vusi remarked,

"I've never failed to behave and act like an academic in the institution and getting closer to what academics do and they know I have interest in what I do" (Vusi, chapter 5).

"We're not in the periphery. You can't ignore us: we are in the centre. We are recognised as being key players in transforming the university environment and in transforming how this university operates and is resourced" (Vusi, section 6.2.2)

Vusi's standing in the university as the Director of the AD unit but also as he claimed, "having clout" (Vusi, chapter 6) has been instrumental in how ASD is perceived and legitimated in this university context. In ensuring that the unit commands the respect that Vusi thinks it deserves as a key player in the university, he believes that it is crucial to,

"understand the dynamics of how universities function, and how university structures function, how to leverage on that" (Vusi, section 6.2.2).

Being strategic and reading the university contexts and development and using that, in a sense, to facilitate the AD work has been a key strategy for academic developers. In a similar way, both Virginia's (chapter 5) and Cindy's narrative (chapter 4) draw on this approach, which they claim may be Machiavellian. Virginia draws our attention to dangling the carrot, wherein she says,

"Carrot! Find a carrot. People, and ourselves included, we like to have our egos massaged, we like to feel we're the centre, we like to feel we're being clever, so pander to it. Try and draw them in, try and hook them in some way." (Virginia, section, 5.2.3)

While Virginia (chapter 5) refers to how academic developers engage with academics through pandering to their egos, Cindy's approach for AD and ASD draws on both her intellectual and academic capital as well as being able to understand the context, as Vusi mentioned above, and leverage that. But she cautions about using strategy to enable the ASD work at her university.

“Speaking of power,” added Cindy, “you have got to understand how power works structurally. You know, to a large extent you go on a power immediately, once you get a title. You also go on a power by playing the system. You have to know how the governance system works, you have to know how to insert things; you have to know when strategic documents can be played with, that sort of thing. You need to know how the system works...many of us were called in to work in this area due to our education backgrounds. But I also knew that you can't just go on, go in and upset the apple cart. You have to move very slowly, very strategically. So Quality Assurance was coming in and so I sort of knew quite early on, that strategically I could pick up on that. So I worked very slowly, strategically and discursively and we were able to use the quality assurance story to get things established. So that was one thing, sort of, what is going on in context you can draw on, to get staff development going, suppose it's quite Machiavellian, but I've always been good I suppose, at analysing context.” (Cindy, section 4.3.4)

7.3.3. Concluding thoughts on Thinking with Bourdieu and Samuel's biographical forces

Thinking with Bourdieu's concepts about the three differentiated universities has revealed that social hierarchies and inequities continue to be perpetuated in university structures through the habitus of key agents and particular forms of capital valorised in higher education. These have influenced and shaped the practices of and structuring of the field of academic staff development. In comparing the two university's ASD at the two extremes: University A, a research-intensive urban university and University C, a rural University of Technology we see evidence of the ways in which capital, habitus and strategy (playing the game) work to construct two very diverse practices of academic staff development. At University A legitimacy and credibility of ASD initiatives was enhanced by a key agent, the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Teaching and Learning who possessed academic capital in her role as DVC but also stronger intellectual capital through her disciplinary scholarship. Having a programme for academic staff at the university being 'driven by the top' appeared to have accorded the teaching and learning unit at the time more credibility at the university, although the programme was differently experienced by academic staff as evidenced by the narrative accounts of academic developers at University A.

At university B, adopting an aggressive approach, being at the forefront of the university and understanding the context and knowing how to leverage this to advance the AD project at the university was evident. The habitus of the key role player as the director of the AD unit was critical in this regard. While resources were still constrained, this did not deter Vusi from forging ahead, placing his AD unit as a critical component of the university structure.

At university C, a rural university, we see the effects of disproportionate support (resources in the form of human, financial, and structural) that impact the agency of the manager to foreground the academic staff development. This challenging state of ASD at the university was exacerbated by the limited capital of the manager of the unit to be able to wield the kind of power needed to advance academic staff development.

This analysis focused on *thinking with* Bourdieu to examine the structuring of the field of HE and ASD and has shown that within the constraints placed on ASD through the power structures associated with capital and habitus, there have been moves to shift the structure of the field of higher education. This varied across university contexts, as highlighted above. There are constraints with respect to intellectual and academic capital of academic staff developers, with intellectual capital - through research, publications and citations - being more valued than promoting the social justice agenda of higher education, a focus of academic staff development.

Does this mean that academic staff developers need to accrue more intellectual capital to 'play the game' that is privileged, valued and legitimated by higher education? This is a key question emanating from this analysis of thinking with Bourdieu.

As per Cindy's argument, "if you want to be respected, then publish, get PhD, do research". There is no doubt that the valorisation of specific capital in the field of HE (Naidoo, 2004), in the form of intellectual capital, is not just a national phenomenon, but a global one too. Literature is abundant in this regard. Naidoo (2004) in her study of admissions policies in the South African HE context two decades ago and Kloot (2009, 2011, 2015) a decade later, on foundation programmes, a student AD programme, have both made similar observations about what was valued and privileged in the field of higher education.

Recognising this dichotomy in HE between research and teaching and learning has led the Department of HE and Training (DHET) to release the National Framework for Enhancing

academics as university teachers. This is a bold move to enhance the academic role through the professional development of academics.

This does not negate the importance of research (disciplinary research). I do believe that disciplinary research either through postgraduate qualifications, supervision of postgraduate students, or other forms of research in the discipline is critical in/for/of/ about knowledge building – the purpose of universities.

However, there are two critical challenges/ concerns that deserve further exploration and interrogation in this data set for this study. One, the commodification of such a knowledge-building process through the neoliberal ideologies that consume HE in SA (and other parts of the world). Two, what (and whose) knowledge is of most worth (Spencer, 1884) in the South African context, for Africa and the global south.

Drawing from these critical questions emanating from this study, what is the role for ASD in these explorations?

I discuss these issues in the following sections through *thinking with* Barad (section 7.4) and *thinking with* a decolonial lens (section 7.5).

When I initially conceptualised this study on exploring ASD in a changing HE context in South Africa, I selected Bourdieu's Field theory. This was on the basis that an examination of ASD as a new and emerging field within a HE that was already governed by specific logics was pertinent. AD and ASD emerged in the 1980s as ways in which HE was responding to the democratisation of the country and of the field of HE and transformation efforts in line with a new, yet fragile democracy. However, since its inception in the 1980s and its development almost four decades later, AD remains a contested terrain, a field of struggle with its legitimacy, credibility and status constantly questioned and under threat

Given that Bourdieu's Field theory and thinking tools (concepts) centred on issues of power dynamics, it seems apposite as a theory to *think with* about academic staff development. However, such an examination using Bourdieu's concepts, centred on the agents (academic staff developers) within the field: who they are (and become through the AD trajectory), the resources (capital) they possess and how this positions them within the field, how they

navigate the 'rules of the game' of HE or develop new rules in their efforts of transforming higher education. From this perspective, the field of academic staff development, how it is constructed, evolves and is sustained, is reliant to a large extent upon the agents, academic staff developers. This could refer to the biographical forces drawing on Samuel's (1988, 2008) Force Field model. But, as Samuel infers in this model that he developed to explain the forces impacting on teacher identity and the field of teacher education, there are other forces that include contextual, institutional or programmatic forces. In her study where she explored, HE admissions policies in South Africa, during political transition, just before the brink of democracy and in which she drew on Bourdieu's concept of field, Naidoo (2004) suggests that the analysis using Bourdieu's concepts could be complemented through for example, a materialist take on discourse analysis. In the next section, I continue thinking with Barad's (2007) feminist new materialism that explores entanglement and intra-actions of academic staff development.

7.4. Thinking with Barad and Samuel's forces (Contextual and Institutional)

Exploring intra-active entanglements that produce and (re)configure ASD

7.4.1. Introducing the theoretical constructs: Barad and Samuel

As alluded to in the Introduction of this chapter, when I commenced this study, I drew on Bourdieu's field theory and Samuel's Force Field model (also refer to chapter 2, part 2) to assist me in producing the data. As my interest in this study was in exploring the developing field of ASD, I was interested in what was, what is and what could be ASD. This also required that I explore why ASD existed in the way that it did, or why academic staff developers enacted their roles in the ways that they did. In other words, it was necessary to inquire into the forces that impacted on the production of the field of ASD. In this regard, Samuel's Force Field model was relevant. This model by Samuel (2008) illustrated the various forces that shaped (school) teacher identities – personal biography, contextual factors, institutional settings and forces, and programmatic forces. Samuel (2008) also argues for the interplay of these multiple forces in constructing teacher identities.

I extend Samuel's force field model by drawing on Barad's theoretical perspectives of intra-active entanglements and agential realism. While Samuel's model reflects the interaction of the multiple forces in a system, Barad's theory, drawn from posthumanism and feminist new materialism, recognises the complex entangled nature of ASD where human and non-human entities are co-constituted. From Barad's (2007) theoretical perspective, I draw on the concepts of entanglement, intra-action and agential realism. Barad refers to intra-actions as material-discursive, where entities are constituted in the process rather than pre-existing.

In this section, I draw on Samuel's (2008) contextual and institutional forces and I read these through the lens of Barad (2007). For example, a key contextual force impacting the construction of HE and ASD is neoliberal discourses perpetuating HE. In thinking with Barad, I explore how neoliberalism, performativity and managerialism are entangled with academic developers and their practice and the different ways in which AD practices are constructed. Instead of thinking of the neoliberal discourse permeating higher education as merely influencing practices, a new materialist take would regard these as active agents having a force that produces particular (re)configurings (Nietsche & Gowlet, 2019) of ASD practices.

Critical to this entanglement are the socio-historical contexts, which are also an active agent and force that contributes to structuring ASD in particular ways.

What follows next is a re-turning (Barad, 2014) to extracts of the narrative data from chapters 4 and 5 (Table 7.1.), which I read through Samuel’s Force field and Barad’s theory. This apparatus (Barad, 2007) is another example of my own intra-action with the theory and data, selecting certain extracts and not others for this assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) to explore ASD in a changing South African higher. This boundary-making practice creates particular agential cuts (Barad, 2007) about academic staff development, through the forces that act on the field.

Table 7.1: Selected narrative extracts from chapters 4 and 5.

| |
|--|
| <p>1. systemic interventions needed in higher education and that there have been lots of gentle nudging and no hammer blows. He went on further to say that staff development has been doing the nudging and asked whether that is enough. So I asked him what is gentle nudging. What are hammer blows? What do we need in Higher Education? (Nalini in conversation with Michael, section 4.3.2)</p> |
| <p>2. “we have to ask more critical questions. I think one of the knower attributes for many academic developers and for us is very affirming and bend over backwards and very respectful of our academic colleagues and I still believe that that’s very important. But I think that we also have erred on the side being too nice, and being too afraid, and maybe lacking the courage. I think now we have to be prepared to ask much more challenging questions.” (Mary, section 4.3.3)</p> |
| <p>3. <i>I (Nalini in conversation at Café Spiralina) thanked everyone for their thoughts and contributions and reiterated my interest in the notion of self-reflexivity and about the field of AD actually bending backwards on itself and asking: what are we as academic developers doing? Why? And perhaps our inability to do that.</i> “So, that self-reflexivity I think, as much as we write about it and we talk about it, we don’t have that deep ability to reflect because reflecting might mean that are consequences. I think that is complicated by the high stakes environments in which we work so there's a lot to lose, so one needs to understand that. And, being on the slippery slope as I explained earlier, nobody wants to admit that because already your position is tenuous so let's not go there; let me just continue doing what I'm doing” (Jane, section 4.3.3)</p> |
| <p>4. The government probably looks at the relevance of staff development very much as something in the neoliberal sense. As something in terms of achieving the knowledge, your knowledge economy. And therefore, seeing that the funding and those issues are all enveloped in all this. What happens is; if we have better academics who can probably understand the unpreparedness of students or whatever, then we can have better throughput, and all that. So, it's all intertwined within the neoliberal thought and I think to me that's problematic because then we begin to do the numbers....</p> |

I seriously think that AD has lost direction. Seriously!

People in power tend to use power and, connive or collude with the policies, that simply want quick-fixes

But, at the end of the day we might actually be doing, a disservice to the nation and, a disservice to global knowledge production;

we need to seriously rethink the direction of academic staff development. Especially in terms of - who do we involve in the debates?

Are we really going to continue taking higher education, staff development simply, as an additive

to the so-called, ordered, disciplines?

Are we going to be able to pursue this as a serious discipline on its own?

We need these debates. (Bongani, section 5.3.4)

I read the above narrative extracts diffractively with Samuel's (2008) identified contextual and institutional forces together with Barad's (2007) concepts of entanglement, agential realism, intra-action, material-discursive practices. Before proceeding to the analysis, a brief overview of Barad's theoretical concepts is discussed below.

A key aspect of a diffractive analysis is the focus of enacting *differences* that *matter*. For Barad (2007) diffractive analysis is a process "of reading insights through one another in attending to and responding to the details and specificities of relations of difference and how they matter" (p. 71). Barad (2007) alerts us to the quantum understanding of diffraction, a close reading of texts, rather than the classical understanding of bending and spreading out of a wave when it encounters an obstacle.

Of entanglement, in the opening lines of the book, Barad (2007) outlines that,

To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. (p. ix)

Emerging from this theory of entanglement, for Barad (2007), nothing is fixed and everything is an enactment. This is captured in their agential realism, which espouses a relational ontology. Barad's (2007, 2014) agential realist ontology rests upon a relational and material turn (Coole and Frost 2010, Fox and Alldred 2015b) that "de-privileges human agency, focusing instead upon how assemblages of the animate and inanimate together produce the

world” (Fox & Alldred, 2015a, p. 399). Through this relational paradigmatic positioning, the assemblage rather than the individual entity becomes the point of reference (Barad, 2007; Le Grange, 2020).

In an interview with Kleinman & Barad (2012, p.80) Karen Barad states that, “matter is not mere stuff, an inanimate given-ness. Rather, matter is substance in its iterative intra-active becoming—not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency.” In a turn to matter and materiality, such an approach considers “how things other than humans (for instance, a tool, a technology or a building) can be social ‘agents’, making things happen” (Fox & Alldred, 2018, quotations original). Gamble, Hanan & Nail (2019) draw attention to how matter is “alive”, “lively”, “vibrant”, “dynamic”, “agentive”, and thus “active” (emphasis through quotations, in original, p. 111). Matter is thus not a thing or an attribute of something, a noun so to speak, but rather, as indicated above, an enactment (mattering), a verb. And it is thus a performative act enacted through relations. Likewise, agency⁵³, traditionally understood as the will to act and possessed by a (human) entity, is considered an enactment. As alluded to in the previous section all matter, humans, non-humans and more than humans enact agency through their intra-actions.

Barad (2007) coined the neologism intra-action that refers to the “mutual constitution of entangled agencies” (p. 34) and distinguishes it from interaction, “which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognises that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action” (Barad, 2007, p.34). In this way, intra-action emphasises entanglements and agential flows critical to Barad’s agential realist framework.

Following the above theoretical account, I turn now to consider how the assemblages of the human and non-human agents (or the animate and non-animate) enact agency and intra-act to produce ‘agential cuts’ that depict the phenomenon of ASD in South Africa.

⁵³ It is important to also highlight that while posthumanist and feminist new materialist scholars describe matter as being agentic, other scholars also alert us that new materialisms is ‘new’ only as it concerns the euro-western and that agent ontologies have been part of indigenous epistemologies for millennia. See for example, the work of Gamble et al., 2019; Robinson-Morris, 2015; Rosiek, 2020; Rosiek & Snyder, 2018; Rosiek & Pratt, 2019; Wu et al., 2018

7.4.2. Contextual and Institutional Forces enacting Agential cuts and Material-discursive Intra-actions

In this section, I explore the agential cuts that are formed and intra-actions that emerge through the contextual and institutional forces, how these structure and legitimate particular forms of ASD and roles that are enacted by academic staff developers and new insights that could emerge from these diffractive readings. This diffractive analysis reveals a complex entanglement of multiple forces shaping academic staff development; it illuminates how power dynamics, policy pressures and ASD's status as a disciplinary or legitimate field of practice and research intra-act to create diverse realities for academic staff development.

Contextual forces and agential cuts

The need for 'systemic interventions' and references to 'gentle nudging' and 'hammer blow' in the extract 1 above could relate to contextual forces (Samuel, 2008) that emphasise agential cuts that determine what comes to matter in/for/about academic staff development. For Barad (2007), agential cuts are boundary-making practices that are enabled through particular agential intra-actions.

"Apparatuses enact agential cuts that produce determinate boundaries and properties of "entities" within phenomena... only through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of "components" of phenomena become determinate and that particular articulations become meaningful" (Barad, 2007, p.143, emphasis in original).

They add further that "[d]ifferent agential cuts produce different phenomena" (Barad, 2007, p. 175). How particular agential cuts come to matter and why, and what or who is accountable for particular agential cuts, is a crucial question for academic staff development. These agential cuts enable specific material-discursive practices where certain approaches to change are enacted over others. In this example, this may refer to 'gentle nudging' by ASD rather than 'hammer blows'. Materially gentle nudging could suggest reformist approaches, experimentation and incremental adjustments to institutional or national policies, procedures and practices. 'Hammer blows,' on the other hand, suggests more transformative, longer term, sustainable change. Discursively, these approaches fall within a continuum of non-confrontational, gradual change to more systemic, transformative change.

While the author of extract 1 suggests that ASD had not been forceful enough, is this a true reflection of this phenomenon in South African higher education? Boughey (2016) argues that

AD work had adopted a culture of compliance targeted toward meeting the needs of globalisation and vocationalism. Has AD indeed been complicit in bolstering particular forms of elitist normative educational worldviews? (Boughey, 2007). Or, “has AD indeed contributed to a transformative discourse engendering a greater critical social justice worldview and operations within the higher education” (Behari-Leak et al., 2018, p. 418)).

Michael adds further in extract 1 “...I think that this nudging issue is really, it’s still important because what you don’t want to also is to like make staff development a kind of have to do...Enforced!...then people kind of put their backs up. So, I think there is still a lot of nudging to be done but I think there is also a need for major kind of national interventions”

I divert to a national intervention, a *Framework for enhancing academics as university teachers* (DHET, 2018) a national guiding document supported by the Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa. In conversation with Lionel, who has been instrumental in overseeing the development of this document, I queried the idea of ‘enhancing’.

“Well,” with a slight chuckle Lionel says, “we could have titled it, ‘transforming teachers as social justice practitioners’. Imagine that, you shut off everybody, immediately. ‘Enhancing’ was chosen as a very strategic word. It is about recognising that a lot of work has been done. That you are not starting from a blank slate. That people transition into teaching roles in universities along a range of pathways and along those pathways they develop capacity and experience. It wasn’t about imposing a policy. I think there is a strong idea that equity, social justice is about recognising people, is about building people, is about working with people, is about taking people along, is about building communities. So the thinking is how do we work with people rather than on people. So how do we build people? Because that’s where the sustainability is. (Lionel, section 4.3.2)

Have we erred on the side of being too nice, too kind, in South African higher education, as Mary claims in extract 2? Is nudging enough? Do we need more hammer blows? Our student protests of 2015-2016 calling for the decolonisation of HE have posed critical challenges and blind spots for ASD and AD more generally, suggesting that more aggressive revision of HE and ASD is required. I discuss more of this in the next session 7.5 (thinking with a decolonial lens). However, the challenges remind us in ASD for the need to reconfigure the agential cuts shaping ASD practices, reviewing the material-discursive intra-actions emerging from these cuts and reframing the discourse and practices for ASD.

Entangled bodies marked by contextual and institutional forces

Such hegemonic performativity and efficiency discourse ensues and within this context academic developers are expected to contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning in a somewhat piecemeal and technical way to show immediate impact (Di Napoli, 2014), sometimes in contrast to their own values, resulting in hopelessness and worthlessness. These markings on bodies create long-term effects, with academic developers questioning their worth in the institutions, as we see in Bongani's narrative below:

“People think that I can stand there and just give them quick-fixes on how curriculum should be decolonised. I know as an academic that that's not true because these are complex issues, these are issues that need a lot of reflection. You cannot just go to staff members and say: Oh, you're doing physics, you do this; you decolonise, you do this; you decolonise. And, that's wrong!!!!

You then begin to see that academic developers begin to feel this hopelessness or this worthlessness, because we are probably viewed as people who just work in a positivist, quick-fix, measurable way. And so, people can usually say: “No but, you see, we have been talking about decolonisation, nothing is decolonising here”. Why? Because academic staff developers have done the quick-fix!!!!!! That's a problem and so you begin to start feeling, of course overwhelmed, because obviously you can't, do quick-fixes. All these things are very stressful. It's very stressful because sometimes you start thinking; why am I in this space? Why should I be in this space when I know what I am” (Bongani, section 5.3.4).

Bongani's narrative above reflects how contextual and institutional forces and the ensuing discourses of efficiency and neoliberal metric intra-acts with academic developers embodied experiences. The effect of these performative forces reduces complex pedagogical transformation to measurable outputs, resulting in epistemic violence that denies the depth of decolonial work required to bring about the transformation of HE in SA. And as Bongani stresses in his narrative account, this institutional power materialises as emotional and professional exhaustion.

7.5. Thinking with a decolonial lens and Samuel's forces (Contextual and Programmatic)

Exploring onto-epistemologies

“...if we were set up to help black students and if we are at the edge of the university in terms of seeing the problems that exist, why is it that AD came under fire for not being able to respond to students' concerns in the teaching and learning sense?.. Why haven't we chipped away at that in 25 years?” (Jane, section 6.3.3).

7.5.1. Why a decolonial lens to think with the data

In the previous sections, I examined the entanglement of multiple entities that work to produce ASD by enacting distinct agential cuts, in other words, producing particular configuring of academic staff development. The students' protests of 2015-2016, alluded to in the opening extract of this section, may be viewed as an agential cut that reconfigures the HE landscape in South Africa. Against the backdrop of these student protests, which illuminated blind spots and limitations in AD (Behari-Leak et al.,2018), a critical question emerged: if AD as a field was meant to be driving the transformation agenda, then why is it that almost thirty years later students raised critical challenges related to their epistemological access and success and their needs to assert their ontological presence?

The aforementioned concerns and challenges have brought to the fore, the ethical and moral responsibility and accountability of ASD and a critique of its epistemological and ontological foci and role in the transformation of South African higher education. Why did academic staff developers enact their roles in the way that they did? Whose interests were served or not served by the provision of academic staff development?

In her research on decolonising 'development' studies in the global north, Narayanaswamy (2023) reflects on the need for development researchers to reflect on their own roles in perpetuating particular forms north-south binaries and ponders the question whether development researchers are complicit in the problems that exist. Can we ask the same of ASD – is ASD complicit in perpetuating particular forms of practices and worldviews that reinforce the status quo of coloniality in South African higher education?

This is a complex question, given the sociohistorical context that underpins HE in SA and requires further analytical review. It is apposite at this juncture to draw on a decolonial

attitude (Mignolo, 2007) and the decolonial turn (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 2011, Maldonado-Torres & Cavouris, 2017) to *think with* the data. As Maldonado-Torres (2007) indicates, the decolonial turn which was “announced by W.E.B. Du Bois in the early twentieth century”... entails... “making visible the invisible and about analyzing the mechanisms that produce such invisibility” (p. 262). Maldonado-Torres (2011) posits further,

The decolonial turn does not refer to a single theoretical school, but rather points to a family of diverse positions that share a view of coloniality as a fundamental problem in the modern (as well as postmodern and information) age and decolonization or decoloniality as a necessary task that remains unfinished (p. 2).

While it is evident that decoloniality has been around since the early days of colonisation in other parts of the world, it became prominent in South African higher education during the students’ protest action in 2015-2016 (Hlatshwayo, et al., 2020), highlighted earlier. Following the national student protests, there was a surge (or rather, more appropriately, a growing body) of scholarship drawing on various aspects of decolonial theories, by academic developers, those in the areas of sociology and philosophy of education, curriculum developers, environmental education and to some extent in disciplines as well. In the midst of the protest era, Behari-Leak (2015) cautioned that it cannot be business as usual for HE institutions in South Africa. Fataar (2019) avers, there is misrecognition of students based on their academic preparedness for HE and advocates for a ‘*socio epistemic centring*’ (p. 23) that includes students’ cultural histories and identities. He purports further that decolonial knowledge should be at the centre of the academic project (Fataar, 2022). This approach also recognises the ontological turn for HE (Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2007; Shawa, 2019) in addition to an epistemological focus.

Furthermore, findings from a collaborative research project, *SA in Rurality in Higher Education* (SARiHE), offered the following suggestion,

to re-shape higher education and transform curricula, institutions need to bring multiple knowledges into dialogue through a transformation process that links places, people, knowledge(s), and skills, offering students spaces for recognition and visibility to make sense of their own experiences (Timmis, et al., 2019, p. 76).

While there have been some strides in developing scholarship in the field of higher education, the wealth of research (Boughey and Niven, 2012) is received with skepticism by Ganas et al. (2021). There appears to be a slow transformation (Badat, 2022) in HE and student success is still, racialised, [classed] and gendered (Mgqwashu, 2023).

Why do these experiences exist in the way that they do?

Why was ASD as agents of change (Debowski, 2014) not able to bring about transformative and sustainable in South African higher education, thirty years into democracy? One of the earlier scholarly contributions from the field of ASD was the paper by Vorster and Quinn (2017), titled, *The 'decolonial turn': What does it mean for academic staff development?* In this paper, they share their reflections as follows

“although we have encouraged lecturers to be critical of their practices, to take into account issues of transformation such as equity, social justice and inclusion, these ideas were largely framed as being related to pedagogical issues rather than to decolonising the university, knowledge and curricula” (Vorster and Quinn, 2017, p. 42).

This reflective account by Vorster and Quinn (2017), while focused on their practices illuminated the deeper, more critical engagement required for the decolonial project that is beyond a parochial focus on pedagogies, and that challenges the hegemonies of global north paradigms, perspectives and theoretical positions. This is especially important given that coloniality persists in South African higher education, long after colonialism has ended. This is evident in Badat's reflections on the *Review of higher education in South Africa, twenty-five years into democracy*. Badat offers the following observation:

“...there is evidence of substantial symbolic transformation in policy aspirations and strategic intentions at both national and institutional levels. However, there is limited success in turning policy and strategy into a transformational groundswell in the sector...main reasons for this apparent impasse and identifies major barriers, among others, in the form of prevailing conceptual paralysis in the sector about what constitutes transformation, the prevalence of deep coloniality by which the matrices of power, knowledge and sense of being remain hamstrung in the western canon and an underdeveloped capacity to lead transformation across the sector” (Badat, 2022 p. 232).

Next, in line with the decolonial turn, I draw on the colonial matrix of power, knowledge and being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007), diffracting this with Samuel's contextual and programmatic forces to illuminate the extent that colonial legacies continue to shape ASD in a changing South African HE context.

7.5.2. Diffracting Samuel's contextual and programmatic forces with a decolonial lens

I engage in a diffractive reading of Samuel's (2008) contextual and programmatic forces with the colonial matrices of power, knowledge and being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) with a selection of narrative extracts to reveal interference patterns that offer plausibly a more nuanced understanding of why academic staff developers enact their roles in the way that they do.

I re-turn to the opening extract (at the beginning of section 7.5) and the following data extracts below, diffracting the data with the theoretical concepts. I draw on Barad's (2014) notion of re-turning, which they aver is not about returning to the past "but re-turning as in turning it over and over again" (p. 168). They draw on the example of the earthworm to describe the process of turning over and over again, "ingesting and excreting it, tunnelling through it, burrowing, all means of aerating the soil, allowing oxygen in, opening it up and breathing new life into it" (Barad, 2015, p. 168).

Applying this re-turning process to the diffractive analysis of reading the opening extract and the following narrative extracts in Table 7.2 through the theoretical concepts of Samuel's contextual and programmatic forces and decolonial concepts reflects an intra-active entanglement of data, theory and researcher to produce new knowledge. It is not merely a matter of returning (going back) to the previously analysed narrative data. The re-turning process allows the data to produce new meanings through engaging with the theory. New interference patterns (Barad, 2007, 2014), in other words, new insights emerge from this intra-action between data and theory that may not have been visible previously. In line with Baradian (2007) thought of agential realism, the data becomes an active participant in the process of meaning-making.

Table 7.2: Selected narrative extracts from chapter 4 (My emphasis added)

| |
|---|
| 1. "curriculum ... is 'a sacred ground ' for the academics" (Sally, section 4.3.1) |
| 2. "So, AD people have never really questioned in the past the epistemologies of what people teach. So, they're called into a department, they take the knowledge for granted, they never talk back to the disciplinary lecturer and say: Hey, don't you think you should... Maybe we're starting to do that now." (Jane, section 4.3.3) |
| 3. "I also think there is a need to be critical of our teaching and learning centres. The whole fees must fall and the decolonial turn, has really pulled the rug on us because we've been so focused on epistemological access and we haven't paid attention to epistemological justice. And, so that's made us, I think, just in the last couple of years, certainly since 2015, 2016, become more introverted and questioning our own practices. " (Sally, section 4.3.3) |
| 4. "As you've also mentioned the decolonial turn, so, if I had to pick just some ideas that students raised, i.e. who's silenced? Who's marginalised? Whose hands go up and who answers? Who sits in the groups, are those racial groups in the classes?" "Why haven't we chipped away at that in 25 years? Are we going in with a script and we continue, we think we're doing good work but actually not seeing what's right in front of us? So, that self-reflexivity I think, as much as we write about it and we talk about it, we don't have that deep ability to reflect because reflecting might mean that there are consequences . And, being on the slippery slope as many in AD/ASD are, nobody wants to admit that because already your position is tenuous so let's not go there; let me just continue doing what I'm doing. I think that's the tact that leaders in staff development have taken or AD, they just say: Let's get on with it . But, in the long run, that's really not going to build a cadre of, you know, AD people who can stand up anywhere and say: We know what we're about." (Jane, section 4.3.3) |

The diffractive reading reveals ASD as entangled within the sociohistorical context of SA HE. While there are attempts at transformation and development of scholarship, it is evident that coloniality persists through the complex interplay between power, knowledge and being and the contextual and programmatic forces.

Interference patterns shaping ASD practices

Insights from the diffractive analysis reveal interference patterns at the levels of epistemology, ontology and power dynamics. Reference to 'slippery slopes' and 'tenuous position' (extract 4) limits and constrains the agency of academic staff developers, resulting in a compliance mode, as reflected in 'let's get on with it' (extract 4) and a form of survival tactic to secure their positions in HE institutions. These further limit ASD's role and authority

as legitimate role players, and to ‘build a cadre of academic developers who can stand up’ (extract 4).

This constrained power is reflected further in the epistemological projects, where curricula and knowledge are ‘sacred ground for academics’ (extract 1) and academic developers have limited power, authority and credibility to ‘talk back’ (extract 2). This reveals the colonial power structure in what knowledges are legitimated and valorised in higher education.

Ontologically, the ‘deep ability to reflect’ and ‘questioning our own practices’ (extract 3), is coupled with dire consequences and risks and when constrained further by tenuous positions contributes to insecurity for academic developers. The above interference patterns coincide to configure how and why ASD exist in the ways that they do in different contextual realities of South African higher education.

The effect of precarity through the interplay of tenuous positions and the need for more critical engagement with HE structures, and knowledge creation results in limited action and traditional ASD approaches. This calls for renewed agency by academic developers by possibly building collective agency which will enable the structural, cultural and agential conditions (Archer, 2000) to engage in deep reflexivity, challenge ‘the sacred ground’ of curricula, and work towards building and sustaining new spaces for transformative and sustainable change and knowledge creation in/of/for HE that remains in flux.

A key challenge for ASD is in its paradoxical position where it must use colonial institutional structures to challenge colonial legacies, a case of ‘the master’s tools that will never dismantle the master’s house’ (Lorde, 1981).

7.6. Toward a synthesis: Diffractive entanglements

In this section, I diffract the theoretical insights through each other to illuminate further questions and insights about the field of academic staff development. These diffractions reveal the following, which illuminate that ASD is not just a neutral practice (or scholarship) for enhancing learning and teaching but is a complex process of negotiating multiple forces:

- The material-discursive arrangements of ASD may reinforce or challenge the existing power structures of HE and influence how the HE field is constructed, which in turn constructs academic staff development. This is an iterative process.

The power dynamics within HE are continually shaped and reshaped through ASD practices. This iterative process suggests that ASD may be regarded as more than just a technical process of professional development but could either perpetuate or challenge existing power relations

- The embodied, contextualised epistemologies can contribute to decolonising ASD praxis

Following the decolonial framing, this approach recognises that knowledge is situated, embedded in lived experiences and underpinned by individual and collective histories. This will require challenging Eurocentric hierarchies and respecting multiple ways of creating knowledges.

- Academic capital is materially and discursively produced, and this could relate to colonial legacies within the socio-historical context of South Africa. Acquiring academic capital is not a neutral process but is deeply influenced by historical colonial structures, especially in a country like South Africa with a socio-historical context underpinned by inequities that permeate through higher education. Ultimately, this influences how ASD is constructed.

Sharon Stein (2024) encourages us to expand our collective response-ability – our ability to respond (Barad, 2007; Murriss & Bozalek, 2019) - to what is being silenced, in more accountable ways. Diffractively reading the data through multiple theoretical referents has led to further questions for the developing field of ASD in a shifting South African HE context.

- How do we build and sustain the field of ASD as a legitimate field of practice and research?
- What ‘powerful knowledge’ (Maton, 2014a) is required for this purpose for academic staff development? Powerful for whom? And for what purpose?

Reflecting on AD and drawing on the work of Suellen Shay (2012), Boughey (2022) claims that AD as a field is not there, yet! “AD has been able to draw on relevant theories that provide not only strong explanations for why things are the way they are, but a solid basis for pedagogical practices based on social constructivist theories, academic literacies, critical theory and discourses” (Behari-leak et al., 2018, p. 413). Vorster and Quinn (2017) reflect on whether the strong theories that they have drawn on need further interrogation in terms of

their usefulness for engaging in the deep work required. Boughey argues that the theories used in AD are drawn mainly from the north (see also for example, Vorster and Quinn, 2017). She proposes further work on decoloniality, drawing on Ubuntu (Boughey, 2022).

In January of 2024, Lesley⁵⁴ stood up in a plenary session of a Legitimation Code theory (LCT) conference and made a profound observation of the research being done in AD, which I believe is pertinent for this study and for advancing the field of academic staff development. Lesley draws extensively on LCT as a theoretical tool for her research and engagement with academic staff and in her ASD initiatives institutionally, nationally and internationally. She remarked (rephrased)

“we are doing all this research, yet our students are still experiencing challenges...should we not be drawing on something else more relevant to our context, something like Ubuntu?”

Lesley provokes us to consider whether we need to think differently about academic staff development.

Behari Leak et al. (2018) aver that perhaps the gaze was somewhere elsewhere, such that academic developers were not able to see what was in front of them. Thus, a key question emerging from this study is:

Should we broaden and shift the gaze in academic staff development?

Ndlovu- Gatsheni (2021, p. 80) encourages a “re-worlding from the global south,” and Behari-Leak et al. (2022) suggest reconceptualising epistemologies as pluriversal. I expand on this further in the next chapter and proffer possibilities for ASD in a changing South African HE context, in line with the above provocations.

⁵⁴ Pseudonym

CHAPTER 8

THEORISING THE BIOGRAPHY OF ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT

8.1. Introduction and Overview

This study investigates the life history of ASD within the evolving landscape of the of South African HE context. While previous life history research has focused on individuals (e.g., Samuel, 2008) or an institution (e.g., Dhunpath, 2011), this work expands the scope to explore the life history of a field (or emerging discipline): academic staff development. To achieve this, I delved into the lived experiences of academic staff developers, leaders of teaching and learning centres and representatives from the national higher education units in South Africa, examining their roles, challenges and experiences. A crucial aspect of this inquiry involved interrogating how power works to construct the field of academic staff development. Chapter Four focused on understanding ASD conceptually/ philosophically through a series of conversations. Chapters Five and Six explored ASD operationally, drawing on individual narratives.

In Chapter Seven, I employed Jackson and Mazzei's (2012, 2022) *thinking with theory methodology* and Barad's (2007) *diffractive analysis* to think through my data by drawing on and thinking with a range of theoretical referents. This theoretical interplay, diffracting the data with concepts from Bourdieu's Field theory, Samuel's Force field model, Barad's agential realist framework and a Decolonial lens, offered a nuanced understanding of how the field of ASD is structured within a changing South African context.

This present Chapter Eight constitutes a culminating comparative stance, emerging from the debates of earlier chapters and proposes the central thesis of this study. This is developed incrementally in four parts. First, in illustrating the biography of ASD as a field-in-becoming, I draw on the *figuration of the rhizome* from Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to illustrate the entangled, rhizomic features of academic staff development, consisting of an *assemblage of intra-acting* (Barad, 2007) elements. Such a field engages in deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, navigating smooth and striated spaces as new lines of flight (ASD

practices) are formed, specific to and shaped by the national and institutional contextual forces.

Next, building on the previous chapter's exploration of ASD's paradoxical nature, I delve deeper by employing the concept of the *pharmakon*. This is a Greek term signifying a substance that simultaneously functions as both a cure and a poison. I examine ASD through this lens, challenging its perception as a universal solution (cure) for higher education's challenges while also questioning its potential negative effects (poison).

Thirdly, the *coloniality of power, knowledge and being* poses significant challenges (also discussed in chapter 7 and illustrated above through the *pharmakon*). Provoked by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021, p. 80) to think differently through "re-worlding from the global south," I recommend broadening and shifting the gaze for ASD in SA by cultivating a southern gaze for academic staff development. While southern-centric perspectives for the global south are not entirely new, I recommend that ASD in South Africa reconsider knowledge-ing (Taylor, 2021)⁵⁵ in/ of/ for/ about academic staff development through a *decolonial praxis*.

Critical to developing ingenuity for ASD in South Africa is the cultivation of an ASD gaze that fosters ASD praxis that is truly transformative and socially just. I draw on Raewyn Connell's (2007) *southern theory* to offer a critique of the hegemony of global north theories and the power relations in knowledge creation in ASD practices. I further draw on a *constellation of gazes* from key scholars to show how a particular gaze may perpetuate power and control (as in the understanding of the *medical gaze* by Foucault, 2003) and inferiority and othering (*postcolonial theory/ colonial gaze*, Said, 1978). Furthermore, I elaborate on hooks' (1993) *oppositional gaze* that resists domination through developing critical consciousness. I argue in this thesis for a *cultivated gaze* (Maton, 2014b), which requires critical reflexivity and deep interrogation of what and who is being valued, legitimated, privileged, centred or marginalised, disadvantaged, and decentred in ASD practices. Through cultivating a southern gaze for ASD, I advocate for re-turning the northern gaze, that includes and embraces an ethico-ontoepistemology (Barad, 2007).

⁵⁵ Carol Taylor (2021) rejects the neoliberal construct of knowledge 'production' and proposes knowledge-ing for knowledge creation. In line with her posthumanistic orientation knowledge-ing for Taylor (2021) "acknowledges the processual nature of knowledge-making. It shifts from knowledge as a thing – separable, contained, over and done with – to knowledge as a doing, an unfolding, a process that is open, nomadic, unfinished and perhaps unfinishable" (p. 30).

I argue next that a southern gaze underpinned by the principles of Ubuntu and ukama offers a more inclusive and transformative approach to academic staff development. Drawing on several scholars, I subscribe to the notion of Ubuntu that encompasses care and responsibility for all entities, which includes both human and non-human entities.

Finally, having illustrated the elements of the ASD biography, I draw on *the Lotus flower as the metaphorical representation of this thesis* that encapsulates all these elements discussed above. As a rhizomatous herb (Hajela et al., 2018), the lotus represents multiplicity; they do not exist on their own but rather as an assemblage of lotuses. The lotus flower is known to grow in a messy environment. The environment constitutes (nurtures) the lotus, which in turn constitutes the environment by enhancing it – both are imbricated, an entangled phenomenon. Likewise, ASD is entangled in a HE environment, marked by constant disruptions and complexities, but with immense possibilities for change through collaboration, dialogue, critique, hope and love (decolonial love).

I close this thesis chapter by proposing the LOTUS RHIZE framework for ASD IN SA HE.

8.2. Biography of Academic Staff Development

8.1.1. ASD as Rhizome

In theorising the biography of ASD as a field in becoming, I drew inspiration from the work of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in their 1987 book, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and schizophrenia*⁵⁶. Specifically, I draw on the figuration of the rhizome to illustrate the entangled, rhizomic features of ASD that resist linear configuration. This is a shift away from a focus on individuals (academic staff developers) to consider the assemblage of intra-acting (Barad, 2007) elements that constitute, define and configure the field. Such a field engages in deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, navigating smooth and striated spaces as new lines of flight (ASD practices) are (per)formed, specific to and shaped by the institutional, national and global forces.

⁵⁶ Whilst this theoretical exposition is relatively dated, its relevance and value inspiring South African work is relatively underdeveloped for academic staff development scholarship, and this thesis contributes to showing the enduring value of a worthwhile theory and this seminal work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

8.1.1.1. Rhizome from Botany

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) drew on the rhizome to depict a non-linear network. Drawn from botany, a rhizome, “describes a form of plant that can extend itself through its underground horizontal tuber- like root system and develop new plants” (Parr, p. 232).

Examples from nature include the ginger or turmeric root plant.

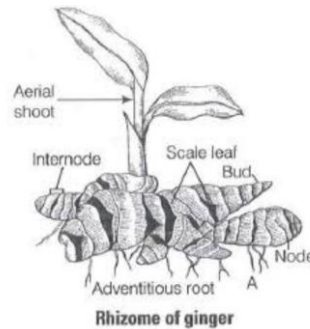


Figure 8.1 The ginger rhizome

(Source <https://artpictures.club/autumn-2023.html>)

8.1.1.2. Principles and philosophical underpinnings

In their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) draw attention to a tree and advance their argument in support of the rhizome with respect to thinking.

They describe the rhizome as follows:

“A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb ‘to be’, but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, ‘and...and...and...’.” (p. 25)

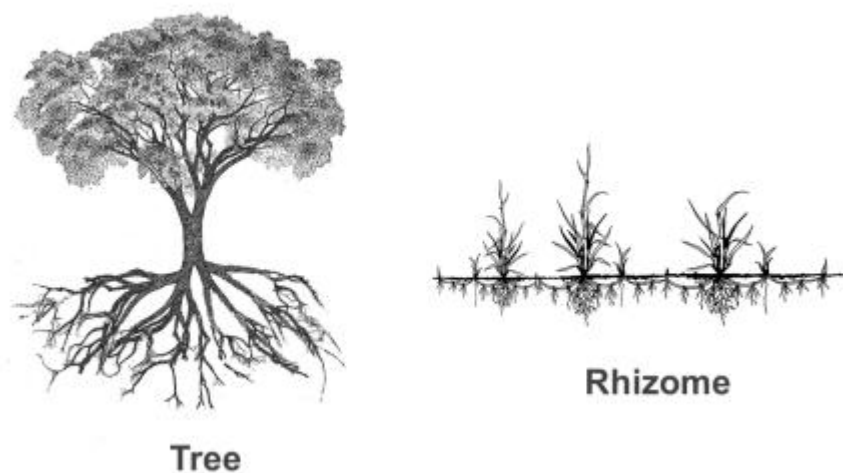


Figure 8.2: Comparison of the Arborescent tree and rhizome

(Source: <https://artpictures.club/autumn-2023.html>)

In using the tree to illustrate the features of the rhizome Deleuze and Guattari (1987) demonstrate that rhizomatic thinking discards the notion of linearity (as in “no beginning or end”), rejects hierarchy with no privileged positions (“in the middle”), shifts away from fixity and focus on relationality (“mutual co-constitution”) and relationships (“between things, interbeing, intermezzo”), to a focus on interconnections and partnerships (“rhizome is alliance”) rather than hierarchies of knowledge formation e.g., Family trees, carrying knowledge over generations (“tree is filiation”).

A key aspect of the rhizomatic philosophy is the focus on becoming rather than being and suggests that practices are constantly in flux and influenced by a multiplicity of forces (Martin & Strom, 2015). This is portrayed with the conjunction ‘and...and...and’ depicting its continuous state of becoming. As McIntyre (2016) notes, “[t]he phenomenon of ‘unseen’ connectivity is intrinsic to the concept of a rhizome (p. 21). “The planar movement of the rhizome resists chronology and organization, instead favoring a nomadic system of growth and propagation” (Wikipedia). In the HE context of South Africa, ASD may be considered as a rhizome that emerges in the middle of the context, propagating into multiple directions and “becoming might be conceived as the eternal, productive return of difference” (Stagoll, in Parr, 2010. p. 26).

Other key characteristics and principles of the rhizome from *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) that are relevant for understanding ASD are the following:

- The principle of connection and heterogeneity - that summarises that “any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7). This feature of the rhizome reflects its ability to make connections with entities “outside of its own immediate context because of the inter-relationship between elements of any multitude of ideas or concepts, no matter how far removed they may seem from the central theme” (McIntyre, 2016, p. 182).
- Principle of multiplicity – A multiplicity for Deleuze is not just a collection of discreet elements but should be considered in its “substantive form - as a constellation of something” (Parr, in Hordvik, 2018, p. 62). In other words, a multiplicity has generative capacities and transformative potential to create new configurations through

interconnections. A multiplicity can exist within other multiplicities; different multiplicities can combine to create an assemblage that produces a phenomenon. For example, a multiplicity of staff developers – with their own knowledges, practices, worldviews, values, principles - connects with the university multiplicity comprising managers, places/ contexts, policies, discourses to produce the ASD assemblage that constructs/ influences/ shapes the phenomenon of ASD in a particular university. University ASD multiplicities may connect regionally, or across regions to produce ASD in a country – these then connect across regions to construct a global phenomenon of ASD...and, and, and...

- Asignifying rupture – if broken at any point, the rhizome can re-grow and produce a line of flight. Through this process, it undergoes continuous transformation. “A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines”.
- Cartography and Decalomania – a rhizome may be viewed as a map rather than a tracing. This map conceptually reflects the complex network and interconnections that produce a phenomenon.

Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy of the rhizome has been used in a number of studies, most notably to describe rhizomatic learning (e.g., Brailas, 2020). In addition, it is used in a diverse range of studies, for example, examining students’ transitioning into HE (Gravett, 2021), self-study in teacher education (Hordvik, 2018; Hordvik et al., 2018; Hordvik et al., 2019; Martin and Strom, 2015; Strom, 2015), exploring global online learning and professional development (McIntyre, 2015); and as a methodology for research inquiries (Honan & Sellers, 2006) amongst others. There is a growing body of research using rhizomatic theory to explore various aspects of teacher professional development, for example, on instructional coaching (Sherman, 2019; Sherman & Teemant, 2021). While these studies illuminate some aspects of professional development, my study intends to contribute to the scholarship of ASD by theorising the biography of ASD using the rhizomatic philosophy.

The complex landscape of ASD, with its multifaceted and diverse nature and underpinnings, resonates well with Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) rhizomatic philosophy. The field’s inherent characteristics that include its multiple entry points, diverse ontological positions, distinct axiological orientations and heterogeneous methodological and theoretical frameworks/

philosophies/ principles, align well with the rhizomatic thinking. The rhizome's core principles discussed in the section above – multiplicity, networked and interconnected relationships, generative disruptions through ruptures and the rhizome's capacity to connect seemingly disparate entities (comprising human and non-human) – make it an apposite conceptual lens to develop the thesis for this study. This theoretical alignment reflects ASD as a dynamic network that resists hierarchical and linear conceptualisations and categorisations.

Furthermore, the relational ontology of Deleuze and Guattari that underpins the above principles emphasises reality as a constantly evolving, dynamic network of interconnections. In describing a relational ontology, Murris and Bozalek (2019) draw on the work of Barad and Deleuze and claim that “entities do not ontologically pre-exist relationships, but rather that entities come into being through human and more than human relationships” (p. 3) and they further emphasise that “Barad's relational ontology is referred to as entanglement or worlding, and Deleuze's as assemblages” (p. 7).

An assemblage is a constellation of how human and non-human actors work to produce something, in this case, academic staff development. For Deleuze and Guattari everything exists as a multiplicity. The relational ontology reveals academic staff development, not as a fixed entity, but as a constantly evolving set of practices, relationships and knowledge dimensions that emerge (and undergo metamorphoses) through multiple entities in the HE ecosystem.

8.1.1.3. The ASD Rhizome

The rhizome is used to theorise the biography of ASD in terms of 1) movement and becoming; 2) non-linear assemblages of entangled entities that intra-act; 3) exist in multiplicities; 4) produce multiple lines of flight through ruptures and offshoots.

AD in South Africa represents a complex assemblage of intra-acting elements that resists a linear configuration. The narrative portrayals in this study that make a particular agential cut (Barad, 2007, 2014), capturing the trajectory of ASD in South Africa, reflect a dynamic, complex system, one that has been constantly changing since its inception almost four decades ago, with multiple points of rupture and offshoots. This rupturing of the system, we have witnessed, is continuous as HE and societies/context (national, global and institutional) continue to change through the multiple forces that impact the systems.

Linguist (2019) offers the following characteristics of the field of academic (staff) development, which may be synonymous with the ASD rhizome:

Fragmentation: the field is characterised as having a fragmented nature without a singular identity. Linguist (2019) argues that the fragmentation is due to the diverse roles and responsibilities of academic developers. He posits that AD “is more a community and/or organization position, than a position defined by a codified set of practices” (p. 3). It is apposite at this juncture to draw on the work of Boughey (2022) with respect to the kinds of knowledge produced in ASD and how this structures the field. Drawing on the work of Gamble (2009) and Shay (2012), Boughey presents another view of ASD concerning the ‘codified set of practices. She claims that ASD practices have largely been presented as codified practices, or craft knowledge, in other words, everyday practices of learning and teaching from which principles for good practices emerge. Boughey (2022) further draws on Garraway and Bozalek (2019) to argue that much of these codified practices are similar to ‘show and tell’ presentations that are offered in teaching and learning conferences and do not have sufficient theoretical knowledge or proceduralised conceptual knowledge (Boughey, 2022, p. 995) to be able to translate these practices in order to see the problems (of student learning in HE in South Africa, which is ultimately the focus of academic staff development). Boughey calls for a need to enhance and expand the knowledge base of ASD to enable opportunities to re-see the problems impacting on higher education. I discuss this further in the section on Broadening and shifting the gaze (section 8.3).

Navigating Fault lines: Linguist refers to the tensions that exist within the field of ASD with respect to how academic developers see themselves, especially if they are disciplinary migrants (Green & Little, 2013; Manathunga, 2007), who join from a more established disciplinary field into ASD that is less established or recognised or respected as a field. Linguist claims that “[there is no direct path into AD as there is not an established set of entry qualifications or vocational standards” (p. 9) and this synonymous with the rhizomic characteristics of ASD with multiple entry points. He draws on Manathunga (2006) who describes academic (staff) development as a liminal space similar to Whitchurch (2015) who would regard this as a third space (drawing on the work of Homi Bhabha). Academic developers themselves do not regard ASD as a disciplinary home. Working within the third space, according to Whitchurch (2015), means that academic developers need to manage

ambiguous roles. Insights from her research suggest that in spite of these ambiguities, the motivation lies in academic developers' commitment to making a difference.

“Despite frustrations associated with, for instance, resource constraints, the studies suggest that higher education institutions remain favoured places to work. More specifically, the attractions of working in Third Space included being able to make a difference” (Whitchurch, 2015, p. 18)

I discuss further tensions, ambiguities and paradoxes of the field in the next section (8.2.2).

Drawing on a Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomic illustration, ASD in a changing SA HE context could be viewed as a non-linear assemblage of entangled entities that intra-act to produce multiple lines of flight, that remains in-becoming. Such a field engages in deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, dynamically moving between smooth and striated spaces. According to Drumm (2025) “[s]mooth space allows unfettered movement from one point to another where movement itself is more important than the arrival...[s]triated space, on the other hand, is structured and hierarchical, where movement is regulated...” (p. 40). As new ASD practices (lines of flight) are formed, they are continually shaped by the national and institutional contexts that both constrain and enable their development. Drumm (2025) adds further that “[s]mooth and striated spaces are not separate physical locations, but forces which are acting and interacting within spaces. Therefore, *smooth* space can be *reterritorialised* into *striated* space and vice versa” (emphasis in original, p. 40)

According to Livesey (in Parr, 2010),

Specific actions can find, define, and assemble territories, and the forces of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation themselves develop new territories....An assemblage emerges when a function emerges; ideally it is innovative and productive. The result of a productive assemblage is a new means of expression, a new territorial/spatial organisation, a new institution, a new behaviour, or a new realisation. The assemblage is destined to produce a new reality, by making numerous, often unexpected, connections (Livesey, in Parr, 2010, pp 18-19).

ASD is SA, a dynamic field of continuous transformation. While fixed national and institutional structures and frameworks create defined pathways for ASD (regarded as striated spaces) and may constrain ASD practices, ASD also has the agency to engage in the process of deterritorialisation through innovation, creativity and adaptability. This is a process of breaking free from established and fixed structures. The process of reterritorialisation (the process of reconfiguring or reorganisation) occurs after the deterritorialised practices become

integrated into institutions allowing for ASD practices that are more fluid, responsive and open to experimentation. These smooth spaces allow for practices to develop, offering flexible learning opportunities. However, these practices may differ across institutional contexts, with some processes occurring more easily than others. The narrative data representations in chapters four to six reflect this diversity across institutional contexts.

Having invoked Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic philosophy to theorise the biography of ASD in the changing South African HE context, a critical question emerges – how does such a disparate field of academic staff development, as portrayed in the aforementioned discussion, augur for building and sustaining the field as a legitimate field of praxis and research?

Would drawing on arborescent, tree-like filiation with some amount of fixity and a generational, core body of knowledge, as part of the ASD assemblage, contribute to enhancing its legitimacy as a field and its transformative potential?

Herein lies one of the many paradoxes of the ASD assemblage. I will discuss some of these paradoxes in the next section and proffer some provocations for enhancing the field of ASD. However, before proceeding to this next section tackling these paradoxes, I wish to draw attention to an important aspect raised by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) in their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, specifically, about dualism. The intention is not to take on a dualistic view, pitting the tree-like development of thought against the rhizomatic thinking. Their interest lies in demonstrating that there are other possibilities for ways of thinking that may be limited by the arborescent way of thinking, which is linear and fixed. They do admit, though, that they may have reverted to dualism “by contrasting maps to tracings, as good and bad sides” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.13).

They draw on psychoanalysis and linguistics to show how tracings alone root people and phenomena in one way by translating “the map into an image...transformed the rhizome into roots and radicles. Thus, diverse map tracing and rhizome-root assemblages exist, each with varying degrees of deterritorialisation. It is not uncommon to find tree or root structures with rhizomes and conversely, a tree branch or root division can burgeon a rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate that one is, in essence, part of the other – “[t]here are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots” (p. 20) – and they suggest the importance of “try[ing] the other, reverse but nonsymmetrical, operation. Plug the tracings back into the map, connect the roots or trees back up with a rhizome” (p. 14). Relating this to ASD and the challenge highlighted earlier, there is the possibility of creating a body of knowledge that signifies the field, a vertical knowledge structure, whilst also drawing from a range of and producing other knowledges, horizontally.

However, what (and whose) knowledge is of most worth is another consideration, which I discuss in the next two sections, the Paradoxical nature of ASD (8.2.2) and Broadening and shifting the gaze (8.3.3).

8.2.2. *The Paradoxical nature of ASD*

This section builds on the findings from the previous chapter 7 on the paradoxical and complex nature of ASD that constitutes its biography. I then shift to elaborate on this aspect of its biography through theorising with Derrida’s (1981) concept of the pharmakon. ASD is traditionally considered a beneficial endeavour. However, when examined deconstructively by drawing on Derrida, it reveals a multifaceted character like the pharmakon. Originating from the Greek origin, the pharmakon is illustrative of a drug that serves simultaneously as a cure and poison, a duality that illuminates the contradictory nature of ASD. I trouble both these ideas concerning ASD, discussing my discomfort with considering ASD as a panacea (cure) for the challenges (ills) of HE and/or of being toxic (poison). After resolving this tension, I discuss how ASD embodies these inherent contradictions. I illustrate the pharmakonic aspect of the ASD biography, especially in light of its transformative intent on one hand and the impact of neoliberalism and the hegemonic stronghold of coloniality that perpetuates ASD practices and maintains the status quo of injustices and slow transformation (Badat, 2022, 2023).

8.2.2.1. The Pharmakon

The idea of the pharmakon as a metaphor for thinking with/ about/ of ASD constitutes one way of making sense of the levels of paradoxes and complexities when one examines the field of ASD that came to be revealed during the analysis of the fieldwork of this study. Wikipedia describes pharmakon as a ‘remedy, poison, scapegoat’ ([Pharmakon - Wikipedia](#)). My initial

reaction was a sense of being uncomfortable to consider that ASD could be considered a 'poison'. I discuss this discomfort below, but first explore the ideas around pharmakon.

In medicinal, therapeutic terms, a pharmakon or the concept of pharmakon was introduced by Derrida (1981) in discussing Plato's reading of Phadeus to metaphorically describe writing as both a cure for memory (in its recorded form) and as poison, as it induces forgetfulness (Marom & Ruitenberg, 2018).

Using pharmakon as a conceptual tool, I explore the paradoxical nature and role of ASD that characterises its biography. One of the key aspects of pharmakon is its duality, embodying the idea that something can be both beneficial and harmful. ASD, through its transformative intention, is considered 'helpful'; in other words, ASD practices are intended to improve, enhance and advance pedagogical, curricula and scholarly practices in higher education. While there may be benefits of ASD in SA HE, could ASD cause harm?

At a recent Learning and Teaching conference where I presented my interim ideas about cultivating ingenuity through ASD (Chitanand, 2024), I discussed my discomfort with the idea that ASD could be considered a 'poison'. A colleague⁵⁷, present at my paper presentation, suggested that ASD could be considered in this negative way if it promoted a focus that could, for example, promote the success of students only without enabling systemic changes. This refers to the student development-staff development foci of academic development. While student development initiatives are necessary for advancing learning, it may be argued that without systemic changes, for example, to pedagogy, curricula and institutional changes, improving student learning only may not bring about the kinds of holistic changes required for SA HE.

A deeper interrogation of ASD through the lens of the pharmakon reveals that while ASD may be considered helpful to improve the inequities of a socio-historical context, it could also be disruptive to established systems and to individuals who struggle to adapt and change. Likewise, the changes promoted through staff development can provide opportunities for growth, but could simultaneously be a source of stress, burnout, resentment and resistance, especially when programmes are poorly planned, adding to already heavy workloads. ASD

⁵⁷ I wish to extend my thanks to my colleague Prof Emmanuel Mgwashu for his feedback during my presentation and for offering a view of the pharmakonic effect of academic development, more generally

aims to empower staff, foster autonomy, criticality and encourage creativity and innovation. Yet it often works within institutional frameworks and policies that may be contrary to innovation that ASD fosters. Or ASD may be forced to work within performance metrics that are controlling, stifling or prescriptive to the transformative imperatives that are being promoted. So, while ASD practices may contribute to enhanced skills and knowledges of individuals and institutions (the benefits), when driven by external pressure, like performativity, ASD practices could become a tick box exercise (harmful, poison).

Furthermore, although ASD aims to promote innovative pedagogical approaches and curricula, there is also the pressure of conforming to standards and 'best practices', which could stifle the innovation it seeks to achieve. This is especially crucial in South African higher education, where one-size-fits-all approaches do not work and more contextualised approaches are advocated (Jacobs, 2021). ASD has a crucial role to play in supporting context-sensitive teaching by encouraging academics to move beyond generic approaches. In this role, ASD needs to promote practices that disrupt decontextualised notions of 'best practices' and foster the understanding of the social embeddedness of learning and teaching in higher education (Jacobs, 2021). Another crucial area where the pharmkonik aspects of ASD is evident is in the process of decolonisation of the curriculum. While decolonial imperatives are necessary for addressing the historical imbalances in SA HE and for creating a more inclusive education and just society, it can also be challenging if not engaged with sensitively. This process is further challenged in light of the entanglement of neoliberalism and decoloniality, which impacts ASD. For ASD, the impact of neoliberal performativity and managerialism and the focus of the knowledge project, may portray the negative aspects of the pharmakon to thwart the transformative potential of ASD.

South Africa's capitalist neoliberal agenda for higher education, where the focus is on the shift from a knowledge economy to a digital economy, will choke the life of indigenous knowledge out of the university curriculum (Koopman & Koopman, 2021, p. 129).

Injustices rooted in coloniality are a form of symbolic violence that perpetuates inequities and social hierarchies. As we have encountered in chapter 7 and in the discussion above, this violence may be perpetuated through ASD practices that centre Eurocentric canons and practices from the global north (Heleta, 2016). In the next section, I propose that ASD more broadly engage in symbolic nonviolence (Evans, 2021) through broadening and shifting the

gaze for ASD through a decolonial praxis. I purposefully include 'more broadly' to recognise and acknowledge that some of these practices already exist. I will discuss them in the next section. However, practitioners in the field of ASD have recognised the blind spots (see, for example, Behari-Leak et al., 2018) that exist and ultimately the need for possibly more systemic transformations within the ASD field. Drawing on the key findings from this study, I make these propositions in the next section.

The above discussions focused on the idea of pharmakon as being either beneficial or harmful. Next, I explore the scapegoat aspect of the pharmakon. ASD programmers or even academics can become targets for absorbing blame, diverting attention from deeper issues. When institutions face challenging learning and teaching or research output challenges, ASD programmes are implemented to 'show' that strategies are in place. If the problems persist, then ASD or the academics are blamed (become the scapegoats) rather than addressing the deeper systemic issues. The focus of ASD then takes on a deficit approach with the idea to 'fix' the academics rather than engaging with the broader contextual or structural issues. This deficit approach or 'fixing' the staff (or students) or the institution, has been a concern for the ASD community and practitioners have argued for more contextualised approaches (see, for example, Leibowitz et al., 2014). Leibowitz et al. (2014) emphasise understanding the broader socio-economic contexts within which ASD occurs. Drawing on critical realism, Leibowitz et al. (2014) argue that systemic issues are deeply entangled with cultural and structural factors that influence ASD, rather than denoting deficiencies within individuals.

Thinking about ASD through the ideas of the pharmakon reveals that ASD is not a simple linear process for improvement of HE learning and teaching practice. Rather, it is a complex, multifaceted process that intra-acts with a range of structures, cultures and individual experiences in diverse ways, serving simultaneously as agents of positive change and sources of tension. Embracing its paradoxical and complex nature requires that HEIs and ASD practitioners acknowledge the potential benefits and possible pitfalls so that more creative, responsive and contextualised practices can emerge.

Next, in light of the contradictions already illuminated, I discuss how the cultivation of a southern gaze embedded with an ethos of Ubuntu may contribute to the transformative aspirations and visions for ASD. Ubuntu, underpinned by a relational ontology, is an

indigenous African knowledge system that emphasises humanness, interdependence, community, autonomy and ethical practice. Its relevance for ASD will be discussed further in the following section.

8.3. Broadening and Shifting the gaze

From the aforementioned discussions on the coloniality of knowledges and prompted by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2023) to think differently through re-worlding from the global south I recommend cultivating a southern gaze for ASD in South Africa. While southern-centric perspectives for the global south are not entirely new (see, for example, SoTL in the South, and other research⁵⁸), I recommend that ASD in South Africa reconsider knowledge-ing (Taylor, 2021) in/ of/ for/ about academic staff development, through a decolonial praxis. Such an approach will require the cultivation of an ASD gaze that fosters ASD praxis that is truly transformative and socially just. This will require a critical reflection on assumptions and practice about transforming higher education through ASD and requires cultivating a critically reflective and reflexive ASD gaze. This cultivated gaze (Maton, 2014b), I argue in this thesis, requires deep interrogation on what and who is being valued, legitimated, privileged, centred or, marginalised, disadvantaged, and decentred in ASD practices. In this section, I draw on Raewyn Connell's (2007) southern theory to offer a critique of the hegemony of global north theories and the power relations in knowledge creation in ASD practices. Some of this critique already exists in current literature on ASD in SA HE (see for example Vorster & Quinn, 2014; Jacobs, 2021; Ganas et al., 2021; Boughey, 2022).

8.3.1. Southern theory

Connell's (2007) southern theory focuses on the "geopolitical inequities in knowledge production" (Manathunga & Grant, 2017, p. 1) and the hegemony of global north theories in social science with a disregard for other knowledges (Connell, 2007). In her book, she attempts to foreground some of this knowledge in Africa, India, Latin America and Asia. While Connell (2007) raises the issue of geopolitical inequities she also reminds us that the idea of *southern* is not merely a geopolitical focus but to emphasise the power relations implicit in knowledge production between historically dominant and marginalised societies. This is

⁵⁸ For example: Chaka et al. (2022); Motsa (2017).

emphasised in Connell (2017), as she asserts that “[w]hat I have called ‘Southern theory’ (Connell, 2007) is not exactly an indigenous knowledge project, nor primarily a critique of Eurocentrism” (p. 8) but rather to assert that the “sheer wealth of conceptual, methodological and theoretical thinking that comes from the colonized world– and is generally ignored in the mainstream economy of knowledge– is the central point being made” (Connell, 2017, p. 9). Criticisms of Connell’s (2007) theory, especially in her book, *Southern theory: the global dynamics of knowledge in social science*, exist for having a “slightly dated feel to it” and missing “the more apposite, vibrant and politically risky social science of 1980s South Africa” (Muller, 2009, pp. 506-507) and its silence “on the fuller history of knowledge generation in the global South” (Motsa, 2017, p. 28). While Connell (2007) draws primarily on the work of African philosophers, the Beninese Paulin Hountondji and Ghanaian Kwasi Wiredu, “there are new voices in the debate on decolonising higher education”, argues Motsa (2017, p. 33). While I acknowledge that Connell’s Southern theory emerged in the early 2000s, it is worth also heeding Motsa’s proposition to Southern scholars to bring to light the “proper accounting of the world knowledge economy” (Motsa, 2017, p. 33), from a southern perspective. She cogently captures this in the African proverb,

“Until the lion tells his/her own story, the hunter will always have the best part of the story” (Author unknown, in Motsa, 2017, p. 34)

Notwithstanding these criticisms, Connell’s work “provides a wakeup call or heads up about the avoidable silences in our craft” (Muller, 2009, p. 509) and “raises a number of critical issues regarding the Euro-American university and its impact on the post-colonial global-Southern scene” (Motsa, 2017, p. 28).

While “South Africa has taken the decolonial discussion even further in recent months” (Motsa, 2017, p. 33), it is also important to note that as of 2024, thirty years into democracy in South Africa, we continue to witness slow transformation (Badat, 2022, 2023, 2024) that impact students’ epistemic access and success (Mgqwashu, 2023). This is evidenced by several decolonial scholars (see, for example, Keet, 2014; Heleta, 2016, 2023; Hlatshwayo and Alexander, 2021; Hlatshwayo, 2022, 2023; Mbembe, 2015; Zembylas, 2018a).

“Over the last three decades, despite the post-apartheid curriculum reforms that took place in the South African tertiary education sector, Western knowledge continues to dominate the curriculum landscape. This knowledge not only continues to objectify the world for students but culminates in a regime of visibility

where the very act of seeing finds its vanishing point in the subjectivity of the observer” (Koopman & Koopman, 2021, p. 127-128).

8.3.2. Constellation of Gazes

The ‘act of seeing’ highlighted by Koopman and Koopman (2021) takes me to the next part of my proposition, Gazes. The gaze refers “to look upon someone or something, or to experience being looked at” (Thompson and Prinsloo, 2024, p. 155) and may at first appear simplistic. However, this “act of seeing” (Foucault, 2003, p. ix) in a Foucauldian sense may be underscored by issues of power. As Thompson and Prinsloo (2024) aver, “[t]he relationship between the gazer and the gazed is complex and abounds with power imbalances” (p. 155). In exploring the relevance of an appropriate gaze for ASD I first offer a brief theoretical account of a constellation of gazes, drawing on the medical/ clinical gaze (Foucault, 1989), postcolonial gaze (Said, 1979) and the oppositional gaze (hooks, 1993).

“Seeing what is hidden by a blind spot requires a new gaze, a different insight”
(Maton, 2014b, p. 1).

8.3.2.1. The Medical Gaze

The work of Michel Foucault centres on how power works in social systems. In his work *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault (2003) viewed the medical gaze by doctors as a form of power and control, “describing how doctors modify the patient’s story, fitting it into a biomedical paradigm... doctors are doctor-oriented, not patient-oriented, and thus medicine creates an abusive power structure” (Misselbrook, 2013, p. 312).

8.3.2.2. The Postcolonial Gaze

Drawing on his work in *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1979) examined how the West constructed the Orientalist gaze, depicting the people from the East as exotic, inferior and further requiring Western domination. The impact of this reflects the colonising effect of this on those considered as the ‘other’, essentialising and objectifying people. The postcolonial gaze thus focuses on challenging this perspective and representation.

8.3.2.3. Oppositional Gaze

bell hooks (1993) theorised the oppositional gaze as a way for marginalised people, Black, and especially women, to look back at the objectifying white (and or male) gaze, through an act of

resistance. The oppositional gaze resists domination through developing critical consciousness and asserting one's own subjectivity.

8.3.2.4. Cultivated Gaze

Maton (2010) draws on the work of Bernstein to suggest that "a 'gaze' has to be acquired, i.e., a particular mode of recognising and realising what counts as an 'authentic'... reality" (Bernstein, as cited in Maton, 2010, p.8). Maton (2010) developed four types of gazes drawing on the work of Bourdieu and Bernstein, born, trained, social, and cultivated gaze.

Born gaze may refer to an inherent talent, something an individual may be born with. The social gaze is developed through everyday engagement through social encounters and interactions and shaped by cultural backgrounds. The trained gaze is usually developed through formal educational encounters and includes specialised knowledge (Maton, 2010). The cultivated gaze is developed through being immersed in a particular field and may or may not include professional training with specialised knowledge, as with the trained gaze.

Considering the above and given the previous discussions of academic developers' entry into the field of academic staff development, academic developers are not born with a natural inclination or gaze for/of academic staff development. There are a few professional development programmes in South Africa for developing specialised knowledge or the trained gaze. Although this may be developing further, not many academic developers consider this and it is not a requirement for being an academic developer.

Most academic developers are able to see and understand their roles (their gaze) through engaging in everyday practices of being in the field and their social interactions (social gaze) and/or through their immersion in the field (cultivated gaze) over a prolonged period of time and through engaging other AD pioneers who have over time developed the kinds of specialised knowledge. Given the diverse nature of knowledge in/ of the field, drawing from a diverse range of other specialised fields (e.g. philosophy of education, sociology of education, and psychology). The field of AD comprises knowers (practitioners) who are shaped by a combination of different gazes that may result in varying practices of ASD.

Through the aforementioned discussions on a *constellation of gazes* from key scholars, I submit that a particular gaze may perpetuate power and control (as in the understanding of the *medical gaze*) or inferiority and othering (*postcolonial theory/ colonial gaze*). In a country

like South Africa, where coloniality persists and where universities are constructed based on neoliberal ideologies, there is a need to resist the hegemonies and domination through developing critical consciousness (*oppositional gaze*). I argue in this thesis for developing a *cultivated gaze* (Maton, 2010, 2014b), which requires immersion in the ASD field but also the creation of spaces/ opportunities that will foster, promote and prioritise critical reflexivity and deep interrogation on what and who is being valued, legitimated, privileged, centred or, marginalised, disadvantaged, and decentred in ASD practices. This will contribute towards developing the kind of ASD gaze relevant, necessary and required for ASD in South African HE. Next, I argue that developing such an ASD gaze will involve cultivating a *Southern Gaze* for ASD in SA.

8.3.3. *Returning the Gaze: Cultivating a Southern Gaze for ASD*

I advocate for returning⁵⁹/ reversing the Northern (colonising) gaze by broadening and shifting the ASD perspective to cultivate a Southern gaze for ASD in South Africa. This requires that ASD practitioners actively critique and challenge the perspectives and dominance of colonial logics on ASD practice and scholarship, confront oppressive structures and foster decolonial and transformative practices (McCubbin et al., 2023).

From the discussions already presented in this chapter, inequities persist in post-apartheid South Africa, thirty years into democracy, with a continuation of colonialism and neocolonialism. This entrenches Eurocentric and Western perspectives, values and worldviews as 'globally renowned' (Leibowitz, 2017) with SA universities often remaining local instantiations of the dominant Eurocentric canon (Mbembe, 2015). The impact of these historical inequities is pervasive in ASD practices. Considering the global North's enduring hegemony and the global South's persistent dependence (McSweeney et al., 2019), it is imperative for a transformed society that we question what [and whose] knowledge is deemed most worthwhile (Spencer, 1884).

In reversing the colonial gaze, I argue for cultivating a southern gaze for ASD that draws on a decolonial praxis and embraces an ethico-onto-epistemology (Barad, 2007). Such a decolonial

⁵⁹ I extend my thanks to my colleague Dr Samia Chasi for her feedback during my presentation and offering the idea of 'returning the gaze' arising out of her own doctoral study, Chasi (2019)

praxis involves a continuous, critical and action-oriented process of dismantling colonial systems, structures and ways of knowing and knowledge creation in ASD practices and scholarship in SA HE. This will require confronting and challenging the colonial matrix of power (Quijano, 2007) and uncovering how colonialism continues to shape HE and ASD practices. I concur with Hlatshwayo (2023), who argues that “academic development is strongly positioned in helping us transform and decolonise higher education and AD...[and] is better suited to respond to some of the urgent calls for structural reform and decolonisation in the academy” (p. 98). To do this important transformative work will require that the ASD community engage in deep reflexivity and self-critique about its positionality, practices and complicity within existing colonial structures in HE. A crucial aspect of decolonial praxis involves epistemic disobedience and de-linking (Mignolo, 2007, 2018). This means actively questioning, resisting and decentering solely Western-centric ways of producing, validating and disseminating knowledge and recentering African knowledges. However, such a position does not negate Western Eurocentric knowledges. On the contrary, I strongly argue for the plurality of knowledges (Heleta, 2023), epistemic reciprocity (Naidoo et al., 2022) and pluriversality (Mignolo, 2007).

A decolonial praxis, thus, is not just a theoretical endeavour but requires active engagement with the world. For Barad (2007), “the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter” (p. 185). Moreover, ethics for Barad extends beyond “a response to an exteriorised other.” It demands “acknowledging our complicity and accountability in the relationalities and entanglements that we are part of” (Bozalek, 2021, p. 145). By embracing this ethico-onto-epistemological lens (Barad, 2007), a decolonial praxis shifts beyond merely critiquing the representation of knowledge. It actively challenges the materialisation of reality as shaped by dominant colonial epistemologies, thereby providing opportunities for diverse, new knowledges to be co-constituted. This approach underscores our ethical obligations and responsibilities as a field of academic staff development. It compels us to recognise who and what truly matters in higher education, in society and the world, but also to contest and rework who and what is excluded and explore what this means to be an African/Global South university.

As alluded to earlier, a growing body of work emanating from the South African ASD context seeks to broaden and shift the gaze necessary for transformation in ASD and HE more generally. I draw specifically on the New Academics Transitioning into HE project (NATHEP).

Two critical decolonial concepts that became important for NATHEP's work on reframing induction practices helped us to understand the CR and SR framework in contextualised ways that kept the project grounded in an African reality. The first is "endogeneity" (Mafeje, 2011) which is centred on the need for an authentic African scholarship, grounded in African ontological discourses and experiences. second is "extraversion" (Hountondji, 1990), which challenges Eurocentric assumptions about the existence of universal knowledge and theories used to explain social phenomena across space and time (Behari-Leak & Sabata, 2024, p. 56).⁶⁰

The Critical Framework (Behari-Leak et al., 2020), developed by the NATHEP core team represents a progressive and transformative move toward fostering the ideas discussed in this chapter, especially around developing a Southern Gaze for ASD. While the NATHEP focused on new academics programmes, much more work is necessary to transform the broader ASD in SA HE.

Building on this call to cultivate a Southern Gaze for academic staff development in SA, the next section explores how integrating the African philosophy of Ubuntu can provide a framework for decolonial praxis in action.

8.3.4. Integrating the African Philosophy of Ubuntu in ASD

8.3.4.1. Conceptions of Ubuntu

In an earlier section I drew on arguments from Boughey (2022) amongst others to advocate for cultivating a southern gaze for ASD in SA HE. I draw once more on Boughey (2022) who calls for a collaborative, integrative and more inclusive approach to knowledge building about learning and teaching in South African higher education. Specifically, she suggests considering the approach embedded within the African philosophy of Ubuntu.

In provoking us to think differently about "theory building on teaching and learning in South African universities... for the production of the systematised knowledge" (Boughey, 2022, p. 999), Boughey (2022) asks,

⁶⁰ The use of CR and SR by the authors refer to Critical realism and Social Realism

‘...what if the notions of autonomy and rationality were to be ‘de-privileged’ in favour of understandings which see being and thriving as communal (as in the African concept of ‘Ubuntu’) or which understand knowing not as a matter of cognition alone but of embodiment...[with] more deliberative attempts to draw on the concept of ‘collective consciousness’, rather than on individualised notions of high achievement...Could the concept of collective consciousness not be used to ‘re see’ teaching and learning practice...such reconceptualisations would not involve simply identifying the privileging of autonomy and rationality as problematic in the African context but also showing how alternative, more productive experiences could lead to learning of a different kind altogether” (p. 999).

In this extract, Boughey prompts us to think differently about education through non-Western perspectives as opposed to a Western conceptualisation of learning and education, which tends to focus on individual autonomy and rational, cognitive learning, separating mind from body. She proposes an alternative drawing on Ubuntu, which emphasises community, interconnectedness and where learning is an embodied experience. She draws on Freire’s (1970) critical consciousness to advocate for ‘collective consciousness’ that emphasises learning through collaboration and collective reflection, and questioning assumptions about learning that will enable one to re-see the challenges differently. She contends further that the purpose of such reconceptualisations is not only to identify the challenges with the western (autonomous, rational) ways of engaging in HE but to imagine new possibilities for the African contexts, where shared experiences and communal knowledge creation is valued⁶¹.

In this section, I explicate the Ubuntu philosophy further, drawing on Tutu (1999), Ramose (2004), Le Grange (2012) and Waghid (2023) and then elaborate on Ubuntu currere, an expanded aspect of Ubuntu (Hlatshwayo, 2023; Hlatshwayo & Shawa, 2020; Hlatshwayo et al., 2020; Le Grange, 2019) before moving to the implications for academic staff development.

In his most profound book, *No Future without Forgiveness* (Tutu, 1999), South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu encourages people, in the spirit of hope, to embrace their humanity to each other, despite the pain, hardships and sufferings endured by South Africans during apartheid and the scars through violence and oppression. He draws on the traditional African philosophy of Ubuntu, a complex construct “drawn from the Nguni group of

⁶¹ It is important to draw attention at this juncture to the point that while Ubuntu values communal wisdom, engagements and knowledge creation, Waghid (2023) alerts us to the autonomous dimension of Ubuntu as well. I discuss this later in this section as well.

languages”, and also known as “*botho*, in the Sotho languages” (Tutu, 1999, p. 31). For Tutu Ubuntu is about being generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. Drawn from the Nguni Bantu phrase *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, Ubuntu may be translated as follows:

“‘A person is a person through other persons.’ It is not, ‘I think therefore I am.’ It says rather: ‘I am human because I belong. I participate, I share’” (Tutu, 1999, p. 31).

Discarding Descartes ‘Cogito, ergo sum,’ “‘I think, therefore I am’ - I think, others don’t” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) that reduced humans to less than human based on rationality, Tutu draws attention to Ubuntu’s relational, ethical and holistic aspects. Relationality places at the core the importance of interactions, relations and responsibilities to self and others. This is contrary to western tradition that privileges individualism. Communal ethics reflect a joint responsibility for the well-being of oneself and each other. Holistic aspects refer to knowing and knowledge creation that recognises and integrates multiple dimensions: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual.

While Ramose (2004) echoes similar sentiments regarding the importance of shared humanity, community and mutual respect, he extends the understanding of Ubuntu by breaking down the word Ubuntu into ‘ubu’ and ‘ntu’ to offer a more nuanced understanding of the concept.

It is best, philosophically, to approach this term as an hyphenated word, namely, ubu-ntu. Ubuntu is actually two words in one. It consists of the prefix ubu- and the stem ntu-. Ubu-evokes the idea of be-ing in general. It is enfolded be-ing before it manifests itself in the concrete form or mode of existence of a particular entity... Ubu- as the generalized understanding of be-ing may be said to be distinctly ontological. Whereas -ntu as the nodal point at which be-ing assumes concrete form or a mode of being in the process of continual unfoldment may be said to be the distinctly epistemological (p. 380)

Relating Ubuntu in terms of ubu and ntu to ontology and epistemology, Ramose (2004) explains the fundamental essence of existence, and our manifestation of it, to include it as a phenomenon that is continuously evolving. In other words, Ubuntu remains in- becoming.

I wish to raise two further aspects that extend our understandings of Ubuntu, and which are relevant to inform our practices in/of/ for HE and ASD praxis. The first, raised by Waghid (2023), is the understanding that while Ubuntu emphasises community, “Ubuntu has both a collective (communal) and autonomous dimension” (p. 109). Waghid (2023) argues for an

Ubuntu university based on autonomy and deliberative engagement. Such a university that embraces the principles of Ubuntu, humanness, community and interconnectedness values both individual contributions and collective well-being. He regards autonomy and iterative engagement as critical for both students and academics engaging ethically as members of a community.

The second aspects consider Ubuntu more holistically as encompassing a caring for all entities with which we share our world. Le Grange (2012, 2019) adds to the African philosophy *ukama*, a Shona⁶² term that underscores the interconnectedness of all beings within the cosmos, implying that our moral commitments and obligations extend to all entities. He draws on Murove (2009), who argues that “Ubuntu (humanness) is the concrete form of ukama (relatedness) in the sense that ‘human interrelationship within society is a microcosm of the relationality within the universe’ (Murove as cited in Le Grange, 2012, p. 332). As such, Le Grange (2012) emphasises that Ubuntu, as an expression of ukama, advances ecojustice, in addition to human well-being and social justice. In fact, the two are entangled as justice for humanity would entail caring for our non-human world as well. Le Grange (2019) further elaborates on relationality through ukama by drawing on Felix Guattari’s notion of transversality to explain suffering across ecological registers. “Guattari’s notion of transversality helps us to gain a more nuanced sense of the notion of ukama when he argues that when suffering is witnessed in one ecological register, it will also be witnessed in other ecological registers” (Le Grange, 2019, p. 219).

Mbembe (2015) acknowledges the interconnectedness of all beings and the environment, urging a rethink of our connection and encounters with the non-human world in light of threats to our ecologies. Like Le Grange (2012), Mbembe (2015) extends the idea of Ubuntu to include the active agency of all entities, human and non-human, and advocates for a more holistic perspective that includes our commitment and care for all entities.

“...humans are part of a very long, deep history that is not simply theirs... Our history is therefore one of entanglement with multiple other species. And this being the case, the dualistic partitions of minds from bodies, meaning and matter or nature from culture can no longer hold... matter has morphogenetic capacities of its own and does not need to be commanded into generating form. It is not an inert receptacle for forms that come from the outside imposed by an exterior agency... the concept of

⁶² Shona is an African language spoken predominantly by people in Zimbabwe

agency and power must be extended to non-human nature and conventional understandings of life must be called into question.” (p. 25-26).

Both Le Grange and Mbembe draw attention to and critique Anthropocentrism, the “belief that nature only has value insofar it is a means to human ends—that nature has instrumental value” (Le Grange, 2012, p. 330). Mbembe cautions on the “precariousness of our [human] species” (p. 26) and asserts that,

“...a new understanding of ontology, epistemology, ethics and politics has to be achieved. It can only be achieved by overcoming anthropocentrism and humanism, the split between nature and culture. It is about humankind ruling in common for a common which includes the non-humans, which is the proper name for democracy. To reopen the future of our planet to all who inhabit it, we will have to learn how to share it again amongst the humans, but also between the humans and the non-humans” (pp. 26-29).

Le Grange and Mbembe’s conceptions of Ubuntu have broadened the idea of community, interconnectedness and mutual relationships to include our commitment, responsibility and interconnectedness toward all entities and the broader environment. These conceptions are developed further in terms of Ubuntu *currere*, which I discuss next.

8.3.4.2. Ubuntu *currere*

Le Grange (2014) extends Ubuntu to Ubuntu *currere*, which suggests “newness, the creation of things unforeseen, experimentation, and the expansion of difference and movement” (p. 1288). Hlatshwayo et al. (2020) have extended Le Grange’s Ubuntu *currere* to HE learning and teaching, community engagement and research and provided hints toward their re-imagining. Promoting the shift from Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum* – I think therefore I am to the relational philosophy of Ubuntu, Hlatshwayo and Shawa (2020) emphasise that

“Ubuntu *Currere* in its active force implies oneness of body and mind and oneness of humans and the more-than-human world...We live and experience the world through ontology and make sense of it through our diverse epistemologies. Thus, the two are intertwined and cannot be separated from one another” (p. 31).

These expanded understandings and conceptions of Ubuntu further suggest our entangled existence as humans with all entities in our world. This has implications for how we design our educational encounters and ASD that considers and extends our ethical responsibilities to our planet, and more than human entities, our posthuman world.

8.3.5. Implications for ASD

Through cultivating a southern gaze grounded in principles of Ubuntu and ukama, ASD will focus on enhancing community, whilst fostering autonomy as required in the academy, developing communities of practice among multiple stakeholders (academics, students, community), and fostering deliberative engagements. These will include:

- Enhancing Community: mutuality, co-creation, collaboration, teamwork, co-belonging, co-travelling
- Fostering recognition, respect, trust where multiple knowledges are valued, thus promoting plurality, cultural openness and understanding
- Fostering Autonomy through providing support for academics to develop their practices and research engagements

Through practices such as:

- Cultivating collaborative engagements between students and academics. For example, Ravhuhlali and Mboweni (2024) involve students in their needs-based academic induction programme. Other practices involve the ‘students as partners’ methodology for collaborative engagements in curricula, pedagogy and research (e.g. Matthews, 2016; Peseta & Bell, 2016, 2018; Bovill, 2017; Cooke-Sather et al., 2018; Peseta & Suresh, 2024).
- Cultivating collaborative engagements among staff through institutional collaborations between academics and academic developers (Jacobs & Barends, 2023) and cross-institutional and country collaborations (e.g. Cooke Sather et al., 2023).
- Facilitating Intergenerational learning and support through senior staff mentoring new emerging academics; extending staff development to communities and involving elders in the ASD programme to discuss indigenous and local ways of engaging in local and global issues.
- Enabling and enhancing Community engagement such that ASD programmes include more engagement with communities; academic staff and students are supported to develop joint projects with communities addressing real-world local challenges (wicked problems).
- Cultivating loving relationships through, for example, decolonial love (Maluleka, 2024). Maluleka (2024) draws on the concept of decolonial love as a transformative approach within the neoliberal university. Echoing the principles of Ubuntu, humanness, care,

compassion and respect, this approach may be regarded as embedded within a southern gaze that values inclusivity, equity, diversity and the creation of supportive, nurturing and socially just HE environments.

Critical to cultivating such a southern gaze for ASD will require engaging in critical reflection and reflexivity through a process of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). This involves turning the critical eye inwards, disrupting assumptions and leading to perspective transformation. Taylor (2015) argues that transformative learning enables heightened consciousness and entails multiple ways of coming to know about our situatedness in the world - who we are, our values, beliefs, preconceptions, assumptions - and who we might become. "Critical reflection emancipates us from our ideological prisons, thereby enhancing our conscious awareness of ourselves, others and the worlds that we co-construct" (Taylor, 2015, p. 1079). Drawing on Mezirow's transformative learning, Taylor (2015) proposes five ways of knowing that will enable academic staff developers and academics to confront their own biases, presuppositions and assumptions, engage in understanding critically how power works to produce practices in particular ways and to envision a better world for all. These five ways of knowing include Cultural-Self Knowing, Relational Knowing, Critical Knowing, Visionary and Ethical Knowing and Knowing in Action. Table 8.1 below lists a brief description of these five ways of knowing and possibilities for ASD.

Table 8.1: Five ways of knowing (Taylor, 2015, pp. 1080-1081)

| Characteristic | Description and possibilities for ASD |
|---|--|
| Cultural-Self Knowing (self-realisation) | <p>This is the process of understanding how our identities, behaviours and practices are shaped by our cultural contexts. It involves recognising how our values, beliefs, traditions, emotional patterns and spirituality implicitly inform our worldview and influence how we relate to both our social and natural environments.</p> <p>In the context of cultivating a southern gaze, this process of cultural self-realisation will be crucial for understanding how hegemonic actions have dominated ASD practices. Engaging in reflexive approaches to examine how cultural background influences practices (of academics and academic developers) will be crucial.</p> |
| Relational Knowing (opening to difference) | <p>This involves the capacity to form authentic connections and relations to oneself, immediate community, with others from diverse cultural backgrounds and with the natural environment.</p> <p>This approach embodies the principles of Ubuntu and ukama, demonstrating how ASD practices can cultivate more harmonious relationships in pursuit of sustainable futures for all. Building communities of practice, collaborative engagement and ecological consciousness may foster such relational knowing.</p> |
| Critical Knowing (political astuteness) | <p>This process involves understanding how power works to construct reality. It examines how these power dynamics create and normalise social categories of race, class, gender, etc and how this embedded power influences and often distorts our lived experiences, relationships and interactions.</p> <p>This recognition and understanding is crucial for ASD practices that seek to foster critical insights in order to envision transformative and sustainable practices.</p> |
| Visionary and Ethical Knowing (over the horizon thinking) | <p>This involves the transformative process of imagining and articulating better futures through engaging in creative, contemplative and collaborative processes. It also involves envisioning ethically what a better world could and should be.</p> <p>For ASD practices that seek to cultivate an ubuntu-inspired southern-centric approach such practices could involve co-creating visions for transformative practices and developing ethical frameworks for practices.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Knowing in Action (making a difference)</p> | <p>This aspect involves our commitment to improvement and consciously developing our capacity to enable positive change. It involves moving beyond just envisioning to taking action, linking local initiatives to global awareness.</p> <p>Cultivating ASD practices that are transformative and sustainable will require building capacity for ongoing transformative action.</p> |
|--|---|

Next, I re-turn to the lotus flower metaphor that I introduced in the Prelude, to represent this study's thesis: Embracing Pluralism for ASD in an evolving South African HE landscape.

Through embracing pluralism, this thesis argues for an Ubuntu-inspired, southern-centric approach to Academic Staff Development.

8.4. The thesis: Embracing Pluralism for academic staff development in South Africa

In this section, I develop the thesis⁶³ for this study: *Embracing Pluralism for academic staff development in South Africa*. I once more invoke the Lotus flower that I introduced in the Prelude to serve as the metaphorical representation of this thesis. The previous sections in this chapter served as the building blocks toward the construction of the thesis and are highlighted in the graphical representation below.

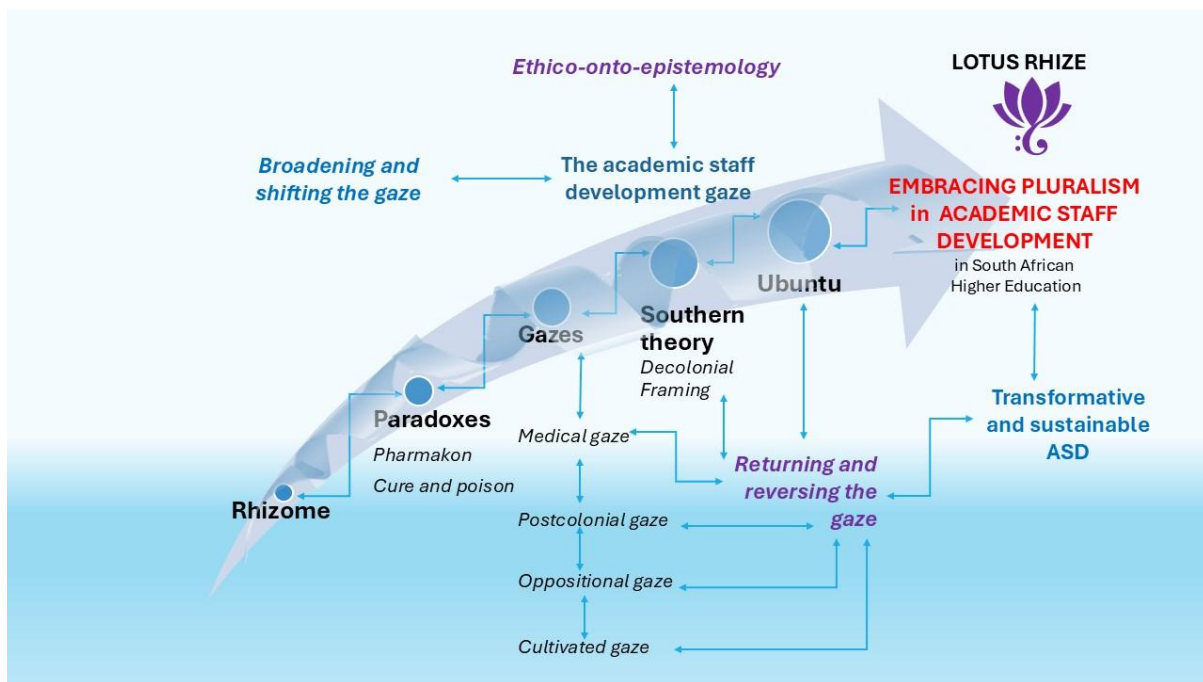


Figure 8.3: Graphical representation of the thesis

(Source: Author's own compilation)

I commence this section by providing a brief description of the lotus, then move towards its representation as the thesis, drawing on the various parts of the plant and its environment. Following this, I introduce the LOTUS RHIZE as a framework for envisioning ASD for South Africa and conclude the section by discussing the possible limitations that could exist with the use of the lotus metaphor.

⁶³ The concept of 'thesis' is used in two ways in this research report. In the first instance, the thesis broadly refers to this research report comprising the 9 chapters, including a Prelude and Doxa. In this chapter, 'thesis' is used to denote the central argument emerging from this study. In this case I am arguing for embracing pluralism in academic staff development in South African higher education.

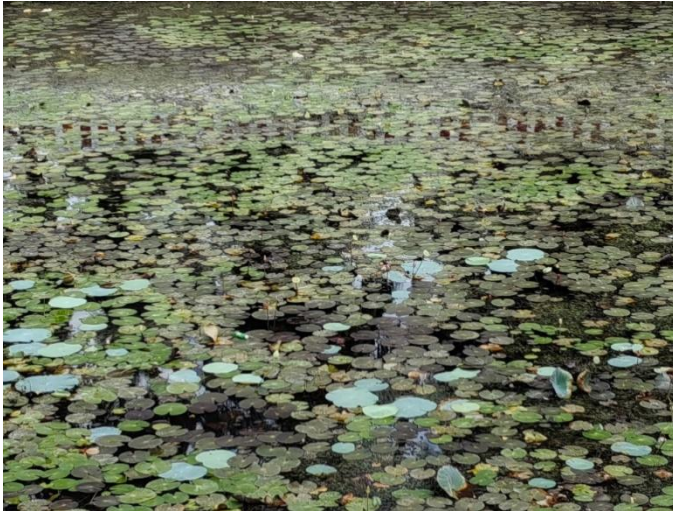


Figure 8.4. An assemblage of lotuses flourishing in Chennai, India
(Source: image provided by Gerard Samuel, 2024)

8.4.1. *The lotus*

“The lotus is an aquatic rhizomatous herb consists of elongated, slender, nodal roots with a creeping stem” (Hajela et al., 2018, p. 92). The lotus represents multiplicity; they do not exist on their own and exist as an assemblage of lotuses (as in Figure 8.4).

The lotus plant, officially known as *Nelumbo nucifera* in plant genealogy and also referred to as “The Sacred Lotus...is regarded in many different cultures...as a symbol of purity, enlightenment, self-regeneration and rebirth” (Deka, 2021, p.34). It has spiritual significance in Hinduism and Buddhism and is the national plant of both India and Vietnam (Deka, 2021) and among the top ten traditional famous flowers in China (Lin et al., 2019, p. 5). The lotus is often associated with images of Hindu deities and once harvested, the lotus flowers are used in many temples in India (Figure 8.5 is an image of a bunch of lotuses that I captured at a temple in Mumbai, India, in 2018). It is also used in the production of food, beverages, and medicines and has industrial uses (Sridhar & Bhat, 2007; Deka, 2021).



Figure 8.5 Lotus flowers at a temple in Mumbai, India
(Source: image photographed by me in 2018)

8.4.2. The Lotus Metaphor depicting the thesis



Figure 8.6: Thesis metaphor
(Source: AI-generated image with ChatGPT 4.0 mini DALLE)

Within the fluid and evolving landscape of HE in South Africa, the lotus flower emerges as a metaphor for academic staff development. Amidst the rapid changes, complexities and contradictions, the lotus flower serves as a metaphor for growth, resilience, hope and the ability to thrive in challenging conditions.

A key aspect of this thesis is reflected in the rhizomatic structure characterising the biology of the lotus plant that grows outwards in multiple directions, in a continuous interconnected assemblage, to draw once more on Deleuze and Guattari (1987). This relational ontology implicit in the notion of the assemblage, emphasising plurality and multiplicity, is relevant for this thesis on ***Embracing pluralism in academic staff development in South African Higher Education.***

The interconnectedness of the lotus is symbolic of ASD in SA HE, that is: multi-faceted, continuing to grow, develop, enhance and innovate; engaging with multiple stakeholders, including students, academic staff, managers, community; drawing on a multiplicity of theories and methodologies for practice and scholarship.

Following the arguments presented in the earlier section on Broadening and shifting the (academic staff development) gaze (section 8.3.3), **Embracing Pluralism** is about envisioning an ASD where multiple epistemologies are respected and legitimated, marginalised voices are heard, and all entities (human and non-human) are equally valued.

The image in Figure 8.6 representing this thesis captures the fluidity of the landscape, with the map of South Africa as a reminder of the unique challenges and opportunities within this context. The movement of the water beneath the lotus signifies the dynamic forces shaping and influencing the landscape and ultimately academic staff development. Located within the context of Africa, this thesis promotes an ASD grounded in the African philosophical principles of Ubuntu (humanness and community) and ukama (relatedness to all entities). The glowing light around the flower suggests that, amidst the challenges, there is hope for a flourishing future with the opportunities for ASD to lead, collaborate, adapt and innovate within a dynamic HE ecosystem and an evolving society and world.

In describing her teaching philosophy using the lotus metaphor, Elaine Kao (n.d.) writes,

“The lotus blossom’s life is marked by three main stages. In the beginning the bud lies below the dense mud, in ignorance and darkness and it eventually gets pulled upwards to the warmth of the sunlight. The next part of the lotus flower’s evolution is the climb through the mucky waters, ... as it continues reaching out to the sun regardless of the environment. The last stage is when the lotus bud blossoms into a beautiful flower... Like everyone else, I’ve been through some mucky waters and I’ve made it through every time. Everything has played an important part in the person I’ve become and who I want to be. I’ve been fortunate because there has always been sunlight encouraging me to grow and never give up...”

I discuss some of these features highlighted in the narrative above, in the next sections, drawing on various parts of the lotus flower and its environment, to further illuminate the various constructs of the thesis.

8.4.2.1. Muddy environment: Imbrication, paradox

The lotus flower is known to grow in a messy environment (Lin et al., 2019; Deka, 2021). The environment constitutes (nurtures) the lotus, which in turn constitutes the environment by enhancing it physically, an entangled phenomenon, drawing on a Baradian (2007) notion of entanglement, which suggests that “existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating” (p. ix). This aspect of the lotus within its environment reflects both the imbrication and paradoxes, as highlighted in previous discussions in section 8.2.2. Likewise, ASD is entangled in an HE environment, where multiple tensions and priorities co-exist.

The developments of the lotus highlighted by Kao (n.d.) in the section above are synonymous with the growth and trajectory of academic staff development. Starting off its life (history) as seedlings spread across the messy/ mucky/ murky waters of the HE landscape of South Africa (in multiple and diverse HE institutions) almost four decades ago, it too had to push through the mud (i.e. navigate the tensions, obstacles, challenges and complexities) towards the (sun)light. The light could signify the opportunities that enabled ASD to grow and thrive. In the SA context, as we have seen in chapters 4-6, narrative accounts of academic developers, there were numerous developments within the HE context that enabled academic staff development. As participants in these chapters commented, it was important to read the context and leverage that for enabling and fostering ASD.

These included massification, mergers, quality assurance requirements, curriculum renewal, and changing discourses around learning and teaching, amongst others. The #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall driving the student protests in 2015-2016 that prompted the more vigorous decolonial drive was also a key moment driving transformation imperatives in higher education, although, as discussed in chapter 7 and earlier sections of chapter 8, blind spots have been revealed with regard to the decolonial work and ASD’s role.

Just as the lotus is nourished by the nutrients of the muddy environment, the complexities and challenging conditions also serve as sources for growth for academic staff development. It is important to note however that the extent to which ASD can transform these challenges through innovation into beautiful lotus blooms, i.e. transformative educational practices is still dependent on the contextual realities of the HE landscape in SA, one that is still plagued

by historical inequities and coloniality (Badat, 2022, 2023), neoliberalism (Heleta, 2023), and instrumentalist logics (Ganas et al., 2021).

8.4.2.2. Root: Pluralism, multiplicities, assemblages

The lotus plant has an interconnected root system that grows beneath the surface, spreading outwards horizontally. This represents pluralism and multiplicities that define the lotus plant. Similarly, within the socio-historical context of South Africa discussed above, ASD exists within multiplicities and interconnected realities. Some of these work beneath the surface and are responsible for the structuring of academic staff development in particular configurations.

Following the earlier discussions in section 8.3, I wish to advance the argument that the pluralistic approach is not merely an adoption of multiple methodological or theoretical perspectives but an ethico-onto-epistemological approach that is intentional about who and what is recognised, valued and legitimated within our ASD practices. This is about an ethical practice and about recognising the injustices inherent in our practices and recentring that which has been marginalised. This emphasis broadens and shifts our gaze firstly, such that multiple ways of knowing, being and becoming can co-exist and multiple voices and epistemologies (Western and indigenous) are respected and valued. For example, global north epistemologies are in conversation with global south epistemologies to solve local challenges.

Secondly, such a pluralistic approach is inclusive and respectful of all entities, human and non-human. This has implications for how we design academic staff development, shifting from a parochial emphasis on improving learning and teaching to questioning the purpose of HE and the role of ASD in building and sustaining a just society and world.

Lotuses existing as assemblages are significant to reflect the principles of community (Ubuntu) and relationality (ukama), also highlighted earlier. This is relevant for ASD in developing communities of practices, where learning and engaging in and with community thrives. Within the resource constraints contexts of South African higher education, a sense of community enables shared networks and collective support and a sense of growing together with a common vision, building on the diversities that exist within individuals and communities.

8.4.2.3. Stem: Renewal, strength, adaptability

The stem that connects the roots and the flower remains strong yet flexible, drawing resources from the environment. It may bend, encountering the harshness of the environment, but it will not break, remaining steadfast and strong. In a dynamic HE landscape in South Africa, characterised by multiple entangled factors that challenge and shape educational provision and experience and structure academic staff development, this aspect of the lotus emphasises the importance of adaptability and renewal.

8.4.2.4. Flower and leaves: Beauty, resilience, hope

The leaves of the lotus plant exhibit ultra-hydrophobicity (Lin et al., 2019). “This feature of lotus signifies water-repellent self-cleaning function, which maintains its beauty and cleanliness, despite growing in dirty ponds” (Deka, 2021, p. 42). This feature of the lotus plant is unique, demonstrating its resilience within its context. Similarly, ASD, through its own self-care (critical reflection and reflexivity) is able to remain resilient amidst the challenges, complexities and evolving contexts within which it is located.

Like the leaves, the flower of the lotus plant also exhibits unique resilience. “Each day the flowers bloom, at nightfall they will close up and sink back into the water or mud only to re-emerge beautifully intact the following day” (Ralls, n.d.). This also signifies hope for a flourishing future for HE and ASD in South Africa. However, such a hope-full future for ASD rests on an acknowledgement that challenges exist within the South African context and that meaningful transformation requires perseverance and commitment. Bozalek et al. (2014) remind us

“to distinguish naïve hope – which is similar to optimism or a blind faith that things will get better – from critical hope, which is grounded in reflexivity and action for transformation...Critical hope, therefore, is a *relational* construct that is both emotional and critical. To say that someone is critically hopeful means that the person is involved in a critical analysis of power relations and how they constitute one’s emotional ways of being in the world, while attempting to construct, imaginatively and materially, a different lifeworld.” (Authors’ own emphasis, p. 13).

The idea of *critical* hope, as illustrated in the above excerpt, foregrounds a recognition of the role of power dynamics in the complexities associated with issues of social justice, equity and transformation in/of/for higher education. Thus, rather than blind optimism, nurturing critical hope of/for/through ASD will require a critical examination of the underlying factors that

perpetuate inequities with a transformative intent grounded in critical reflexivity. Within the spirit of Ubuntu, this requires collaborative and deliberative engagements amongst multiple stakeholders to firstly confront, disrupt and then work through the obstacles and complexities. This is particularly important for nurturing the kind of futures for ASD and HE more broadly built on decolonial love and caring relationships.

8.4.2.5. Concluding comments about the lotus metaphor

Given the prevailing inequities inherent in the South African HE context, ASD with a life history of almost four decades, is positioned as a key agent within the HE assemblage to foster transformative and sustainable change. This calls for a pluralistic approach that acknowledges and integrates a diverse array of knowledge systems, practices and perspectives.

Mindful of the contextual realities where disruptions, complexities and challenges abound, there is strength in the interconnected spaces connecting communities across boundaries and differences, offering hope for flourishing practices to bloom. This requires recognition of the continuous challenges perpetuating the HE contexts, communal learning to navigate these challenges collaboratively and a recognition of AD to remain adaptive, resilient, creative and innovative.

8.4.3. The LOTUS Rhize Framework



Figure 8.7 An assemblage of lotuses growing rhizomatically with elongated individual stems and flowers

(Source: <https://www.gardenia.net/plant/nelumbo-nucifera>)

The LOTUS Rhize framework serves as a practical manifestation of the thesis presented above and offers a re-envisioning for academic staff development. The use of *Rhize* in the name plays on both ‘rhize’ to refer to rhizomatic growth and features as well as ‘rise’ (to grow upwards), thus embodying dual meanings. This is relevant as I wish to emphasise what I believe to be the essence of effective academic staff development. Drawing inspiration from the lotus plant described at length in the previous sections, the framework is reflective of the plant’s growth pattern. While the lotus grows and spreads through an interconnected network, it also produces strong, upright stems with flowers (as in Figure 8.7).

This framework envisions ASD as primarily occurring through horizontal, interconnected learning communities, with its distinct fluid rhizo-identity embracing multiplicities. Simultaneously, it is also suggestive that, like the lotus stem that emerges from its rhizomatic base, a coherent onto-epistemological foundation to support and guide the implementation of transformative and sustainable praxis is needed. This need is in response to Shay (2012) and others (e.g. Boughey and Niven, 2014) who have called for a strengthening of the epistemological spine. Linquist (2019) referred to this as a codified set of practices and Boughey (2022) extends this, arguing for principled procedural knowledge. In chapter 4, the

participant Linda spoke about ASD being a contentious field due to a lack of a coherent body of knowledge or what she referred to as 'nurseries' (section 4.3.3). I would add further, in light of my earlier proposition for cultivating a southern gaze for ASD, that such an onto-epistemological foundation will require embracing pluralism for ASD in South Africa, where multiple knowledges co-exist and multiple voices and entities are legitimated.

The LOTUS RHIZE Framework is loosely composed of two parts:

LOTUS, which includes the key foundational elements:

Leading **O**nto-epistemological-ethical **T**ransformative ASD practices, that are
Untu-centred and embrace **S**outhern perspectives

RHIZE, which represents the principles for implementation:

Rhizomatic; **(W)**holistic; **I**ntegrated; **Z**en; **E**mergent

I will explain each of these concepts below. Some of the concepts have been used throughout this chapter and I will not provide a lengthy explanation.

8.4.3.1. LOTUS: Key foundational elements

Leading

ASD, as a developing field, has not taken a leadership role, remaining rather in the background, nudging moves towards enhancing learning and teaching, as illustrated in chapter 4. This may not have augured well in terms of positioning ASD as a field with clout to bring about the radical change required for transforming HE in South Africa. There have been some moves in this direction through national collaborative projects and initiatives (e.g. HELTASA and the TAU programme) and innovative and transformative developments within individual universities. Within this context, nurturing a *transformative* (see below for an explanation) HE through ASD will require adopting a philosophical and ethical approach. Within the spirit of Ubuntu ethical leadership in ASD will require cultivating collective agency (Bandura, 2000) where “[p]eople’s shared beliefs in their collective power to produce desired results are a key ingredient” (p. 75) and these beliefs “influence the types of futures they seek through collective action” (Bandura, 2000, p. 77).

ethico-Onto-epistemological

This approach acknowledges the inseparability of knowing, being and ethics. In this context, it will include our ethical responsibilities in ASD that seek to address inequities and injustices and contribute to a truly transformative and socially just HE, society and world.

Barad (2007) asserts that,

Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming...[and] the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter (p. 185).

This powerful extract from Karen Barad underscores the importance of recognising and acknowledging the diversity within our contexts, our⁶⁴ entanglement within these contexts and the continuous and evolving nature of the transformative actions of ASD.

Transformative ASD practices

Elsewhere, I have reflected on and written about conforming, reforming and transforming in our practices in HE and more specifically in ASD (Chitanand, 2013, 2019). I argued that conforming (complying) and reforming (minor tinkering and experimentation) served to perpetuate the existing inequities and a critical epistemological framework was required.

I have become increasingly concerned about how to ensure that our practices as staff developers are beyond reformist approaches that merely perpetuate the status quo, but rather engender a transformative praxis addressing some of the pressing concerns of higher education and society at large (Chitanand, 2019, p. 294).

In their latest book, *Higher Education Transformation in Africa: A Quest for Epistemological Rupture*, Woldergiorgis et al. (2024) clarify that transformation “refers to a *revolutionary, deeper and more fundamental* shift in HE systems, knowledge structures and values, rather than merely making incremental improvements to existing structures” (my emphasis added, p. 4).

This “revolutionary, deeper and more fundamental shift” that they refer to above is aligned with my thinking throughout this chapter and research report of the transformative intent. I agree further with their ideas about reforming.

⁶⁴ This refers to academics, academic staff developers, students, managers, community and other stakeholders and partners who are all part of the socio-historical context of South Africa. This history as I have discussed throughout this research report, is one marked by legacies of inequalities that have been perpetuated in educational provision, including higher education. This history also includes rich and diverse cultural perspectives and knowledge systems, many of which are subjugated and marginalised.

Reforms alone are insufficient to address the root causes of epistemological, ontological and methodological challenges in higher education in Africa; transformative change is necessary to create more pluralistic, just, equitable and sustainable learning environments...a critical approach to higher education, challenging traditional, conformist approaches and advocating for innovative and creative solutions that are better suited to the African context (Woldergiorgis et al. (2024; p. 4).

Following the above, a transformative approach to ASD goes beyond surface level development. It promotes critical reflexivity (Ryan, 2005; Bolton, 2010) and transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000) and fosters sustainable change to address inequities and hegemonies prevalent in HE and in ASD practices.

Ubuntu-centred

Discussed extensively in section 8.3.4., an Ubuntu-centred approach foregrounds humanness, community, autonomy and deliberation. ASD practices grounded in principles of Ubuntu foster the cultivation of communities of practice for collective sharing and knowledge creation, whilst recognising individual autonomy.

Southern perspectives

Within ASD practices approaches drawing on southern perspectives challenge global north hegemony and global south dependency. Such practices provide opportunities for developing African and southern knowledges whilst also promoting epistemological pluralism. A decolonial framing that drives the processes of cognitive and epistemic justice are critical aspects for nurturing southern perspectives in academic staff development.

8.4.3.2. RHIZE: Principles for implementation

Rhizomatic

Promotes non-linear, interconnected and cross-disciplinary opportunities for academic staff development. Rhizomatic processes establish networks within the HE ecosystem and facilitate external partnerships working towards the common vision of transforming higher education.

(W)Holistic

According to Connolly (n.d), “education should inform the physical, the mental, the emotional and the spiritual capacities of learners: this is understood to constitute wholistic education” (p. 6). Drawing on insights from her indigenous First Nation friends, Conolly argues that “the ‘western’ version of education – *Mens sana in corpore sano* - often translated as 'A sound mind in a sound body' - only educates our physical and mental capacities”.

Considering that the above includes the whole person, following Sutherland (2018) a key move to advance ASD is to consider the whole of the academic role, that includes not just learning and teaching, but research and engagement; and considers the whole institution, other key role players who are part of the dynamic HE rhizo-systems, students, and managers rather than only academic staff. This principle provokes a rethink of traditional roles of ASD that have focused predominantly on improving learning and teaching in undergraduate education.

Integrated

Considers the multiple perspectives impacting the academic life of individuals and communities and seeks to balance the various dimensions of the multiplicity. ASD combines various approaches and methodologies focusing on the core elements of integration, including: Personal and professional development; Theory/ Knowledge and practice integration; Individual/Personal and Collective development; Teaching and Learning-Research-Engagement integration.

Zen

This principle relates to contemplative, mindful practices for academic staff development (Govender & Timm, 2023). Critically reflecting on practices to examine inequities, hegemonies and harm and one’s own complicity in perpetuating such harmful practices, requires a pedagogy of pausing (Patel, 2015), contemplation, and deep interrogation.

Emergent

This principle allows for ASD practices to emerge and adapt, given the constantly changing contexts of higher education, our societies and world. Such practices embrace the

uncertainties and complexities and require academic developers who are innovative, creative and adaptive and who are able to respond to the rapidly evolving contexts.

8.4.3.3. Concluding comments about the LOTUS RHIZE Framework

The two preceding sections, loosely referred to as the *Key Foundational elements* (LOTUS) and the *Principles for implementation* (RHIZE) prompt a fundamental shift from traditional academic staff development. Rather than simply focusing on incremental improvements to learning and teaching strategies or minor curriculum reforms, this approach advocates for a deeper, transformative change. It recognises the rhizo-network of entangled relationships within education and emphasises the role of ASD in fostering the sustainability of our society and world. This vision is possible through thoughtful, caring, purposeful and deliberative ASD that is fully integrated and within the HE ecosystem, acknowledging its legitimate position within an evolving society and world.

8.4.4. Limitations of the lotus metaphor

While the lotus metaphor offers a useful theoretical perspective to develop the thesis for this study, it provides one possible approach out of many that may exist. Each approach may also have shortcomings or limitations.

For example, there is the possibility of overly romanticising the beautiful flower emerging from its muddy environment, without fully acknowledging the complexities and challenges of the context. South African HE is fraught with multiple complexities, from a country dealing with a still fragile democracy to complexities associated with funding cuts and a simultaneously massified HE context, inequities across institutional types, and overall challenges of the neoliberal university, amongst others.

It is also useful to acknowledge that not all ASD practices bloom into beautiful flowers on a strong stem. There is a diversity of practices and contextual realities that exist within South African HE, which may result in varying ASD practices.

The lotus flower is primarily a flower from eastern countries (India, Vietnam, China) with spiritual significance and not necessarily a flower from South Africa or Africa, although versions like lilies do exist. It may be construed as the appropriation of cultural wisdom from

the east and may therefore be contrary to the southern gaze that I have advocated for in this study.

However, it may also be argued that, having an eastern cultural heritage, India is a developing world country characterised by colonial marginalities and contestations both within the country and interconnectedly to other international powerful forces, and its quest for relational identities with western hegemonies might be considered as a *southern discourse* from an epistemological point of view. After all, *southern scholarship* is not a geographical entity (or a restrictive cultural feature alone), as Connell (2007) has argued, since the quest for disruption of inequities and quests for social justice crosses permeably geographic or nationalistic borders.

In line with the thesis of embracing pluralism, including the lotus metaphor within the theoretical repertoire alongside the African philosophy of Ubuntu, may be apposite. Furthermore, as a Hindu South African woman of Indian descent, I have discussed in the Prelude how the lotus metaphor is embodied, drawing from the meaning of my name.

Notwithstanding the motivations I attempted to provide above to counteract this possible limitation, it will be beneficial for future studies to explore other African theoretical/conceptual frameworks that reflect the African diaspora. I have integrated to some extent an Ubuntu philosophy as indicated above. Another example could be the Baobab tree, an indigenous African tree that grows for many years (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baobab>). Metaphorically, it could be drawn on to reflect the many features of academic staff development⁶⁵.

However, it is crucial to note that Embracing Pluralism enables multiple perspectives (knowledges, theories, methodologies) to co-exist. It is not about privileging anyone or replacing one over the other. This has been a common misconception in decolonial work as well. However, in a country like South Africa, where global north hegemonies continue to dominate HE epistemologies and scholarly practices, recentring of marginalised and

⁶⁵ See also <https://heltasa.org.za/unconference-2024/>

The metaphor of the baobab tree was used as a theme for the 2024 HELTASA conference. This is an annual conference for academics and academic developers in Southern Africa.

subjugated epistemologies as well as reclaiming authority through research, are simultaneously, paradoxically and dialogically necessary.

Considering the aforementioned, the lotus and baobab metaphors could be explored collaboratively to depict ASD in South Africa.

8.5. Synthesis and concluding comments

In this study I examine the phenomenon of AD as an evolving field of practice and research within the dynamic South African HE landscape. Specifically, the study investigated the trajectory of ASD to understand critically its past, present and future possibilities and potentialities. Drawing on the experiences and perspectives of academic staff developers, I examined their enacted roles and the reasons why they were enacted in the ways that they were. This revealed an array of multiple forces impacting the structuring of the field of academic staff development.

This study has advanced the life history methodology to portray the biography of ASD within South Africa's evolving HE context. Drawing on a number of theoretical insights, this chapter focused on developing the emerging thesis for this study.

Drawing on the figuration of the rhizome, ASD emerges as a complex, evolving field, where multiplicity, interconnectedness and emergence are part of its fabric. Resisting a linear configuration, ASD operates through an assemblage of intra-acting entities that influences the structuring of the field in varying contextual realities.

As we have seen through the narrative data from chapters four to six and the analysis in chapter seven, inherent in this biography is evidence of a transformation paradox, with ASD located within the very context that it is attempting to transform and where precarity prevails. Having theorised with Derrida's notion of the pharmakon, I illustrate the dialectical roles of academic staff development, serving simultaneously in its supportive and transformative role while also exhibiting tensions through its blind spots, precarity and other contextual forces that adversely influence its role. The paradoxical nature necessitates further critical reflexivity to examine how ASD can challenge the hegemonic power dynamics that influence its role.

In this chapter, I propose cultivating a southern gaze for academic staff development. I argue that the cultivation of this ASD gaze relevant for a postcolonial South Africa draws on a

decolonial praxis and embraces an ethico-ontoepistemological approach that legitimates the interconnectedness of knowing, being and ethical practice. In arguing for a recentring of African epistemologies through cultivating a southern gaze I support the plurality of knowledges and the recentring of knowledges within the South African context that had been previously marginalised and decentred through the hegemonies of the global north epistemologies. This study attempts to make a small contribution more holistically to the scholarship on creating an African-centred university, as argued by scholars within the South African context (Badat, 2023; Woldergorgis et al., 2024).

I have argued further that the cultivation of a southern gaze grounded in the African philosophical principles of Ubuntu and ukama will advance transformative and sustainable academic staff development. This approach, I contend, will strengthen and sustain the field of ASD with practices that are truly transformative and socially just, by nurturing humanness, community, autonomy and deliberative engagement.

The Lotus flower serves as the symbolic representation of this thesis: *Embracing Pluralism in academic staff development*. Such a pluralistic approach for which I argue in this study, embraces multiplicities in many forms. It is not merely an adoption of multiple methodological or theoretical perspectives but an ethico-onto-epistemological approach that is intentional about who and what is recognised, valued and legitimated within our ASD practices. This is about an ethical practice and this approach extends our responsibility in HE to the entire planet. This emphasis broadens and shifts our gaze to be inclusive and respectful of all entities, human and non-human. Such an approach has implications for how we design academic staff development, shifting from a parochial emphasis on improving learning and teaching to questioning the very purpose/s of HE and the role of ASD in sustaining a just society and world.

In re-envisioning ASD for South African higher education, the LOTUS Rhize framework reflects the potential for transformation and growth within challenging contexts. Rising strong and beautiful in its multiplicity, imbricated within the muddy waters, the lotus symbolises that ASD can thrive amidst the complexities and disruptions of HE whilst facilitating transformative and sustainable change. Entangled in a HE environment, marked by constant disruptions and complexities, there exist immense possibilities for change through collaboration, dialogue, critique, hope and love (decolonial love).

This study has demonstrated that understanding the life history of ASD is crucial for developing transformative, sustainable and effective approaches to ASD in South African higher education. The biographical understanding of this phenomenon presented in this study opens up new possibilities for re-envisioning academic staff development. There are possibilities for future research and practice to advance the opportunities presented in this study and engage with the tensions, to build and sustain the field. Critical reflection and reflexivity (Brew, 2014) remain crucial for advancing the field whilst also ensuring that ASD authentically engages with the needs of South African HE and the broader transformation of society.

This study has revealed that ASD is a relational, complex process that is continually emerging and becoming-with (Harraway, 2016, p. 3). The idea of becoming-with extends the idea of becoming to incorporate the relationality with all beings, humans, non-humans and more than humans in “relations of obligations” (Barad, 2010, p. 265). Within the spirit of Ubuntu, we are responsible for “rendering each other capable” (Harraway, 2016, p. 7). Drawing on the work of Barad (2014), Despreet and Meuret (2016) and Harraway (2016), Murriss and Bozalek (2019) aver that “[p]art of a response-able methodology is the cultivation of collective knowing, desiring, being and making-with so that we render each other capable” (p. 11). This is the essence of an ethico-onto-epistemology (Barad’s, 2007; 2010; 2014) and marks our ethical responsibility and obligation to each other and our HE contexts, societies and our world, our post-human world.

CHAPTER 9

IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AN ASIDE

9.1. Introduction and Overview

In this chapter, as I bring this study to a pause, I reflect on the implications of the research undertaken over the last few years as I delved into exploring and experimenting. I elaborate on the contextual, theoretical and methodological contributions that could emerge from this study. I pay attention to the limitations that restricted certain areas of exploration, and I offer recommendations for future work. I also include an Aside. Given that the data for my study was produced prior to COVID-19, I did not include any aspect of development in ASD during COVID-19 or the crisis that followed later, namely the impact of artificial intelligence on various areas of HE curriculum (including pedagogies and assessment). My original data production from which the fieldwork data is analysed, pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic and the more recent influences of the more prominent presence of AI in the HE landscape. I include a brief discussion on how I responded as a staff developer during these two instances.

9.2. Implications and Contributions of the Study

9.2.1. Contextual contributions

Contextually, the focus of the study was to critically explore ASD in a changing South African HE context. There are many studies that focus on various aspects of ASD, mainly in the realm of describing and discussing ASD practices (strategies) with limited research on the developing *field* of ASD. There are (have been) three national projects that focused on various aspects of the field from different perspectives (e.g., Academic staff, managers or academic developers). I highlight these below.

As discussed in chapter 2, a large inter-institutional study *Contextual Influences on Professional Development in Higher Education in South Africa*, was undertaken from 2011 to 2016 (<https://interplayofstructure.blogspot.com/p/final-project-report.html>). The project focused on examining the factors that enabled or constrained professional learning of academics in eight HE institutions and drew on the concepts of structure, culture and agency

from Margaret Archer (2000). The focus was on the perspective of academic staff in the universities.

A second project that commenced in 2018, *New Academics Transitioning into Higher Education Project (NATHEP)*, had participants (and steering committee members) from fourteen HE institutions. The project participants were academic developers, and the focus was on new academics induction programmes, which is a staff development programme at the universities in SA. This project also drew on Archer's (2007) social realist toolkit (See Behari-Leak, 2024; available at <https://openbooks.uct.ac.za/uct/catalog/book/73>).

The third project, a national collaborative project, *Developing Academic Staff Development Praxis and Scholarship to Enhance the Status of the Field*, was part of South Africa's National Framework for enhancing academics as university teachers (DHET, 2018) and commenced in 2021. As a member of the core team in this project, I suggested developing a national portrait of ASD following Green and Little's (2016), *Family portrait: a profile of educational developers around the world*. A sub-project within this focused on examining the National Academic Development Landscape (NADL). As with the above two projects, this project also drew on Archer's social realist framework and data about ASD was produced from 25 of the 26 HE institutions in South Africa. This project is still underway.

My study could be argued to be influenced by and is influencing the field of ASD within the South African context. The unfolding debates within this landscape have been a preoccupation of my involvement, and the attempt to document this evolving field has been the agenda of my doctoral study. A key contextual contribution of my study is to add to the above scholarship of ASD by focusing on the biography of ASD in a changing South African HE context, highlighting ASD as a field-in-becoming. I also demonstrate in this study the entanglement of human and non-human agents (the latter including structures, policies, practices) in the structuring of the field of ASD.

Considering the socio-historical context of South Africa, my study recommends developing a southern gaze for ASD in South Africa, contributing to decolonial scholarship for ASD and transformative and sustainable praxis for HE more generally. This I regard as being crucial, as well, in light of recent scholarship on *Creating the New African University* (Woldergiogis,

Motala, Nyoni, 2023). This study attempts to foreground, through an ethico-onto-epistemology orientation, the ethical and moral obligation of ASD as a field concerned with transformative change, given the disparities and inequities through coloniality that continue to perpetuate the context of HE in South Africa. In this light, this study attempts to shift the discourse of HE from parochial, instrumentalist and utilitarian perspectives underpinned by the neoliberal ideologies that are pervasive in HE to contribute to a truly transformative and socially just higher education, society and world.

9.2.2. Theoretical contributions

A key feature of the contribution of this study is theoretical pluralism. The study makes a number of theoretical contributions to exploring ASD in South Africa by drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives and concepts, and extending the theoretical repertoire currently being used in ASD in SA. The dominant theories drawn on to explore various aspects of ASD include critical realism (Bhaskar, 1979) and social realism (Archer, 2000) as shown in the national projects mentioned above and other studies⁶⁶. Studies in ASD have been drawing extensively on Legitimation Code Theory (Maton, 2014b).

In dialoguing with the data, I drew on four theoretical perspectives. While Bourdieu's Field theory (2000) has been used in some studies and was useful in assisting me to examine the power dynamics evident through capital and habitus of academic developers, Samuel's force field model (2008) assisted me in understanding the multiple macro and micro forces and influences on ASD practice and scholarship. I extended this initial theoretical selection by drawing further on Barad's (2007) agential realist philosophy to explore the various material-discursive entanglements inherent in the contexts and a decolonial lens to illuminate the impact of coloniality on ASD practices. This theoretical interplay enabled a more nuanced exploration and critical understanding of ASD and to envision new possibilities for praxis and scholarship, including a contribution to decolonial scholarship, which has been limited in ASD.

I extended the theoretical framework by developing new conceptual frameworks to theorise the biography of ASD. This included Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) Rhizomatic philosophy to understand the multiplicities in ASD, its non-linear emergence and progression and its

⁶⁶ For example, studies by Behari-Leak, 2016; Boughey, 2009; Boughey & Niven 2012; Lockett, 2016; Quinn, 2012

continuous process of becoming, Derrida's (1981) notion of the Phamakon to illuminate paradoxes and duality/ dialectics of ASD practices, Connell's (2007) southern theory and a constellation of ideas around gazes (Foucault, 2003; Said, 1979; hooks, 1993) to proffer a southern gaze for ASD underpinned by Ubuntu (African philosophical approach), the metaphor of the lotus and critical hope (Bozalek et al., 2014) to suggest transformative possibilities within constraints. This enabled me to theorise the biography of ASD using multiple theoretical lenses that integrate global north and global south perspectives, fostering epistemic reciprocity and plurality of knowledges.

9.2.3. Methodological contributions

This study departs from the traditional single methodology, and espouses epistemological and methodological pluralism, which is the first methodological contribution. The initial study design, a Critical Narrative Inquiring, employed a multiparadigmatic approach incorporating *Interpretivism, Critical theory and Postmodernism* (Taylor, Taylor, & Luitel, 2012) within an Integralist framework (Wilber, 2005). To my knowledge this is the first study on ASD in SA that has drawn on an Integral framework. In chapter 3, I provided a diagram that reflected this evolving nature of educational research from positivism to Integralism (chapter 3, section 3.2).

The next methodological contribution was the integration of both the conventional and post-qualitative methodologies in this study. Embracing pluralism, I extended my existing critical narrative methodology study through adding a post qualitative analytical lens drawn from posthumanism and feminist new materialism. I developed an analytical strategy that drew on *Thinking with Theory* (Jackson and Mazzei, 2011, 2022) and a diffractive analysis (Barad, 2007). While this study is not an entirely post-qualitative one, I have drawn on elements from both conventional (interpretivist, critical traditions) and post-qualitative/ new materialist research. This approach opened new ways of seeing and doing inquiry has enabled me to produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently (Mazzei, 2014) about ASD in a changing South African HE context.

At this juncture, it is also my responsibility to offer a cautionary note about theories and methodologies from the global north. Throughout this study I have been acutely aware of "epistemologies of alterity" through othering (Adesina, 2008) and the prevalence of the global

north hegemony/global south dependence (McSweeney, 2019) in much educational research. The latter has been a key concern in much of the research in ASD in SA, which I have alluded to earlier (e.g., in research by Vorster & Quinn, 2017; Jacobs, 2021; Ganas, 2021; Boughey, 2022). The decolonial debates in SA HE are concerned with disrupting this hegemony and recognising, valuing and legitimating marginalised voices and, in most cases, indigenous knowledges.

Naidoo (2016) argues that “theories and approaches that originate in the global north do not always account adequately for multifaceted socio-political contexts or for related pedagogical and curriculum challenges” (p.10). Naidoo (2016) questions the “uncritical, almost evangelical, use of theory which prevents professional academic developers from thinking of creative solutions to the social injustices that are prevalent in higher education” (p. 9) and cautions on the uncritical appropriation of theories that do not take into account the realities of local contexts. This does not mean that one should only draw on theories related to local context, but Naidoo (2016) points to the uncritical use of such theories. I support *pluriversity* (Mignolo, 2007) and as indicated in chapter 3, this research has been about disrupting and decolonising (traditional) educational research and proposing a multiparadigmatic integralist approach that is inclusive of multiple ontologies and epistemologies.

In her compelling book, *Decolonising Educational Research*, Patel (2015) argues for educational research more attuned to context. She speaks of our (humans) interconnectedness with the social and material contexts as well as the human and non-human entities “coming into existence with each other” (p. 49). Drawing on Barad’s agential realism she avers that “research is a fundamentally relational project—relational to ways of knowing, who can know, and to place” (Patel, 2015, p. 48) and the “co-constitutive and intertwined nature of research and knowledge” (p. 50). Methodologically, this study thus makes a move towards decolonising methodologies, following Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021). I have discussed my methodological moves towards this process in chapter 3.

It is my contention that this study has benefited from drawing on both conventional methodologies together with posthumanistic/ new materialist approaches and decolonial thinking, within the framework of Ubuntu to explore ASD in South Africa.

I add another layer to the diagram in chapter 3 (section 3.2) to include the postqualitative opportunities for educational research. This may be considered an extension of Taylor and Medina’s (2013) multiparadigmatic model for research design. The blue layer (PostQ) is the additional postqualitative area that I add to the model.

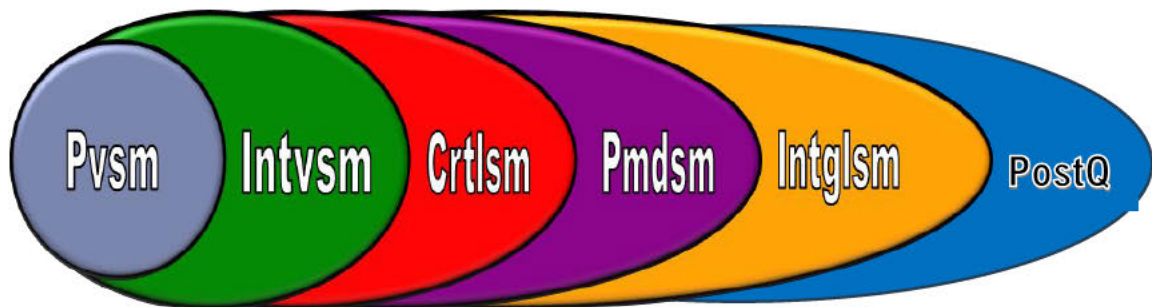


Figure 9.1: Research Paradigm Emergence (Taylor & Medina, 2013) with additional post-qualitative layer

9.3. Limitations

The limitations of the study are broadly within the areas of theoretical, methodological and contextual limitations, and resource constraints.

Theoretically, this study is relatively expansive in terms of the complexity of drawing on and integrating multiple theoretical referents. As a result, there has been a risk of an overload of theories, whilst I maintain that these are relevant to my study. The use of a number of theories has meant that I was also unable to fully apply a theory in depth. I have drawn on specific theories or concepts to assist with the analysis and develop the thesis for this study.

Methodologically, I have drawn on newer approaches, integrating conventional qualitative research (critical narrative inquiry) with post-qualitative approaches. Given the relative newness of post-qualitative inquiry, it may be challenging for readers who have not encountered these approaches. I am also very cognisant of St Pierre’s (2013) cautionary note that one cannot merely appropriate a post-qualitative approach into an existing study. I do not consider this study to be a post-qualitative one. Rather, as indicated previously, I have drawn on elements from both conventional (interpretivist, critical traditions) and post-qualitative research.

I was drawn to post-humanistic and new materialist theories much later during my PhD journey and like Andy Ruck, it was thus an “attempt to learn new materialist theories whilst in the midst of doctoral research” (Ruck & Mannion, 2019). I do not, however, replace one (critical narrative inquiry) with the other (post-qualitative research). Rather, throughout this thesis, I argue in defense of a pluralistic approach that integrates multiple methodological, theoretical and analytical perspectives for doing inquiry.

Contextually, this study produced data from senior academic developers located in the national space and 3 university contexts and in some universities, there were limited numbers of participants (due to the institutional configuration of ASD). While I ensured that different institutional types were included, there were limitations in terms of knowledge of ASD in universities. There are universities where there is a greater pool of academic developers. Due to opting to produce data from one province, this may have restricted the knowledge about practices in contexts where there were more participants.

I have experienced resource constraints in terms of time limitations of my participants. This also restricted me from engaging fully in the data production process. For example, I had planned to utilise visual methodology (e.g., a metaphor drawing activity or drawing of rich images, a collage, mind map, or digital image) in addition to semi-structured interviews. Due to my participants’ constraints, only 2 of the 8 participants from the university groups were able to produce collages.

9.4. Recommendations for future possibilities for practice and research

Advancing cosmo-Ubuntu and Ubuntu-currere

This study has served to introduce the possibility of integrating Ubuntu mindsets within ASD practices. Further engagement with the principles of **cosmo-Ubuntu and Ubuntu-currere** for ASD and its scholarship could be advanced. What are the nuances of integrating these principles and how could these position ASD (and HE) roles and purposes differently are possibilities for further research.

Syntax for ASD in the global south

There is a need to develop a **syntax for ASD in the global south**. Given the diversity of the field and multiple knowledges, theoretical perspectives and methodologies used, generating such a syntax would be useful.

Advancing diffractive analysis

While this study has made a minor contribution towards integrating a **Posthumanistic-Decolonial diffractive analysis**, this approach can be developed further.

ASD for Sustainability

How can ASD contribute to **ASD for Sustainability in the global south**? Exploring further what 'sustainability' means will be useful for knowledge creation in this area. While ASD practices have focused predominantly on the improvement of learning, teaching and assessment, there is limited work in the area of eco justice and sustainability, which ASD could develop further.

Expanding the theoretical repertoire for ASD in the global south

This study has drawn on a few theoretical perspectives for examining ASD in the global south. The focus has been to illustrate the possibilities rather than on being expansive. It would be useful to explore **other possibilities** that may exist for theorising ASD in the global south. This could be in line with Jackson and Mazzei's (2012, 2022) *Thinking with Theory* methodology. A scholarly output in the form of a book would contribute to expanding the knowledge base of ASD in SA and the global south. This study has again made a minor contribution in this regard.

Advancing ASD scholarship in the global south

Currently there is no dedicated journal or conference for ASD, especially in the global south. There are many educational journals, both nationally and internationally in which ASD scholarship features. There is also the International Journal for Academic Development (IJAD). As ASD advances as a field of practice and research it may be useful to develop a journal for ASD in the global south. I acknowledge that there exists the journal SoTL in the South which is open to both academic development and learning and teaching more generally.

Integrating other disciplinary fields to advance ASD practice and scholarship

ASD and AD more generally have drawn from a range of disciplines that has informed ASD (and AD) practices in SA. It may be useful to consider drawing from the field of **Philosophy of**

Education, for example Global citizenship education (GCE) and especially GCE in the global south (see Bosio & Waghid, 2023).

A brief overview of the latest book by Bosio & Waghid (2023) indicates that:

This volume presents a critical discussion that brings contemporary academic debate about 'southern theory' to Global Citizenship Education (GCE). It situates the discussion around GCE in the Global South within a critical and post-colonial paradigm informed by the values and knowledge of critical pedagogy ingrained in social justice....The book is designed with the intent to contribute towards the possibility of imagining a 'yet-to-come' critical-transformative and post-colonial and value-creating GCE curriculum beyond a westernised, market-oriented and apolitical practices towards a more sustainable paradigm based on principles of mutuality and reciprocity (Source: <https://brill.com/display/title/63195>)

The above synopsis of global citizenship education in the global south resonates with the ideas promoted in this study for transformative ASD, especially around decolonising pedagogical approaches, enhancing critical consciousness and reflexivity, embracing transformative professional learning practices that move beyond technicist and instrumentalist logics and advancing scholarship around integrating southern theory and decolonial approaches for learning and teaching.

9.5. An Aside: Global crises impacting academic Staff development The COVID-19 pandemic and AI in higher education

The data for this study were produced in late 2018 and the beginning of 2019. It does not reflect advances in ASD during the two major global crises: the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid rise of artificial intelligence (AI). ASD and AD, more generally, have always been on the periphery, ‘outside the castle walls’, as one participant in this study claimed (Virginia, chapter 5). COVID-19 seemed to have pulled ASD into more central roles in universities globally. To some extent, the rise of AI has also had similar effects to COVID-19, but not to such an extent. I share below my personal experience with these developments.

9.5.1. COVID-19

Some day in mid-April 2020

It’s almost 10 pm. Seems like the doomsday clock was ticking away.

A Microsoft TEAMS call is in progress, on two screens almost 30kms apart.

“So, as we were discussing earlier, we need to consider working with the curriculum in addition to developing the skills about the technologies” was voiced by Nalini from one laptop screen.

“Yes, I agree. We’ve had lots of delays with getting e-learning off the ground. But of course, our staff will need to consider what they will be teaching online and how. But also, how will they introduce this to students,” said the other speaker.

“Okay great. I’ve been thinking that we create a space online for our staff to come together and discuss these critical aspects. We can call this Curriculum Conversations as the focus will be on the curriculum and offer these as two-hour weekly sessions on MS TEAMS. Are you in with me?” said Nalini.

“Yes definitely. “This will be an important space for our staff,” remarked the other speaker.

Curriculum Conversations
Was born at our university
We pooled our resources
Drew on our colleagues
We made connections, some new
Local and global,
Partnerships
Collaborations, Dialogues
Was critical
Enabled us to,

Explore, play and,
Make mistakes
As we learned together
Co-creating and,
Connecting through the digital waves
Save the academic year, they said!!

On 28th April 2020 we (my colleague and I) facilitated the first Curriculum Conversations session on MS Teams for our academic staff. The session was attended by approximately 200 academic staff from our university. This was certainly a first for us...having 200 staff in our staff development workshop. One of our colleagues in our department had this to say,

Such an important social-scholarly community of inquiry you have created online, Colleagues — and what a turnout! The spirit was just right to draw together academics — the sharing was spot on. Well done and thank you.

The COVID-19 crisis caught the world completely unprepared with unexpected challenges. All formal education, basic, secondary and HE were faced with negotiating multiple pressures in terms of maintaining safety and saving lives whilst also paying attention to not losing the academic year. As academic staff developers, our immediate concern was to ensure that our staff had the requisite support as they enacted their curricular online. Never before has ASD been more critically positioned in university operations. While we had previously struggled on the periphery, staff developers around the world were occupying centralised positions and offering a range of staff development support as universities pivoted online in 2020.

As a centre for Academic development, our work was at the centre of the university's attempt at responding to the crisis, from developing new skills to providing leadership in curriculum and pedagogical dialogue and enactment. One of our colleagues, a manager in an academic department, remarked,

You guys are right in the centre now. Everywhere we go, people are talking about the AD unit and what you have been doing

This seemed like a dream come true. Was this really happening? Did it take a pandemic for us, as AD, to be recognised and valued in the academic sector? By us, we do not just mean us two academic developers, but AD nationally, globally. What could this turn mean for AD in higher education, we wondered further? This was a momentous shift from AD being at the periphery to the centre of teaching and learning development. Amidst the trauma and

devastation that dominated the health, economic and education sectors, we were determined to hold on to “positivity” and deliberately search for possibilities that may be hidden under the debris of the COVID-19 disaster. The extract below is from one of my reflective journals.

“I was inspired by the prolific author Arundhati Roy’s portrayal of the coronavirus pandemic as a portal. My understanding of a portal is that it serves as a gateway to something else, another dimension, another world, another way of being. What, possibly, could such a devastating micro-organism offer the world, whilst holding it to ransom?

How could COVID-19 be a gateway to something better? Could it?

Still, I wondered whether the pandemic presented such a portal for higher education in South Africa” (Nalini’s reflective journal, 27 April 2020)

9.5.2. Artificial Intelligence

In December 2022, my son introduced me to ‘ChatGPT’. After ‘playing’ around with it on just a few occasions, my staff development persona came in full swing during the December vacation of 2022. I recall sharing this with a number of my friends and colleagues within the national and international spaces. At that stage, we were all still finding our way with this new platform, which seemed to be replacing Google, with quick information at our fingertips.

As we returned to campus in early 2023, we knew that this new hype was going to be another concern for our academic staff. The major concern was around assessment – especially if students have access to this ready-made information available, how should assessments be designed? As a staff developer in my unit, I invited my colleagues in the eLearning unit to collaborate with me. We took to our Curriculum Conversations platform once more, which was now well established as a virtual space at our university. Collaboratively, we held our first session on 13 February 2023, entitled ‘The impact of AI in HE: ChatGPT’. We invited a guest speaker who had been working in this area. Once more, the crisis through the uncertainties of AI resulted in a large number of academic staff attending our CC session.

9.5.3. Inspiration for an ASD book

The developments in ASD during the COVID-19 pandemic provided opportunities to delve further into how disruptions and complexities provided fertile ground for reflecting critically on our practices and for envisioning new possibilities. We did this collaboratively and invited our colleagues to contribute to a book, *Academic Staff Development: Disruptions, Complexities, Change (Envisioning New Futures)* (Chitanand & Rathilal, 2023).

Below is an extract from the book:

The impetus for this book is the COVID-19 pandemic that saw a centering of academic staff development in higher education institutions (HEIs) globally. As two academic staff developers, we felt the agentic force of the COVID-19 pandemic propel us to the forefront of the learning and teaching agenda at our university. This brought to the fore our combined experience of four decades in academic (staff) development to support our university in the pivot to online learning and teaching to ‘save the academic year’. While we did have reservations about this discourse (Chitanand, 2020) perpetuating higher education globally, we were committed to ensuring that critical engagement was pivotal to the renewed focus of the academic project.

This juncture in the history of higher education prompted us, or rather forced us, to reflect critically and reflexively on our practices and the growing field of academic staff development, and higher education more generally. As we argue below, this disruption of COVID-19 is but one moment in the history of higher education in South Africa which has experienced numerous disruptions, challenges, and changes that are simultaneously local and global, and epoch-shifting (Bawa, 2021). This collection is an attempt to understand the past and present with a view to exploring and envisioning new future possibilities for academic staff development. Within this spirit of reflection and envisioning, we recognise the entanglement of past-present-future (Chitanand & Rathilal, 2023, p. 7)

As we have encountered, in both instances of crises impacting HE pedagogies, assessment and curriculum more broadly, ASD was being pulled into centralised positions. The following quote by Henry Giroux (2019), which was also used in our book above, captures the possibilities for advancing ASD through disruptions and uncertainties:

“Uncertainties can be a time of great anxiety but a time of great possibility ... a discourse of anxiety should give way to a discourse of critique and a discourse of critique should give way to a discourse of possibility. And a discourse of possibility means that you can imagine a future very different from the present.” (Giroux, 2019)

However, as a developing field of practice and scholarship, ASD cannot “rely” on disruptions, complexities and uncertainties to foster change, and more especially, transformative change. It is clear from this study that, although ASD was able to respond during crises like COVID-19, there are still challenges, especially in light of the 2015-2016 massive student protests that revealed blind spots in ASD. As I write this, I am very mindful that ASD is entangled in the very system we are attempting to transform – as illustrated in the thesis chapter and metaphor of the lotus (chapter 8).

If ASD is to be adaptive, transformative and a thought leader in the field of HE studies, and develop as a legitimate field, then further development through critical reflexivity is required. This reflexive stance is not only incumbent on ASD as a field, but more holistically the entire HE context of South Africa and the multiple layers and agents (human and on human) that contribute to the structuring of ASD. Furthermore, this will require a critical examination of our ethico-onto-epistemologies as a collaborative. What are we aspiring to achieve as a HE community? And how might we achieve this? What roles will ASD play? These are critical and necessary conversations.

9.6. Concluding thoughts

In this chapter, I set out to discuss the implications of this research and its limitations. I offer suggestions and recommendations for further research to advance the field. Finally, I close with a brief reflective account of COVID-19 and the rise of Artificial Intelligence, and how these developments impacted my practice. A similar trend may be observed throughout the HE contexts in South Africa, with ASD pulled to more centralised roles.

CODA

FROM BRICOLAGE TO ASSEMBLAGE

Introduction

In this meta-reflective account of my thesis engagement, I reflect on my doctoral process that has seen me tread multiple pathways, engaging in new lines of flight and traversing the continuum from bricolage to assemblage. I outline these developments in this section of my thesis.

Almost two decades ago, when I engaged in a master's study, my focus was on developing a bricolage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I have included an extract below:

In keeping with my epistemological standpoint I will adopt a multi-method approach to address my research questions thereby also subscribing to methodological pluralism. Adopting the stance of 'researcher as bricoleur' I will attempt to produce a bricolage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), a collage-like piece of art pieced together by multiple representations drawn from ethnography (critical), phenomenology (hermeneutic) and biographic accounts of myself and those of my participants (teachers and learners) (Chitanand, 2005, p. 19).

It seemed like a natural progression when I engaged in my PhD study that I would follow a similar process as I had already engaged (experimented) in methodological pluralism as well, at the time. However, I was not just piecing together theories, methodologies and participants' accounts in this study; I was also an integral part of the research process. This was an embodied engagement drawing on Barad (2007) that the researcher does not stand apart from the research process because, "we too are part of the world's differential becoming...and that practices of knowing are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world" (italics in original, Barad, 2007, p. 91). I was not just creating a bricolage in this doctoral encounter, but I was part of an assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), intra-acting and becoming-with (Harraway, 2016) human and non-human actors in the process. I discuss this in the following sections.

Disruptions, irruptions and new lines of flight

“One READS for a PhD....all the time....engaging/re-engaging with the literature review (not a once off event... to find a reference/quote...)” (Samuel, 2021)

“Hannah Arendt and Virginia Woolf both understood the high stakes of training the mind and imagination to go visiting, to venture off the beaten path to meet unexpected, non-natal kin, and to strike up conversations, to pose and respond to interesting questions, to propose together something unanticipated, to take up the unasked-for obligations of having met” (Haraway 2016, 130)

In this section, I reflect on my doctoral study, specifically concerning methodological and theoretical disruptions, irruptions and new lines of flight for performing inquiry. The performative act of reading for a PhD that enables the mind and imagination to go visiting (Haraway, 2016) is itself an entanglement of intra-actional⁶⁷ (Barad, 2007) moments that produce ‘doctoralness’ (Harrison, 2009). It is through reading, all the time and engaging iteratively with the literature, as highlighted by Samuel (2021) in this section’s opening epigraph, that new lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) may emerge for performing inquiry.

In chapter 3, I discussed the challenge I experienced of remaining ‘boxed’ within a single research method. I argued for decolonising the research methodology and proposed the multiparadigmatic research design (Taylor et al., 2012; Taylor & Medina, 2013; Taylor, 2014), which I framed as an Integralist study, drawing on Wilber’s (2003) Integral theory. I presented an argument for pluralism, which espouses multiple ways of coming to know, and I linked this to the Prelude, wherein I described my ontological positioning and positionality that intimately influences my choices. In this study, I experienced methodological disruption during the course of my doctoral journey⁶⁸ encounter.

⁶⁷ Entanglement and intra-action are concepts developed by Karen Barad (2007).

In the book *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Barad considers that entanglement is not just about being intertwined but also about ceasing independence. “To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating.” (Barad, 2007, p. ix) Barad coined the concept intra-action, which “signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies...in contrast to the usual “interaction,” which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action.” (p. 33)

⁶⁸ I hold the notion of journey under erasure in this particular instance as ‘journey’ seem to suggest that one arrives and a sense of bringing to closure an experience once the journey is over. Reference is made to the next section on doctoral inquiry in-becoming that explains this view further.

The second excerpt from Harraway (2016) captures the essence of this study through this disruptive encounter: venturing off the beaten path of traditional educational research, striking conversations with (new) texts, posing questions and thinking with theory (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) to offer hopefully, more plausible insights of ASD and for the practice of educational inquiry. Through my experiences in this study, I make the case for doctoral inquiry in-becoming, which I will discuss next.

Doctoral inquiry-in-becoming

In line with my ontological position of becoming (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), explicated in the Prelude, I consider this doctoral encounter as one that remains in-becoming. By this, I do not just imply the process of becoming-doctorate or doctoralness (Harrison, 2009), which is certainly one of change from the beginning of the study and is indeed expected and required of the study for all doctoral students. I refer herein to the process of inquiry and our pursuit of knowledge through a doctoral inquiry, which itself remains in-becoming. This is so on the grounds that educational pursuits are always limitless and temporal. This is certainly revealed by Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) eight historical moments in qualitative research in the *SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research (3rd Edition)*. In addition, in the more recent edition of the *SAGE Handbook (5th Edition)* the editors Denzin and Lincoln (2018) have claimed to have more than 50 new authors and 16 new chapters. Similarly, in the latest edition of the *SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research (6th Edition)* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023), 27 of the 34 chapters are new chapters with topics not included in previous volumes of the book (<https://collegepublishing.sagepub.com/products/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-research-6-275161>). As Denzin and Lincoln (2018) purport,

Older paradigms are being reconfigured. Hybrid paradigms are emerging alongside new geographies of knowledge and new decolonizing epistemologies... The field of qualitative research is on the move and moving in several different directions at the same time (p. 29).

In this study, I adopted a pluralistic approach that integrates multiple methodological, theoretical and analytical perspectives. My research draws from both conventional (traditional) and in a small way, post-qualitative research and opened up possible new ways of doing inquiry. It is not uncommon for doctoral students to draw on alternative analytical frameworks for their doctoral studies, as has been the case with my peers Dhunpath (2001),

Amin (2008), Naidoo (2019), and Appadoo-Ramsamy (2022). In line with the idea of becoming, the doctorate is not a finished product. It presents one possible view (Amin, 2008) of the phenomenon of inquiry. The analytical strategy, thinking with theory and diffractive analysis is one possible strategy that I have adopted for my inquiry into *Academic Staff Development in a changing South African higher education context*.

Drawing on a new materialist perspective, I argue that this doctoral-inquiry-in-becoming was produced as I engaged *intra-actionally* (Barad, 2007), with various texts, my own thoughts, peers, supervisors, family, pets, my laptop, my surroundings, 'and ... and ... and'⁶⁹ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In this doctoral encounter, the doctoral student-researcher-philosopher encounter is not just a discursive engagement but an entanglement of the material and the discursive, material-discursive intra-actions (Barad, 2007). This was, in fact, *an assemblage*, to draw on Deleuze and Guattari (1987). As I had experienced, the materiality of the discursive encounter is felt in your bones. This is, however, not instantaneous or at the beginning of the doctoral encounter and occurs during the rhizo-experience⁷⁰. Below is a reflective piece from my journal.

I recall vividly Professor Vee's⁷¹ words during a doctoral seminar in 2015, 'when you find your theoretical framework, you will have tears in your eyes', she said. For years during this doctoral journey, I waited patiently for the tears, which would signal the joy of seeing the light. However, none came. I searched through many texts and still there were no tears. Then 'in the middle' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) of things (doctoral study deliberations) disruptions, eruptions and irruptions occurred that had forced me to push boundaries, venture off the beaten path, take risks and play. This opened up new vistas, thoughts, emotions as I was becoming-with (Harraway, 2016) my PhD study - with mind and body.

Enacting Pluralism

Like Jusslin (2020), I did not commence this PhD with any post-qualitative framing. This study commenced as a critical narrative inquiry of ASD in a changing South African HE context. In conceptualising this study, I had proposed a pluralistic multiparadigmatic design as explained in chapter 3. I extend this research design by drawing from post-qualitative approaches,

⁶⁹ Deleuze and Guattari (1987) use 'and...and...and' to suggest continuityand continuous process of becoming.

⁷⁰ I construct this term drawing from Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizome to depict experience that grows in multiple directions, connecting one thought to another and spreading out thoughts as nodes are encountered to produce new lines of flight.

⁷¹ Prof Vee (pseudonym) was a facilitator on a doctoral workshop that I was attending at the time.

specifically posthumanisms and feminist new materialisms. I was drawn to post-humanistic and new materialist theories much later during my PhD journey and like Andy Ruck, it was thus an “attempt to learn new materialist theories whilst in the midst of doctoral research” (Ruck & Mannion, 2019). I do not, however, replace one (critical narrative inquiry) with the other (post-qualitative research). Rather, throughout this thesis, I argue in defence of a pluralistic approach that integrates multiple methodological, theoretical and analytical perspectives for doing inquiry.

I first encountered an aspect of posthumanism, socio-materialism at a HELTASA conference a few years ago. It was during a workshop facilitated by a colleague, the late Brenda Leibowitz and a co-facilitator. There are three things that I recall vividly: firstly, the mention of the concept socio-materialism, secondly, that a table has agency, thirdly, how flabbergasted and thoroughly confused I was. How could a table have agency? I had understood agency to be something that someone has, the will to act. I did not encounter anything post-qualitative after that until reading an article by another colleague, Lesley le Grange (2019) on post-qualitative research. I could argue in new materialist terms how this particular text enacted its agency by pushing itself forward in my research assemblage and intra-acted with me to produce a different researcher-in-becoming. Following this text, there were many others with which I engaged that assisted me in developing the analytical approach for this study.

This doctoral study may thus be considered a “*site of experimentation*” (Ruck & Manion, 2019) with some movements towards “becoming (partially) posthumanist” (Riley, 2019). This study was thus an attempt to explore the potentialities of embracing a multiplicity of (new) approaches for performing inquiry into ASD in South Africa.

A key and central tenet of the posthuman turn is the decentring of the human. Like Ulmer (2017), when first encountering this, I was certainly taken aback! Did the *post*-human equate to de-centring equate to rejection of humans? And, in place of what?

My initial reaction to this allegiance was to pause, retract and decide *certainly not*.

*Certainly not
Could I align my AD work
And research, philosophically to anything
That would negate (our) the human selves
Especially not in a country like ours, South Africa
Where, what it means to be human
Is entangled with a history of subjugation, oppression, alienation
and marginalisation
Injustices!
Certainly not
In the decolonial work that I have entered,
Albeit a bit late
But so needed in/for our contexts
Deeply influenced and shaped by a painful history
Certainly not
Could I negate the human
As central to our endeavours
For Justice!*

A decolonial scholar-in-becoming

I do not regard myself as a decolonial scholar, as an examination of much of my academic development practice and research, although underpinned by a transformative intent, was ashamedly more aligned to technicist and instrumentalist logics, fueling the performative, neoliberal agenda that continues to govern much of higher education. However, in line with becoming, my own transformative trajectory as an academic developer continues to remain in potentiality, spiraling new ways of knowing, being and acting in higher education academic staff development

Bhattacharya (2020) captured exactly my initial emotions. In rejecting post qualitative labels and advocating for culturally situated research methodologies, drawing on one's onto-epistemologies, Bhattacharya (2020, p. 182) claims that "this argument rests on a false perception that all humans are equally centered to support the call for a decentering and radical interconnectivity." This has indeed been the crux of HE transformation imperatives in which the decolonial movement in HE has been pivotal (at least since 2015) for social and epistemic justice in SA and globally as well.

However, as I engaged further, these approaches are concerned firstly with "taking issue with human exceptionalism while being accountable for the role we play in the differential constitution and differential positioning of the human among other creatures" (Barad, 2007, p.136). For Le Grange (2020) "this means that the human is stripped from its ontological privilege and placed on an immanent plane with all modes/objects of life" (p. 130) that includes non-human and more than human entities. This suggests then that the posthumanistic approach does not negate the human but, in 'decentring', the human as well

as non-human (or more than human) entities are also considered as significant contributors to the world (world's becoming).

As I experienced as part of the assemblage, the non-human (or more than human) entities – my laptop, the library, the books that I purchased, my desk, my thoughts etc., are not passive or inert (Truman, 2019) and are lively, vibrant and active (Gamble et al., 2019). The doctoral encounter was a most profound, transformative experience and is reflected in the image below...this is a collection of books I purchased in 2022. The purchase of this set of books was not just a random selection but as part of my transformative process of becoming-with (Harraway, 2016), the social justice foci of academic staff development. It was a radical shift and a broadening of my own ASD gaze whilst working within the neoliberal university to foster **transformative and sustainable** ASD practices.

I added this image to Twitter (now, X), with the caption, 'Looking forward to just getting in...'. One of my colleagues tweeted a comment, 'You are already in, Nalini!'

Indeed, I was...



Figure F: Image of the books I had purchased

This doctoral adventure led to new paths for inquiry. I continue to keep walking, thinking, reading, talking, collaborating, questioning, learning, unlearning, relearning...and...and...and...

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

(Frost, 1916)

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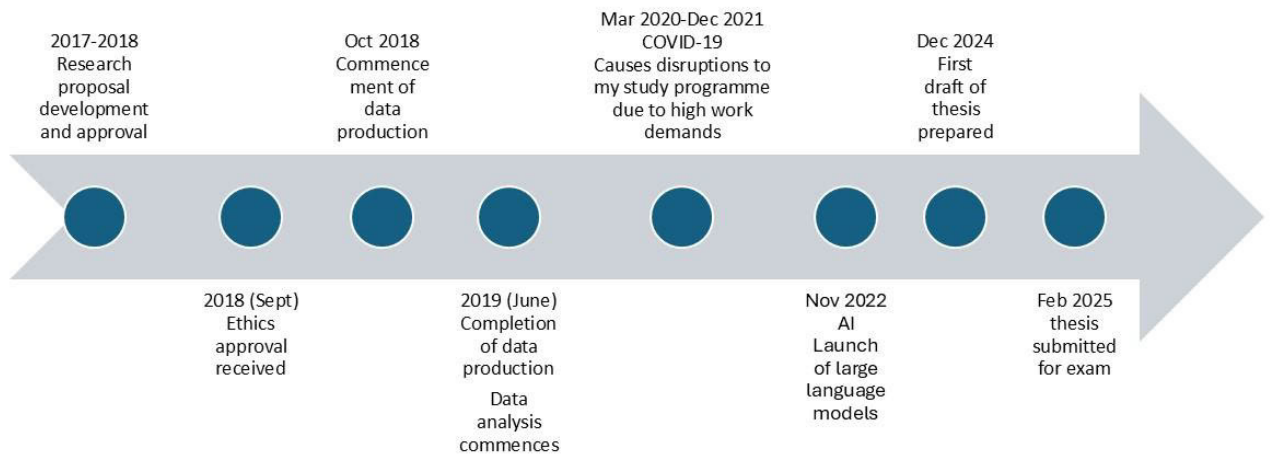
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Appendix 1: Timeline for Research

Timeline for PhD study: Academic staff development in a changing SA higher education context



Appendix 2: Data Production Plan

Research Title: Academic staff development in a changing South African higher education context

Critical questions:

1. How have academic staff developers enacted their roles in a changing higher education context?
2. Why have academic staff developers enacted their roles in a changing higher education context in the way that they do?

| Questions | How have academic staff developers enacted their roles in a changing higher education context? | Why have academic staff developers enacted their roles in a changing higher education context in the way that they do? |
|--|--|--|
| Why is the data being collected? | To explore the various roles enacted by academic staff developers | To examine critically the forces/ influences that have shaped academic staff development in particular ways. This will include an examination of the underlying assumptions governing academic staff development as well as the discourses, ideologies, principles, philosophies and theoretical perspectives underpinning its practice |
| What are the research instruments? | Document analysis – Appendix 5 Visual representation – Appendix 6 Semi-structured interviews – Appendix 7 | Document analysis – Appendix 5 Visual representation – Appendix 6 Semi-structured interviews – Appendix 7 Focus group interviews – Appendix 8 Semi-structured interviews with key informants – Appendices 9, 10, 11 |
| Who (or what) will be the sources of the data? | The primary sources of data will be Academic staff developers at the 3 participating universities National and institutional documents will provide data about the national and institutional declared stance on academic staff development | The primary sources of data will be Academic staff developers Other key informants will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads of Academic Development units/ Teaching and Learning centres; • Senior Academic (Staff) Development practitioners/ scholars; • Heads/ Coordinators of national projects focussing on enhancing academics as teachers e.g. Quality Enhancement Project and University Capacity Development Plan |

| Questions | How have academic staff developers enacted their roles in a changing higher education context? | Why have academic staff developers enacted their roles in a changing higher education context in the way that they do? |
|--|--|--|
| How many of the data sources will be accessed? | 9 participants – 3 from each higher education institution | 9 participants – 3 from each participating higher education institution Key informants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads of Academic Development units/ Teaching and Learning centres – 3 – 1 from each university; • Senior Academic (Staff) Development practitioners/ scholars – maximum 3; • Heads/ Coordinators of national projects focussing on enhancing academics as teachers – 2 |
| Where is the data to be collected? | The data will be collected at the respective universities of the participants | Participants – at their universities Key informants – at their relevant places of employment |
| How often will data be collected? | Participants will develop one visual representation Semi-structured interviews – 1 in-depth interview for each participant – 2 hours in duration Focus group interview – 1 for the group of 9 participants who will be invited to participate | Participants will develop one visual representation Semi-structured interviews – 1 in-depth interview for each participant – 2 hours in duration Focus group interview – 1 for the group of 9 participants who will be invited to participate Semi-structured interview with key informants – 1 one-hour interview each |
| Justify this plan for data collection. | The use of arts based methodologies such as visual representations will encourage creative outputs and also enable reflective and reflexive thinking about participants’ practices. These formats will enable participants to represent their thoughts and experiences that may otherwise not be easily expressed through formal writing or interviews. These outputs will serve as interview schedules to probe further into participants’ experiences. The semi-structured interviews will thus build on the visual representations and are needed in order to add depth to the knowledge generated by participants. | In addition to the justification of the arts based methodologies and semi-structured interviews with participants, focus group discussions with participants will be conducted to generate collaborative and collective insight from participants about the key issues with regards to academic staff development and its development as a field. Interviews with other key informants will add depth to the discussions and highlight multiple perspective on the future possibilities of academic staff development especially as the field is on a trajectory to professionalise teaching and learning in HE in South Africa and globally as well. |

Appendix 3:

Director: Research

Dear _____

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT PhD RESEARCH AT YOUR UNIVERSITY

I, Nalini Chitanand, am reading for a PhD in Higher Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and I am conducting research on academic staff development in South Africa.

The proposed title of my study is:

Academic staff development in a changing South African higher education context

I intend inviting academic staff developers at your university as participants in this study. I will also require to analyse institutional documents related to academic staff development. These may include the institutional strategic plan, staff development policy, strategic plan of the Teaching and Learning centre/ Academic Development unit and other relevant documents.

The purpose of my study is firstly, to understand from a critical perspective how academic staff developers enact their roles in a changing higher education context in South Africa. Secondly, I wish to examine critically, why academic staff developers enact their roles in the way that they do. In researching how individual academic staff developers enact their roles and why they do so in the way they do, I aim to theorise what was, what is and what potentially could be Academic Staff Development theoretically/ philosophically. The insights from this study will illuminate how the theoretical/ philosophical shifts in academic staff development could assist to reframe our interpretations and understanding of shifts in the overall higher education system.

I hereby apply for permission to undertake this research inviting participation of staff from your university.

The information gathered in this study will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The names of the participants from your university as well as the name of your university will not be disclosed. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Nalini Chitanand

Date

Contact Details:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Supervisor: Prof M A Samuel

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Appendix 4: Informed Consent – Information Sheet and Consent Form

Dear _____

Information Sheet

Research Topic: Academic staff development in a changing South African higher education context

I, Nalini Chitanand, am reading for a PhD in Higher Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and I am conducting research on academic staff development in South Africa. The recent emphasis in South African higher education on enhancing academics as teachers, through the calls for transformation and decolonising higher education and the curriculum as well as the number of national projects (e.g. the quality Enhancement project, Teaching Development Grant and the University Capacity Development Grant) has placed staff development centre stage. I am interested in researching the field of academic staff development through exploring the lived experiences of academic staff developers in a changing higher education context.

The purpose of my study is firstly, to understand from a critical perspective how academic staff developers enact their roles in a changing higher education context in South Africa. Secondly, I wish to examine critically, why academic staff developers enact their roles in the way that they do. In researching how individual academic staff developers enact their roles and why they do so in the way they do, I aim to theorise what was, what is and what potentially could be Academic Staff Development theoretically/ philosophically. The insights from this study will illuminate how the theoretical/ philosophical shifts in academic staff development could assist to reframe our interpretations and understanding of shifts in the overall higher education system, its challenges and systems not operationally, but philosophically.

Data for this study will be generated through semi- structured and focus group interviews and through the use of innovative arts- based data generation strategies, for example, visual representations (e.g. drawings, collages, mind maps, digital images etc.). The visual representations will function as reflective tools and will further serve as prompts for the semi structured interviews.

I will also require to analyse institutional documents related to academic staff development. These may include the institutional strategic plan, staff development policy, strategic plan of your Teaching and Learning centre/ Academic Development unit and other relevant documents.

The data from this study will be interpreted to offer insight into the lived experiences of academic staff developers in the changing South African higher education context with the potential to yield significant insights into how best South Africa's higher education institutions can support academic staff – what the expectations and hopes of staff are who embark on this journey, what challenges they face along the way and how they do or do not overcome these.

You are invited to participate in this PhD study based on your experiences of academic development and academic staff development. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research process at any time.

Participation in this study will require that you

- Share your reflections of your academic staff development experiences through engaging in reflective exercises (e.g. visual representations).
- Agree to be interviewed and participate in a focus group interview. All interviews will be audio recorded.

As the researcher I will ensure your confidentiality in this study and will protect your anonymity and that of your university at all times. All data generated in this study will be kept for five years and will be safely stored in hard copies or password protected virtually and will be appropriately destroyed at the end of the five year period.

I would be grateful if you would agree to participate in this study and allow me access to your institutional documents relevant to academic staff development.

As part of this study I will produce a thesis and various other conference presentations and publications. You will be acknowledged in my thesis and any other output from this research.

Thank you,

Mrs Nalini Chitanand

Date

Participant Consent Form

Research Topic: Academic staff development in a changing South African higher education context

I, _____ understand the contents of this document and consent to participate in the study by Nalini Chitanand on **Academic staff development in a changing higher education context**.

I understand that:

- My participation may involve interviews and other data generation methods as explained in the information letter.
- I may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
- I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.
- I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
- The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible for me to be identified by the general reader.

I provide consent,

For interviews that I participate in to be audio recorded YES / NO (Please circle your response)

Signature of Participant

Date

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Nalini Chitanand

Contact Details:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Supervisor: Prof M A Samuel

School of Education, University of

KwaZulu-Natal

Tel: 031-260 1859

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HSSREC Research Office: Mr Premlal Mohun

031-260 4557

Mohun@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 5: Document Analysis Interview Schedule ⁷²

1. Name of the University
2. Name of the document
3. Document date
4. What are the key reference (s) to academic staff development as featured in this document?
5. What discourses/ ideologies/ philosophies about academic staff development are evident in the document?
6. What are the underlying assumptions being made about academic staff development?
7. What is the document not saying?
8. Whose interests are being served/ not served in this document?

⁷² Adapted from Subbaya, R. (2017).

Appendix 6: Visual representation of participant's experiences/ journey of academic staff development⁷³

Dear _____

Good morning. Thank you for your time to meet with me today. Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in my research. As you are aware, I am currently reading for a PhD in Higher Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the title of my research is *Academic staff development in a changing South African higher education context*. I am interested in researching the field of academic staff development through exploring the lived experiences of academic staff developers in a changing higher education context in South Africa. I am using a narrative inquiry methodology that will enable me to explore and capture the experiences, nuances and complexities using the hallmarks of a literary genre.

Today I shall explain the first data generation methods that are part of this study, namely visual representation. You will then have an opportunity to complete this on your own.

As this research is about exploring the various roles enacted by academic staff developers and the influences that have shaped these roles I would like you to reflect on your lived experiences in academic development and academic staff development and depict these experiences through a visual representation that will tell the story of your journey and experiences.

A visual representation is a poster that may include anything from a drawing (images and text), a mind map, collage (made up of cut out pictures and/ or photographs) or a comic strip or a combination of a few of these. The visual representation could be paper based or digital. Recommended size for your paper based poster is between A2 (2 A3 sheets) and A1 (4 A3 sheets).

Your visual representation should include your practice, your passions, values, feelings and emotions. You may also include people, places, events, discourses, ideologies or any other aspects that may have influenced your practice as an academic staff developer.

You will have some time to complete this poster. I will collect it from you, a week from today. This poster will form part of the interview schedule and you will discuss it during the interview

⁷³ Adapted from Jacobs, (2006)

that will be in two weeks. I will also go through your visual representation and will identify questions that we will discuss during the interview session.

Thank you for your contributions to my study. I value and appreciate your time and effort.

Thank you,

Mrs Nalini Chitanand

Appendix 7: Semi-structured Interview Schedule – Academic staff developers

SS-ASD

Semi-structured interview of Academic Staff Developers

Dear _____

Good morning. Thank you for your time to meet with me today. Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in my research.

The purpose of this interview is to explore the various roles enacted by academic staff developers and to examine the forces that have influenced and shaped these roles and practices. The duration of the interview will be 2 hours. Should we require more time we can schedule another date around your diary and availability.

This interview will be structured in two parts; an explanation of your visual representation followed by discussion, and question and answer session, a further question and answer session to discuss aspects not discussed in the earlier section.

Part 1: Visual representation

During this part of the session you will explain your visual representation uninterrupted. Your visual representation will serve as the interview schedule. A discussion will follow based on the representation and questions that I have determined on examination of the visual, prior to the interview.

Part 2: The following themes will be addressed, if not already covered in Part 1 or 2 above.

Journey into Academic development and academic staff development

- Describe how you have come to be in academic development (AD) and academic staff development (ASD). Did you choose to be part of AD or ASD?
- How long have you been in this field?
- What are your prior areas of work before joining AD/ASD?
- Do you have any formal or informal staff development in AD or ASD? Did you have a mentor?
- If yes, describe them.
If not, how did you learn about the work for ASD?

Academic staff development within the university

- Describe the work of your academic development unit.
- Where does staff development feature in this work?
- What is the connection of ASD with human resources or the Skills unit of your university?
- Can you comment on **AD and ASD along the different moments in time or phases** through its inception at the university and where it is now.
- What are some of the key moments that stand out for you in AD and ASD at your university? Why have you selected these?

Personal factors underpinning practice

- Describe some of your staff development activities. And those of your unit or centre?
- What were the different roles that you were involved in at your university?
What did you do? Why?
What did others do? Why?
What happened?
- What influenced these roles and activities?
- What were your own personal philosophies, values, assumptions that have governed your work in academic staff development? Has this changed/remained the same over the years? Why does this situation prevail?
- What theoretical perspectives or theories do you draw on for your staff development work? Why?
- Are your personal philosophies in line with those of your unit, colleagues and university? If not, how do you reach agreement, if at all?

Perceptions and Influences

- How is staff development perceived across the university? By managers? By academics? By other staff?
- How have the following influenced your academic staff development activities?
 - Massification
 - Globalisation
 - Technological innovation

- The national Transformation and the decolonial movement
- The scholarship of Teaching and Learning
- Professionalisation of teaching in high education
- How do issues of power feature in academic staff development?

Highlights, Challenges and opportunities for Academic staff development, at your university and in South African HE.

- What are some of your highlights over the years?
- What are some of your challenges with respect to staff development work? How do you manage them, if at all?
- What would you like to do differently? Why?
- In an ideal situation, how would you see academic staff development occurring?
- What do you see currently as the role of ASD in higher education? In the past? Now? In the future?
- What were other aspects either at the personal, institutional or national (or even global) level that influenced ASD in your practice and at your university? In the past? In the present? Potentially in the future?
- What in your view are the future possibilities for ASD in South Africa?

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Thank you for your contributions to my study. I value and appreciate your time and effort.

Thank you,

Mrs Nalini Chitanand

Appendix 8: Focus Group Interview Schedule – Academic staff developers

FGS-ASD

Focus Group interview of Academic Staff Developers

Dear _____

Thank you once again for your time and agreeing to participate in my research.

The purpose of this Focus Group Interview will be to consider and explore collaboratively and collectively with academic staff developers the possibilities of academic staff development for the future.

The participants from the group of nine (9) Academic Staff Developers will be selected to participate in the focus group interview and the questions will be selected from the key issues emerging from the individual interviews.

Guiding Questions for discussion

1. What is the connection between academic staff development and the social justice and transformation agenda of higher education and the country?
How is this to be facilitated?
2. How is knowledge in/of the field of academic staff development developed?
3. Research in academic development and academic staff development emphasises the under theorisation of the field?
What are your thoughts on this?
How can this be strengthened?
4. What are the challenges impacting on academic staff development?
5. What are the possibilities for professionalising teaching and learning?
6. What are the possibilities for future academic staff development?

Thank you for your contributions to my study. I value and appreciate your time and effort.

Thank you,

Mrs Nalini Chitanand

Appendix 9: Semi-structured Interview Schedule - Key informants: Heads of Academic Development Units/ Teaching and Learning Centres SS-HAD

Semi-structured interview of Heads of Academic Development Units/ Teaching and Learning Centres

Dear _____

Good morning. Thank you for your time to meet with me today. As you are aware, I am currently reading for a PhD in Higher Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the title of my research is *Academic staff development in a changing South African higher education context*. I am interested in researching the field of academic staff development, how it has evolved over the years, what were its influences and what are the possibilities for the future.

As the head of the Teaching and Learning unit, I would like to learn about your views on your unit's roles in academic staff development, its underpinning principles and philosophies, its challenges, strengths and possibilities for the future.

The duration of the interview will be 1 hour. Should we require more time we can schedule another date around your diary and availability.

Questions

What do you consider are the key imperatives nationally and institutionally with regard to enhancing academics as teachers?

What is the role of your unit/centre?

How have these roles evolved over the years? Why? What were the forces and influences that have shaped these roles?

What are some of the philosophies, principles and theories guiding your unit's work in academic staff development?

What in your view, are some of the perceptions of academic staff development? By managers? Academics? Staff in your unit?

What were your highlights? Why?

What has been some of your challenges? Why?

In an ideal situation, how would you see academic staff development occurring?

What do you see currently as the role of academic staff development in higher education? In the past? Now? In the future?

What in your view are the future possibilities for academic staff development in South Africa?

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Thank you for your contributions to my study. I value and appreciate your time and effort.

Thank you,

Mrs Nalini Chitanand

Appendix 10: Semi-structured Interview Schedule – Key informants: Senior Academic (staff) development Practitioners/ Scholars SS-SAD

Semi-structured interview of 2-3 Senior Academic (staff) development practitioners/scholars who are located in key positions nationally, e.g. Chair Teaching and Learning or Deputy Vice Chancellor Teaching and Learning

Dear _____

Good morning. Thank you for your time to meet with me today. As you are aware, I am currently reading for a PhD in Higher Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the title of my research is *Academic staff development in a changing South African higher education context*. I am interested in researching the field of academic staff development, how it has evolved over the years, what were its influences and what are the possibilities for the future.

Since you have been in the field of academic development for many years and are in a key position in higher education, I would like to learn about your views on the changing roles and practices of academic development and academic staff development and possibilities for the future, especially in terms of the professionalisation of teaching.

The duration of the interview will be 1 hour. Should we require more time we can schedule another date around your diary and availability.

Questions

1. As someone who has been in academic development and academic staff development for a number of years you would have experienced the shifts in the field. Please share some of these shifting conceptions and practices of academic development and academic staff development.
2. What were the reasons for these changes? What were the forces and influences that have shaped these roles?
3. What are your views on the role and function of academic staff development in the transformation of higher education, especially given the most recent decolonial movement?
4. These national imperatives (or drive) especially that associated with transformation and decolonisation have in a sense shifted academic development and academic staff

development from the periphery to the centre or centralised position. What are the implications of this? For the field of academic (staff) development? For higher education?

5. How do issues of power feature in academic staff development?
6. What is the role of academic staff development in the professionalisation of teaching in higher education?
7. What in your view are the future possibilities for academic staff development in South Africa?
8. How would or should these be operationalised?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Thank you for your contributions to my study. I value and appreciate your time and effort.

Thank you,

Mrs Nalini Chitanand

Appendix 11: Semi-structured Interview Schedule – Key informants: National Higher Education project managers SS-NHE

Semi-structured interview of Heads/ Managers of National Higher education projects e.g. at the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)/Council on Higher Education (CHE)

Dear _____

Good morning. Thank you for your time to meet with me today. Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in my research. As you are aware, I am currently reading for a PhD in Higher Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the title of my research is *Academic staff development in a changing South African higher education context*. I am interested in researching the field of academic staff development.

Enhancing academics as teachers has been a key priority from a national perspective with a number of projects and funding available for this e.g. Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) and Teaching Development Grants (TDGs) and more recently Workshops on Improving the Effectiveness of University Teaching and Developing codes for good practice and the much anticipated University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG).

The duration of the interview will be 1 hour. Should we require more time we can schedule another date around your diary and availability.

Questions

In the last decade or so, there has been an increased emphasis on enhancing teaching and learning (for student success), especially through the TDGs and now the UCDG. What in your view were the reasons for this?

What in your view are transformative and sustainable approaches for enhancing student success?

What are your thoughts on enhancing academics as teachers? What is its role in student success?

How do you see this taking place in higher education institutions?

What challenges do you anticipate?

How do you think these may be resolved?

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Thank you for your contributions to my study. I value and appreciate your time and effort.

Thank you,

Mrs Nalini Chitanand

Appendix 12: Ethical clearance



20 September 2018

Mrs Nalini Chitanand 8729406
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Chitanand

Protocol reference number: HSS/0442/018D
Project Title: Academic staff development in a changing South African Higher Education context

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 11 May 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the 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.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc. Supervisor: Prof MA Samuel
cc. Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
cc. School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



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Appendix 13: Professional Editing report



Date: January 21st 2025

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing to confirm that the doctoral thesis entitled
**Academic Staff development in a changing South African higher education
context**

by

Nalini Chitanand

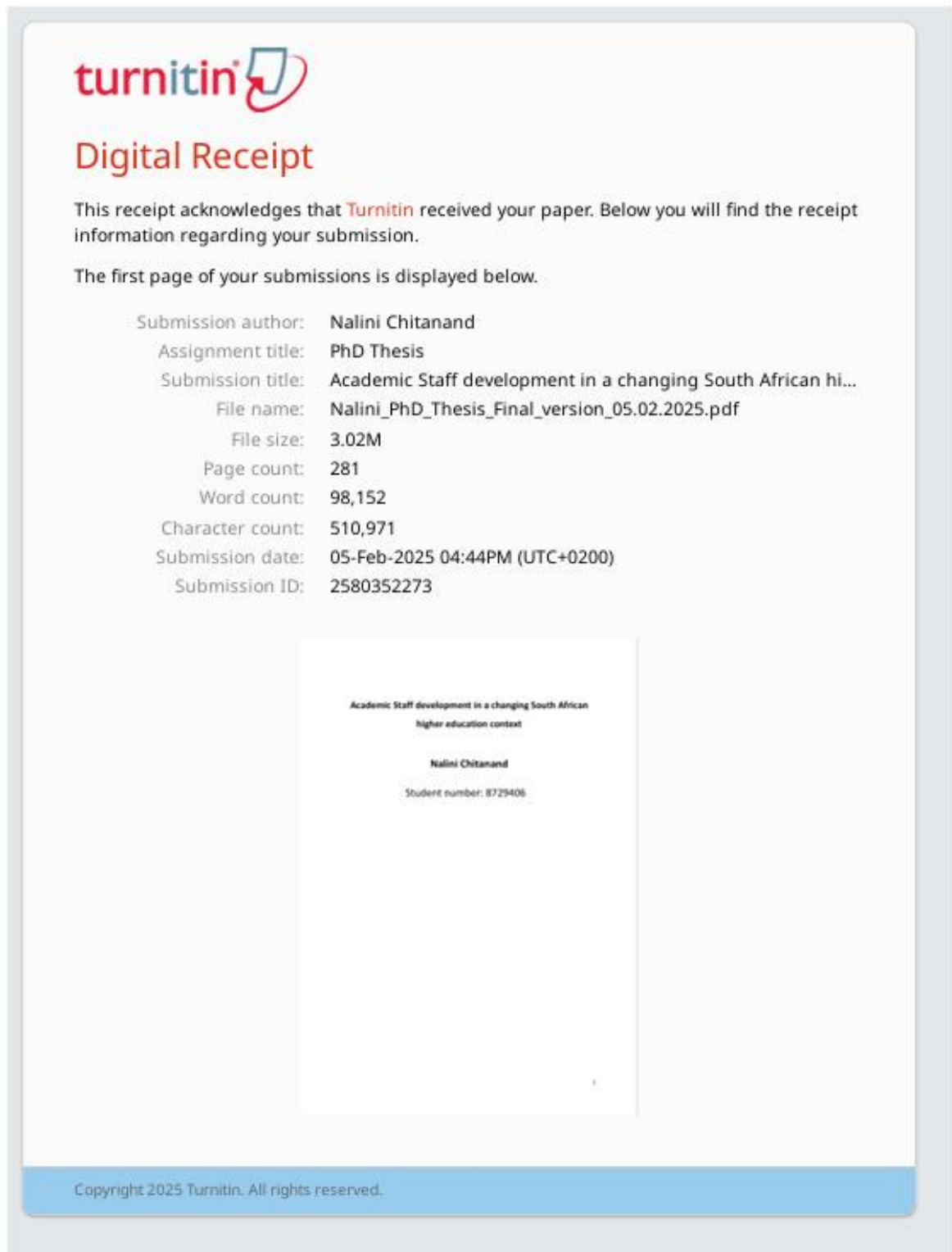
Supervisor: Professor Michael Samuel

has been edited for English language grammar, spelling and usage.

N.B. This letter is issued on the understanding that all corrections and amendments recommended, all anomalies and omissions highlighted, and all clarifications and reformulations requested have been addressed.



Appendix 14: Turnitin report



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Submission title: **Academic Staff development in a changing South African hi...**
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File size: **3.02M**
Page count: **281**
Word count: **98,152**
Character count: **510,971**
Submission date: **05-Feb-2025 04:44PM (UTC+0200)**
Submission ID: **2580352273**

Academic Staff development in a changing South African
higher education context

Nalini Chitanand

Student number: 8729405

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Academic Staff development in a changing South African higher education context

by Nalini Chitanand

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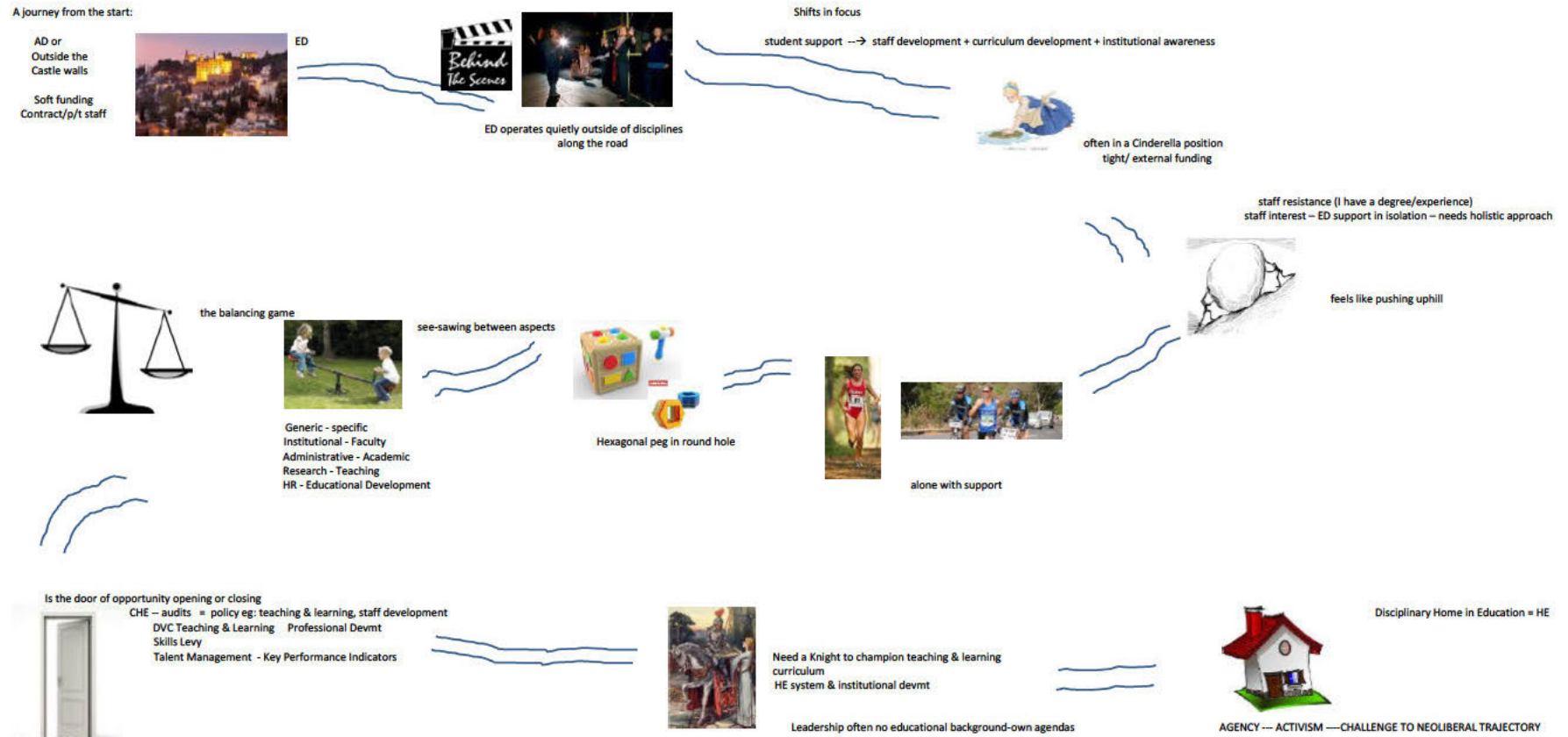
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STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

APPENDIX 15: Visual data (Virginia) (Chapter 4)



Visual Data (Bongani) Chapter 4

Resist, resist and resist

Academic development seen as extra load, "not required"
Academics are already knowledgeable in their field

DiVa Teaching and Learning (Directors of Teaching and Learning)

Usually have varied views about academic development

Each one propels academic development to their own "usually narrow" understanding of academic development

Academic developers tend to be shifted around -- or be seen as irrelevant

Feelings -- of hopelessness

1. People and cars represent disciplines or fields of study
2. There is order
3. Academic Development seems to lack order and doesn't fit in the already

- ii. Feelings of worthlessness
- iii. Always justifying the need for one's field - exhausting!

- Policies + anchoring the need for academic development from students/ staff dev's discourse
- Addressed global pressures of the knowledge economy discourse
- In UK heavily shaped by the cross/incompatible accreditations/epistemological access and openness

Academic staff developer - expected to provide quick fix measures to complex issues such as curriculum (how do we structure curricula?) - hoping experiential as these are not clear cut and quick fix matters!!!!

- A feeling of hopelessness - usually happens after staff finish modules - they begin to see the relevancy of academic development

- The field lacks direction and fails to break through the traditional thoughts surrounding "the given"
- A need for larger debates led by "those with knowledge" about academic development and not necessarily "those in power"