

Debunking the Apartheid Spatial Grid: Developing a Socially Just Architecture Curriculum at a University of Technology

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Abstract

Traditional universities are often interrogated on their pedagogic underpinnings, while universities of technology are often left unchallenged on knowledge production. Universities of technology are often assumed to be transformed because they are a post-apartheid creation, with a mainly black, working-class student body. This assumption has led to little interrogation of the university of technology and its relationship with knowledge production. This paper explores the nature of curriculum contestation and reform at a university of technology. It outlines the historical context of a university of technology and its approach to curriculum development, which has implications for current curriculum transformation efforts. Using autoethnographic research methodology, the paper tracks a multi-year journey towards the development of a transformative, socially just curriculum intervention in the extended curriculum programme for the Architecture and Interior Design programme at a university of technology. The paper concludes that curriculum change does not happen in a vacuum, that it is political, difficult and emotionally taxing, and that it is best done in collaboration with different education stakeholders.

Keywords

Pedagogy, curriculum, knowledge production, curriculum transformation, autoethnography, decolonisation, socially just curricula, architecture, built environment, university of technology

Introduction

The lives of urban dwellers, and particularly urban informal settlement dwellers, are increasingly becoming a key development issue. Urban informal settlements are characterised by many socio-economic issues that built environment practitioners involved in urban development need to understand, in order to build the best working-class communities for the future. Built environment students enter the classroom with biases and assumptions about urban dwellers, which often go unchallenged until they graduate and become practitioners, as the curriculum does not always adequately address them. These assumptions and biases then find their way into housing

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development projects, and later into policies for future buildings, which can be harmful for their residents.

South Africa in the early 1990s held hope for change in all spheres of life, including architecture, which was previously used as an oppressive tool to divide communities by race during apartheid. Many hoped that the post-1994 era would be characterised by architecture as an empowering rather than an oppressive agent in a new South Africa (Marschall, 1998). Marschall (1998: 103) explains that

during the apartheid era, architecture in South Africa has – in a very material sense – sustained and even initiated many of the social, economic and political problems associated with township life and the segregation of society that the new South Africa has inherited from the old.

Various scholars (Marschall, 1998; Rinehart, 2010; Uduku, 1995) have called for a rethinking of architecture and its curriculum, in order to address this issue. Although the dawn of democracy signalled an official end to race-based discriminatory laws which determined where people could live, work and study, their removal didn't immediately break down the invisible structures that made certain neighbourhoods and workplaces inaccessible and university entry unattainable for most black¹ people (Ngoasheng and Gachago, 2017). The social, economic and political problems of township life, and black life in general, did not simply disappear with a change in political dispensation. Architecture in South Africa has always been premised on European town planners and architects, who have imported European ideas, such as the Garden City, and have applied them in this country, regardless of their suitability. The city of Cape Town provides a few examples of importation of European ideas, with the most stark being the unequal application of the Garden City principle in the former whites-only suburb of Pinelands and the former blacks-only (africans-only)² township of Langa in the early 1900s (Coetzer, 2009). Although the two areas have the Garden City's common trait of having a central square, the two communities are chalk and cheese, because one was built for blacks, and the other was built for whites. Uduku (1995) provides a critique of this type of replication of European cities in Africa and argues for an African approach to architecture. He argues against importing colonial building structures and colonial ways of thinking about the built environment in architecture curricula across the continent. Uduku (1995) argues that this leads to African architects being unable to build great buildings, fit for purpose in Africa, and taking into account the continent's socio-economic conditions and climate peculiarities. Others have criticised the architecture curriculum for failing in its current form to prepare students adequately for complex world problems beyond task-oriented problem-solving (Rinehart, 2010). Rinehart (2010) argues for an expansion of the responsibility of architectural education, to go beyond current teaching and to include interdisciplinary problem-solving skills.

Architecture in South Africa was initially a profession dominated by white males, but, even as women and students of all hues joined the profession, Uduku's (1995) argument still held. Although the practitioners shared the same race and history as the poor communities they were building social housing developments for, they were still producing socially irrelevant and ill-conceived developments, because they were produced from an education that failed to grapple with social justice issues. Most built environment curricula were and continue to be focused mainly on the skills required for construction and planning, with little attention paid to the socio-economic implications of decisions made by practitioners for communities.

This paper grapples with curriculum development in an extended curriculum programme (ECP) for the Architecture and Interior Design programme at a university of technology (UoT). Its focus is on the architecture section of the programme. The paper presents autoethnographic reflections on the nature of curriculum development, contestation and reform in a UoT's Architecture

programme. It outlines the historical context of the UoT and its implications for current curriculum transformation. While traditional universities are often interrogated on their pedagogic underpinnings, UoTs are often assumed to be already transformed because they are post-apartheid formations, with a mainly black student body. This assumption has led to little interrogation of the UoTs and their relationship with knowledge production's impact on curriculum transformation within the South African higher education context. This paper seeks to challenge this assumption of transformation and to demonstrate the resultant unequal application of the decolonisation project in the higher education sector, where UoTs continue to be stuck in a pedagogical and curriculum orientation time warp. Using a series of reflections, the paper demonstrates that curriculum change does not happen in a vacuum, that it is political, difficult and emotionally taxing, and that it is best done in collaboration with different education stakeholders.

Historical background: Curriculum development at universities of technology

The South African higher education system has an aversion to discussing history and the impact of imperialism, colonialism and apartheid in almost all subjects. This lack of engagement with context was set to continue across higher education until the #RhodesMustFall (#RMF) and #FeesMustFall (#FMF) protests of 2015–2018 disrupted higher education and its institutions by calling for urgent, radical change to the status quo (Mangu, 2017). #FMF activists across South African universities ignited a new wave of rethinking the curriculum and higher education's role in society by calling for several changes, including:

the decommodification of higher education; racial, gender and class justice; the destabilising of western epistemologies and pedagogies; the reversal of the damage caused by South Africa's neoliberal economy; and the elevation of the self-reliance and self-determination of the black working classes (Ndelu, 2017a: 13).

Institutions of higher learning that had ignored previous calls for transformation of curricula were suddenly forced to debate and admit that curriculum and knowledge production were political, contested spaces in higher education (Mangu, 2017). Traditional, research-focused universities were used to debating pedagogy and approaches to teaching and education, although they were not used to the critique coming directly from students (Mangu, 2017). Many rejected the #FMF movement based on its ideologies, rather than a lack of practice in pedagogy critique (Ndelu, 2017a). UoTs, on the other hand, also struggled with the call for curriculum transformation because of ideological differences, but they were also challenged because of the established structures and systems of curriculum development in their system. UoTs had a centralised curriculum development process and had never been sites of curriculum transformation or pedagogic contestation of ideas in the way the #RMF and #FMF movement required (Garraway and Winberg, 2019).

As the movement grew, activists shared about their lived experiences of oppression in post-apartheid South Africa, and they advanced new discussions on the ways that South Africa's current socio-economic conditions are directly linked to our colonial and apartheid history (Ndelu, 2017a). #FMF's call for the decolonisation of the curriculum was to ensure that the curriculum reflected all the history of South Africa and was inclusive of all languages, knowledges, cultures and people (Ndelu, 2017a). Decolonisation as an ideology was not a new ideology on the continent and the globe, having found popularity in the post-independence era in Africa and South America (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012). However, it was only after #FMF that the conversation on the effect of colonialism and apartheid on every facet of life became part of mainstream discussion in South Africa

(Mangu, 2017). Post-apartheid South Africa was characterised by a desire to focus on similarities and build a nation based on common principles, which made sense, considering that the country was coming from a past that focused on differences. Although this was a noble undertaking, it led to the development of the much-critiqued nation-building principle of rainbowism. Rainbowism served to keep white minorities comfortable and unchallenged, while not dealing with the pain of the past, but looking towards a rosy multiracial future (Ngoasheng and Gachago, 2017). This ideology was not always articulated or agreed upon by all those in leadership, but it was encouraged in popular media, schools, universities and all other socialisation institutions of society. Children and adults alike were encouraged to embrace rainbowism, which led to many in the current generation of students being raised to believe in meritocracy and colour blindness (Ngoasheng and Gachago, 2017). Rainbowism was not the only nation-building ideology tested in South Africa. There were several attempts at forging a new common, multiracial, post-apartheid identity, including a Pan-African identity during the Thabo Mbeki era of the African Renaissance. This Pan-African identity, however, appealed to too few South Africans and was not perceived as much of a threat to the status quo (Mangu, 2015).

At the end of apartheid, the South African higher education system reflected the country's colonial and apartheid roots. The new government then decided to undertake a series of institutional mergers, which would see the higher education sector shrink from 36 higher education institutions to 23 institutions (12 remained unchanged, while the rest were merged) over a period of three years (Hall, 2015). Three types of institutions emerged from this process, namely traditional universities (academic and research-based), universities of technology (vocational), and comprehensive universities, which had elements of both of the first two types (Hall, 2015). The site of curriculum transformation discussed in this paper is a post-apartheid product of a merger combining two technikons previously meant for different races, one previously coloureds-only³ and the other previously whites-only, with many smaller trade schools in Cape Town (Hall, 2015). It is a significant institution in post-apartheid South Africa, because it is 'the only university of technology in the Western Cape' and 'the largest university in the province' (Ndelu, 2017a: 15).

The merger was initially characterised by a high-profile political dispute, but over time the newly merged institution slowly accepted its new role as the educational choice for many underprivileged students from working-class backgrounds, who were mostly black⁴ and from the Western Cape (Hall, 2015).

Curriculum transformation in this type of institution was challenging, because of the historical context of curriculum transformation at universities of technology in general. Historically, curriculum development was the preserve of an elite few technocrats, with academics merely there to deliver the curriculum, with little intervention or challenge (Winberg, 2005). UoTs experienced three distinct periods with interesting results, namely (i) serving the needs of industry; (ii) imitating universities, and (iii) reinventing themselves (Winberg, 2005).

Phase I: Curriculum development for serving the needs of industry

Winberg (2005) explains the genesis of pre-democracy technikons as defined by the breakaway of universities in the 1920s–1930s. Traditional universities were formed with all the courses that seemed to fit the academic and research-based track, and vocational courses were left with colleges. The 1960s saw changes in the workplace which required more technological skills, and government decided this could be the new role of the technikon – responding to the needs of industry (Winberg, 2005). The entire technikon system was then rebuilt around serving this need. Staff

were hired from industry to teach courses, because they understood the immediate needs of industry. These lecturers also often saw themselves as industry practitioners rather than as academics. They worked together with advisory committees, also known as advisory panels, which were mostly made up of industry practitioners (Winberg, 2005). These committees were influential because they '[regulated] programmes, and sometimes departmental practices as well – such as the setting of programme outcomes and deciding how assessment should occur – down to the level of what should be included in student guides' (Winberg, 2005: 192). This partnership with industry also led to the requirement of an industry-based internship for a semester or two, as part of the programme requirements for qualification, a requirement which still stands today.

Consequently, curriculum development in technikons became the preserve of industry through its practitioners, who were hired as academics and members of the advisory councils. There was little to no pedagogic grounding, and they operated much like a standardised school curriculum with multiple subjects. Academic inquiry was not encouraged, with 'virtually no time allocated to individual study, research or project work' (Winberg, 2005: 192). Technikon education operated as part of a large bureaucracy, with the Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC) at its centre. This was the monitoring and evaluation institution for programmes, which required applications from institutions each time they wanted to make curriculum changes or develop new programmes. The process was cumbersome and an administrative burden, so technikon officials avoided it, which meant few changes or new programmes in the system (Winberg, 2005). Industry set the programme with limits on the number of students who could enter to study, which ensured that students found employment after studying. This made the technikon system seem successful in the eyes of industry and greater society, but over time the very reasons that had made technikon education attractive became the reason it was unattractive. Changes to the workplace happened again, and different skills were required by industry, rendering technikons irrelevant and stuck in a time warp. At the same time, there were bigger societal changes, and the fall of apartheid came, which heralded its own set of changes to the system.

Phase 2: Curriculum development and imitating universities

Although the post-apartheid era came with recognition that changes in the system were needed, the foundation of the technikon system stayed intact, including advisory committees, industry internships and SERTEC. Education officials decided that introducing university-educated staff and changing the level of programme qualifications to a higher status would be sufficient change to help technikons meet the new needs of industry. Following these changes, principals in these institutions convened and convinced government to allow them to award degrees, and later postgraduate qualifications at masters and doctoral level. The expansion of the curriculum also did not remove the system's foundation, but merely expanded the role and the bureaucracy of SERTEC, which simply had more monitoring and evaluation to do.

These changes were not welcomed easily, nor were they welcomed by all. They resulted in departments with dissimilar education and work experience, and managers and heads of departments from the old technikon system who saw the introduction of theory and research modules as selling out and imitating universities. Winberg (2005: 194) aptly describes these managers as 'originally recruited from industry, who did not have the experience, the qualifications or the inclination to provide academic leadership'. Technikons were now producing postgraduate students without the necessary academic leadership. They did not have a research culture, and their academic staff did not have the postgraduate qualifications required for academic supervision (Winberg, 2005). They were also characterised by low research support and resources, combined with high teaching and learning loads, which made it difficult even for those interested academics to spend time doing

academic enquiry and producing research. This led to failure of the technikons' phase of imitating universities, as they could not produce sufficient research to compete with traditional universities.

Phase 3: Curriculum development and the reinvention of UoTs

The post-merger era saw the induction of former technikons into the university system as universities of technology, but the issues and challenges of the imitation of the university phase remain. Hall (2015) defines institutional culture as 'the combination of traditions, organisational structures and group and individual behaviours that together come to define a university's identity'. The post-merger higher education era prioritised institutions that provided research leadership more than those that responded to student needs. This meant that institutions such as the UoT discussed in this study were yet again under-resourced and overcrowded, despite their role in providing education to mainly economically disadvantaged students who are the direct descendants of those who experienced apartheid's policies of inequality. This lack of resources and overcrowding has led to an institutional culture of despondency, indifference and lethargy in management and staff, which spills over into the delivery of the curriculum and the overall student experience. One academic interviewed in 2016 by Ndelu (2017a: 15) described the UoT discussed in this paper as follows:

It's a school. It's designed for people to come in, get instruction and then leave. It's not designed to foster and create comfortability in the space.

Although the institution has a large black student body, the culture and the structure still resemble the old technikon of the apartheid era, and like other higher education products of institutional mergers, 'this policy vision has reproduced racial, class and institutional hierarchies' (Ndelu, 2017a: 16).

Methodology

This paper uses autoethnographic research methodology to reflect on the process of developing a curriculum intervention for the ECP class in the Architecture and Interior Design programme at a UoT. Autoethnography is a qualitative research method whose validity and academic rigour is often challenged and questioned in academia (Forber-Pratt, 2015). However, it is gaining popularity, especially among scholars who deal with 'research that would sensitize readers to issues of identity politics, to experiences shrouded in silence, and to forms of representation that deepen our capacity to empathize with people who are different from us' (Ellis et al., 2011: 279).

Ellis et al. (2011: 278) describe autoethnography as 'an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)'. It relies on an unconventional combination of the research methods of autobiography and ethnography, and therefore is both process and product.

The methodology emerged out of a number of shifts in qualitative research methods, which moved from a traditional period, where researchers sought 'objectivity', to the acknowledgement that objectivity was not possible in research, as the subject's own views, upbringing and other factors play a role in the framing of research and the final product (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Autoethnography was social scientists' response to epistemological (how we come to know, or the theory of knowledge) and ontological (how we can know it, or means and conditions for knowledge) limitations of the research methodologies existing then (Ellis et al., 2011).

Autoethnography is described by Ellis et al. (2011) as best suited for social justice research and projects based on personal experience. This paper constitutes such research.

Co-creating a socially just curriculum for the Architecture and Interior Design programme at a UoT

Reflection 1: Curriculum development happens in a context, and it takes time

In March 2016, I was an academic and co-founder of the Decolonising the Curriculum movement at my institution. I am a black female academic who was lecturing journalism, and [I] met my ECP curriculum co-creator, a white female ECP lecturer, when she attended a seminar I presented, sharing my own journey of decolonising the curriculum in the journalism course. She later joined our decolonisation reading group, and in discussions about the readings she showed an interest in transforming her curriculum. She was clear that she wasn't yet able to do a grand-scale change to the curriculum, but wanted to explore ways to transform the curriculum incrementally over time.

She approached me and the co-founder of the Decolonising the Curriculum movement at CPUT [Cape Peninsula University of Technology], a white female academic developer. When I was approached to assist on the ECP curriculum transformation, I was also working on my own journalism curriculum and deepening my curriculum development practice and methodology. Although I was keen to spread the word on decolonisation, I was nervous about helping others with curriculum development on a large scale, because I did not see myself as a curriculum specialist, and [I] was still grappling with understanding and translating epistemologies and pedagogies into my own journalism curriculum. I actively sought new ways to deepen my understanding and practice, so that I would be able to help others from an informed place – beyond the already existing gut instinct that curriculum change was an urgent need and [a] historical inevitability.

I attended a curriculum transformation course, which helped me think through theories of education and curriculum development and the role of pedagogy in teaching and learning, as well as research. I was also growing as a researcher, and [I] attended a writing for publishing course, which also made me rethink my approach to research and writing and allowed me to think through ways of implementing decolonial pedagogies in research, in ways that were academically acceptable.

As my decolonial scholarship grew, I decided to present to my department and then the faculty on the work we were doing as a movement. At this point in time, we were organising seminars and sharing readings in the decolonisation reading group, as well as conducting Peggy McIntosh's White Privilege Walk activity⁵ at institutions beyond my own. As the Rhodes Must Fall movement's ideology was deepening, many key discussions were emerging about privilege, South Africa and race relations in academic spaces, as well as the ways these complex issues were manifesting in different contexts.

Although we were making some headway, we had to fight for each platform to present on decolonising the curriculum, as the curriculum development process at our institution, a UoT, was never historically with academics. There were many institutional actors challenging the decolonial project at each presentation and activity, asking why decolonisation had to happen now and why an institution like ours, which had a majority black student body, had to transform.

The reflection above highlights the contested nature of curriculum development at a South African UoT. The history, already discussed above, sheds some light on why curriculum transformation was important and had to take place in incremental shifts, rather than with one big change, at this UoT. The #RMF and #FMF protests of 2015–2018 challenged all universities, but especially UoTs, who had never been challenged by students on their curriculum development process (Ndelu, 2017a). When the Decolonising the Curriculum movement swept through higher education, institutions quickly developed a hard stance against decolonisation, as it threatened the very foundations of their curriculum development process. The decolonisation call, and academics who supported it, became disruptors to UoTs. This process triggered the feelings of inadequacy from the curriculum transformation processes of the 90s, already described earlier. Decolonisation was also often led by university-trained academics, which reminded 'old hat' managers of the destabilisation when university-trained lecturers were suddenly introduced into the technikon system. These managers felt

undermined and undervalued yet again, as they did in the university imitation phase. Decolonisation called for criticality, academic enquiry, reflection and a theory-based curriculum, which also mirrored the imitation of universities phase which many in the UoT system had already survived.

Before #RMF and #FMF, post-apartheid South Africa had mostly continued without much disruption, despite annual protests by staff and working-class students at former black universities and institutions (Mangu, 2017). The Fallist movement reminded the country of the hard reality of inequality and gave a platform to young people, mainly black, who had been struggling to articulate their experiences of racism in post-apartheid South Africa's higher education system and society (Ndelu, 2017b). #FMF disrupted the status quo, because it was the first time there were coordinated university protests that shut down campuses across the country at the same time. UoTs, which had usually escaped challenges on their race, class and gender discrimination, suddenly found themselves at the centre of change they were not prepared for.

Reflection 2: The curriculum is political

As the Decolonising the Curriculum movement, we held seminars and brought other academics on campus to further discussions around curriculum. One of these academics was Bongani Nyoka, who spoke about his own journey researching and building a critique of the sociology curriculum in South Africa. This was a powerful seminar, as we were hosting a guest from outside our institution who could speak to decolonising and critiquing an entire curriculum. This seminar became the catalyst for the change that was required for our conversation on decolonising the ECP programme. At the time, we (me and my colleague and co-founder of the Decolonising the Curriculum movement) were conducting Peggy McIntosh's White Privilege Walk activity with different groups of students at the invitation of academics, in order to help students have conversations about race and other issues brought up by the #FeesMustFall movement.

In conversations between us as the founders of the Decolonising the Curriculum movement at our institution and the ECP academic, we agreed to do a White Privilege Walk activity with the ECP class of 2017 after they had participated in a District Six spatial justice workshop. We participated in the tour and then conducted the White Privilege Walk activity a week later. In the activity participants start off standing in a straight line, and then the facilitator asks a series of questions, which require participants to step forward or back, to signify privilege or lack thereof. At the end of the activity, there should be a visible gap between the participants, with those at the front with the most privilege (usually white males) and those at the back with the least privilege (usually black females).

The racial make-up of the ECP class is mostly black students, with a few white students joining the class in recent years. The ECP programme and its racial make-up in South Africa is highly political, because it mainly enrolls students from poor black high schools in black neighbourhoods. They usually need a foundation built before they can jump into the full curriculum because of the low quality of education provided and the lack of resources. The course helps these students increase their chance of success after the first year, by extending the 'normal programme' by one year.

Political parties on campus and student leaderships across different universities have at different times protested against ECP programmes, which they argue are an affirmation of white superiority and intelligence and black inferiority and lack of intelligence. They have also argued that the need for a majority black cohort to do one extra year in order to gain their qualifications affirms the stereotype that blacks are less intelligent than whites. ECP courses across South Africa therefore have a stigma, as they are viewed as a remedial class for poor black students from poor neighbourhoods. Architecture and Interior Design ECP facilitators were aware of this history and sought to make the class more racially representative, in order to ensure that black students in the class did not feel stigmatised or discriminated against because of race. White students who showed potential but did not have enough marks or didn't do the required technical drawing and other art-based subjects required to get directly into the Architecture or Interior Design programme were then allowed into the ECP programme. This led to a new demographic for the course that was more representative of South Africa. ECP classes now had a majority black cohort with a few white students in the class.

On the day we were meant to do the White Privilege Walk activity for the ECP class, one of the two white students in the class asked to be excused from the activity, as she felt the exercise was a personal attack on her as a white person. As facilitators of the activity we had a debate about whether [students] should be allowed to 'opt out' of a class activity meant to develop socially just practitioners. We didn't agree with the student being allowed to opt out, but decided to leave it up to the course lecturer, who was in support of the student sitting out the activity. We went ahead with the activity without her and decided to discuss our unhappiness at the opt-out provided for the student in the debrief session with ECP academics after the activity. In the post-activity debrief, various ECP lecturers from different race groups gathered, and it became clear that there was disagreement about the action taken to allow the student to sit this activity out. The first concern was that the student would now be given an option to do another exercise in lieu of the activity because it had an assessment linked to it. Part of the debate was about the extent to which other students had been given this option, and whether the student was becoming a demonstration of the very activity and benefiting from white privilege. A debate ensued about why the protection that the student was allowed and its negative impact on the students of colour, who also had to sit through some emotional discomfort as part of the exercise. Was it a lack of racial stamina, i.e. white fragility, to expect students of colour to sit through the activity while allowing a white student to sit out the same exercise?

Although the student did not participate, they did observe the activity, and therefore benefited from the emotional labour of others, without investing their own emotional labour. After some back-and-forth discussions, a decision was made that two white academics would sit with the student and debrief her about why it was problematic for her not to participate, as well as the ways in which white fragility and white privilege played out in their decision to sit out the exercise. This experience was daunting and emotionally exhausting, but it did help in coming to a decision that a bigger curriculum intervention project was needed. The project would have to fill in the gaps identified after the activity, while raising consciousness and awareness of students as future practitioners with a responsibility to think about and act in ways that help South Africans realise spatial justice.

The White Privilege Walk exercise we used in the reflection was developed by McIntosh (2007) as an activity to make visible the invisible system of oppression that keeps different races perpetually stuck in predefined positions, where whites are always on top and blacks are always at the bottom. The walk has been challenged and critiqued for a number of reasons, including the ways in which it potentially reveals aspects of people's identity that participants may not yet be ready to disclose, but it is still considered a useful exercise for starting discussions on privilege (Ngoasheng and Gachago, 2017). Our version of the privilege walk has an additional element to it where we help students visualise a new society and way of being that is set on different values and ethics to the current system. This is done in order to ensure that those who feel oppression the most are not left feeling depressed and despondent about the status quo, but are able to see that, like all systems, the current system can be changed (Ngoasheng and Gachago, 2017). The development of socially just curricula is not a process with an opt-in and an opt-out that one can step into and step out of without harming others. The importance of the project of developing a socially just curriculum for ECP students was made even clearer by the post-activity debrief conversation. It highlighted that one had to think through the concepts of power, positionality and agency when developing a socially just curriculum, as decisions will have to be made about who carries emotional labour, when and how that labour is distributed.

This reflection also highlights the political nature of ECP programmes and the value of transforming their curricula for their participants and the greater society. Sibiya and Mahlanze (2018: 2) explain the purpose of the ECP programme as being there to 'create the curriculum space needed to enable talented but underprepared students to achieve sound foundations of success in higher education'. ECP programmes are an intervention by the Department of Higher Education that is

meant to change the fortunes of students in an environment where about half of students fail to complete their studies (Sibiya and Mahlanze, 2018). The programmes are meant to help with the retention of black students, who are entering higher education in increasing numbers each year. Understanding the history and the purpose of the ECP programme allows for better reflection on why it is necessary to have a socially just lens for its curriculum. Knowing the history of the ECP programme, white students and academics in the ECP programme should be more conscious and aware of their actions and not avoid being confronted by South Africa's painful history and its impact on the lives of black people. The actions of the white student and the reflex reaction of the white academics – protecting the student, without thinking about the emotional labour of the students of colour – reflect the need for social justice awareness and socially just interventions in higher education, as without them biases go unchecked and unchallenged.

Identity, belonging and positionality are topics that have been explored by many scholars in South Africa and elsewhere, especially in the post-apartheid era (Gachago, 2018; Mangcu, 2015, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Ramutsindela, 1997; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Baines (1998) argues that apartheid made multiculturalism impossible, as it broke down people's identities into two main categories, white and black, with coloured and so-called indian categories as the buffer in the middle. Thinking through what it means to be a white ally in the academic space, Gachago (2018) explains that thinking through positionality in academia especially is a complex and nerve-wracking exercise, which requires self-awareness and being vigilant of your potential to protect whiteness at the expense of everyone else. DiAngelo (2018) speaks to the role of positionality in society in her book *White Fragility*, and she explains positionality as a context that assigns you an identity based on your race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. She explains your positionality, e.g. whiteness can influence the way you look at the world and the way others look at you, sometimes to the detriment of others who look different from you (DiAngelo, 2018). She explores in detail the ways in which whiteness and white people are protected and protect each other from experiencing discomfort in race conversations (DiAngelo, 2018), as displayed in the reflection above. She expands that it is when this protection fails that white people then display what she calls white fragility, which is the inability of some white people to withstand racial stress, which causes them to lash out and become defensive when racial stress becomes unbearable (DiAngelo, 2018).

Students in post-apartheid South Africa come into all higher education programmes, including Architecture, with the baggage of South Africa's racially divided history. They often know very little about each other and the continued effect of apartheid on their lives. The walk exposed the fact that South Africa's race-based hierarchy of humanity was still in place, with white students and academics at the top, followed by so-called indians and coloureds, and then africans at the bottom. This was the picture that emerged at the end of the privilege walk exercise. There was also a clear difference between male and female students, with males showing significant male privilege and standing ahead of female students and academics, even within the same race group. The walk had succeeded in its intended aim of making all invisible systemic and structural oppression visible for all to see.

This is especially important for an ECP course, because it also allows students to understand their placement in the course not as an indication of their individual worth or ability, but rather as a product of an unequal system, which the post-apartheid government is seeking to correct. Students feel judged as inferior in the ECP course, in part because they don't understand the system that has determined their life trajectory based on their race. The ECP course, more than any other course, therefore must have a curriculum that unpacks oppression and apartheid's outcomes, to counter the feelings of lack of self-confidence that arise for students in the ECP programme.

Reflection 3: Thinking through the curriculum – what is it for, and who does it serve?

The year 2017 sped by quickly, with me navigating a high teaching load, while attending national and international conferences and writing about my experiences of curriculum development. I was doing more work as a collective under Decolonising the Curriculum and in my individual capacity, so my practice was deepened even further. In 2018, the conversation about a curriculum intervention for ECP came up again. We revisited the privilege walk and the experience of white fragility by the white student and white academics' responses to it. We spoke about the ways in which the hierarchy of humanity kept showing up in the privilege walk, and ways to help students understand this better through our new project.

We also reflected on the rest of the curriculum that this new project would complete. Project 1 was a two-week diary which focused on student movement in urban settings. Students documented their lives over two weeks, with a written journal of activities in week 1 and a sketch of activities in week 2. This project played the role of helping staff and students bond, while helping academics have a better understanding of students. Students also have some basic research skills imparted to them and learn to work and think as a collective when they must build a group map of daily activities following a discussion of their diaries.

Project 2 focuses on urban settlement and desettlement and seeks to link the past and the present. This project focuses on several concepts in urban planning, including residency, citizenship, urbanisation, spatial apartheid and desettlement in Cape Town. The project starts with a two-day workshop at the District Six Homecoming Centre titled 'Spatial apartheid, spatial justice: Rethinking, reimagining Cape Town'. In this workshop students are taken through a simulation of the separation and havoc caused by the Group Areas Act, and [they] are then challenged to think about its impact today. They also explore the concept of the Cape Flats, its multiple identities, languages, religious and cultural practices, and their associated stereotypes, which assume homogeneity where there is none. They also learn about District Six's history of forced removals and the impact of displacement on its former residents, who tell their stories at the District Six Museum.

The tour of District Six is critical for giving a better context for understanding spatial apartheid and how it worked, but it still did not shed enough light on the disparities between the lives and living experiences of the black group of South Africans, namely so-called indians, coloureds and africans as per apartheid categories. ECP students were future township and other housing development practitioners, so it was critical that they understood spatial apartheid and how different communities came about. We agreed to develop a curriculum for a project that would help with understanding the hierarchy of humanity in South Africa and also tell the story of blacks (africans) in Cape Town and debunk the false perception of all Xhosa people living in Cape Town as economic refugees from the Eastern Cape.

At the end of 2018, I left the institution, but we agreed to still implement the new curriculum intervention. A bus and walking tour was developed and happened in 2019 as a result of our engagements over the three-year period from 2016 to 2019. Students travelled by bus, with walking lectures in different neighbourhoods across Cape Town over two days, separated by a week. On day 1 students travelled to Ndabeni, currently an industrial area, but historically the first black (african) township in Cape Town and the site where some black (african) District Six forced removal victims were sent. We then went to explore how a Garden City was developed and differentiated based on the race of the people it was built for. The former whites-only suburb Pinelands and the second black (african) township of Langa were both developed based on Ebenezer Howard's concept of Garden Cities. The two residential areas are as different as night and day in terms of house size, street size and other physical features, but they both have the key feature of a Garden City, a town centre or central square. Students travelled through both areas and were able to compare the different ways [Howard's] town planning vision was implemented and the deep inequality visible between the two areas. Students then travelled through the so-called coloured neighbourhood of Bonteheuwel, another site for victims of District Six forced removals, and [they] were able to reflect on the difference between abodes, as seen in the District Six Museum and the mostly shared houses in Bonteheuwel.

On day 2, students travelled to the so-called Indian and coloured neighbourhoods of Gatesville and Athlone, where the multicultural nature of the area was highlighted by a Muslim mosque and a Hindu temple right next to each other. We then travelled to Hout Bay, the former whites-only part, its so-called coloured township Hangberg, and black (African) informal settlement Imizamo Yethu, where students could also see different levels of inequality next to each other. This tour was emotionally difficult for a lot of students, who had never engaged with the city and its inequality at street level before or fully understood the apartheid grid and its legacy and impact on the lives of residents today.

One of the key assumptions about the emergence of democracy was that equality before the law would translate into equal access to South Africa and all it has to offer after the 1994 elections (Baines, 1998). However, the separation of South Africans by race in all aspects of life led to a nation where the different races knew very little about each other (Kon and Lackan, 2008). The censorship of the media during apartheid also ensured that sometimes even people who lived in neighbouring residential areas knew little or nothing about the neighbouring community if it was demarcated for a different race group on the apartheid spatial grid (Harker, 1994). As a result, students in post-apartheid South Africa come into programmes such as the ECP course with far too little information about each other's living conditions. Under-resourced communities then suffer, because they face negative media stereotypes, which practitioners take as fact. These stereotypes and false assumptions then make their way into policymaking and exclude community members in decisions that have an economic, social and political impact on their lives.

The curriculum intervention described above was different from the average township tour or poverty tour. These have rightfully been criticised for diluting history, and sometimes even playing to existing racist tropes and stereotypes, in order to meet tourist expectations of poor black communities (Witz et al., 2001). The main aim of this curriculum intervention project was to help students understand South African segregation of communities by race in the past, and its implications for segregated communities today. The project further drew on Springgay and Truman's (2017) walking methodologies, where walking becomes 'thinking-in-movement'. The walking lectures in each neighbourhood combined historical content, knowledge sharing about architecture forms in different neighbourhoods, and local knowledge from at least one resident in each neighbourhood. This format provided students with the opportunity to think through their course content, relate it to the real world and ask questions where they were not clear. Although students regularly walk in urban spaces around the city, they rarely get an opportunity to learn about the history behind the architecture and design that they interact with. This is critical as South Africa undergoes rapid urbanisation, where built environment practitioners are constantly called upon to think through solutions for challenges such as informal settlements and other emerging challenges in urbanisation.

The project was also influenced by the work of critical pedagogues such as Paulo Freire (2005), who argued for students to be given a comprehensive, empowering and emancipatory education beyond the banking model, where students come to class and treat the teacher as an automated teller machine (ATM), from which to draw knowledge. This project aimed to ensure that students were interrogating the real world and filling in knowledge gaps in taught theories with real-life situations. It also sought to develop a different relationship between students and academics and amongst students from different communities in the course. The project also allowed students who lived in the visited communities to discover them and their history anew, while also sharing their knowledge with their fellow students. This student sharing made the curriculum dynamic and co-created. Students' own feelings and thinking about the tour also became a point of learning for the group and allowed them to think further about their role as future practitioners in undoing the apartheid grid and delivering spatial justice.

Conclusion

These reflections show that curriculum change is not a small undertaking that can be done overnight, as it requires thinking and planning for it to be successful. The reflections also provide a glimpse into the process of developing a curriculum, and they show what cultures and institutions need to be challenged for successful interventions in the curriculum. When we started developing the intervention, we were not sure what form it would take. It is only over several years that the gaps became clear. Although different ECP cohorts were engaged with in order to help ultimately develop the curriculum, similar sentiments about what was missing from the curriculum were shared by students. The reflections also show the importance of building relationships as different stakeholders in the curriculum development process, in order to ensure that curriculum change is relevant and student-centred. There must also be in all stakeholders a willingness to implement sometimes uncomfortable change. Although professional skills transfer is important in developing future practitioners, education that raises awareness of social structures and how they interact with their field is key for developing practitioners that are socially just.

This paper set out to reflect on the process behind developing a curriculum intervention for the ECP for the Architecture and Interior Design programme at a UoT. It also highlighted how during the development of the curriculum, students and academics alike were confronted with the politics of race, class and gender and their implications for where people live in a post-apartheid South Africa. The project also challenged students as future practitioners in the built environment to think about how they can play a role in undoing the apartheid spatial grid. The combination of history and social justice in the curriculum, while important, did not override the need to also impart industry-specific skills, as students learnt how to measure and sketch in a short time frame, a skill they would need when they enter the formal architecture and interior design mainstream curriculum. The reflections highlight three important considerations for curriculum development, namely that curriculum change does not happen in a vacuum, that it is political, difficult and emotionally taxing, and that it is best done in collaboration with different education stakeholders.

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Notes

1. I adopt the definition of 'black' as defined by the Black Consciousness Movement, which includes african, coloured and indian apartheid categories under the category of black.
2. Guest editor's note: I said to the author that it would be desirable to provide some explanation of her usage of racial category terms in lower case, in order to explain her reasoning to the readers. Here is her explanation:

Conventionally, or according to pre-existing rules around the English language, 'black' should be capitalised, but I refuse to capitalise it as a political statement. Leaving small letters for racial identifiers is a conscious decision that is made as a political statement to remind us that race is a social construct. As a black person, therefore, I can construct black as I see fit. If 'black' is small letters, then 'white' will also be small letters.

The use of small letters for what 'should' be capitalised, then, is about subverting, disrupting and challenging the status quo around language use and how we think of and write race. It is about rejecting linguistic disciplining, because languages are one of the tools used to oppress, erase and challenge black voices. The use of small letters is jarring and should be jarring linguistically, because it is done to force the reader to pause and think – why is 'black' or 'white' not capitalised, and what is the author trying

to tell me by not capitalising it? Hopefully, in that pause, one will also be forced to think about how we think, write and understand race, and why we so often accept conventional thinking about it. Language is one of the ways in which black voices are oppressed, erased and 'beaten into conventional linguistic submission'. I refuse to submit to this linguistic disciplining.

3. The use of the term 'coloured' was contested during apartheid, because many coloured and indian people considered themselves black as per Biko's definition of 'black', which included all people of colour. They then used the word 'so-called' in front of their designated apartheid racial category when needing to differentiate between themselves and other groups of black people.
4. As indicated in footnote 1, I adopt the definition of 'black' as defined by the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), except for when I need to explain apartheid use of race or differentiated experiences of oppression in apartheid South Africa. BCM uses black in a way that is all encompassing and includes all apartheid categories for those outside the category of "european", namely, african, coloured and indian.
5. The White Privilege Walk activity was developed by Peggy McIntosh in order to help white people see the privilege they have and to understand how it has a relationship with the hardship and struggle of people of colour.

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