

Conclusion

Curriculum Potential for Theory, Theorising, and Praxis

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Curriculum studies has been and will always remain an open field, open to alternative interpretations by both insiders and outsiders. Over the years, such interpretations in Africa have from time to time been championed by people who have no understanding of the field or European fundamentalists with no real experience of the nuances and context in Africa. Curriculum studies in Africa has fundamentally been oriented to focus on Western constellations without fundamental thought about praxis and responsiveness. This book is geared towards opening up fundamental debates about the nature, types and approaches of curriculum and curriculum theorising in Africa, the charges orienting this curriculum on the continent and the different dimensions of responsiveness they speak to. Since curriculum is fundamentally a question of power and how such power is manifested in how students learn, what they learn, when they learn, how what they learnt is assessed, who facilitates what they learn and the principles that would underpin learning or knowledge construction in this case, curriculum studies fundamental centres around the study of this power and who wills it, how they will it and what they will it for. Exploring how these discourses happen and how they shape the field in these unsettling times has been critical in this book.

The chapters in this book focus directly or indirectly on ensuring responsiveness in education. While responsiveness and how it is evoked would vary from context to context, the

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fundamental principles, or alternative ways of exploring it have been the focus of this book. The chapters provided more insight to curriculum potential on the continent. Klafki (2000) argues that curriculum potential can be understood from five perspectives. These are exemplary value, contemporary meaning, future meaning, content structure and pedagogical representations. Exemplary value as a potential for curriculum considers the generality and specificity of sense and value which the content can or should exemplify for students. It questions what basic phenomenon or fundamental principle, what law, criterion, problem, method, technique, or attitude can be grasped by dealing with this content. Exemplary value as a curriculum potential re-orientes curriculum content and ensures that it not only engages charges like responsibility but also works towards responsiveness. Engaging quality and decolonising perspectives situate curriculum and theorising perspectives on the continent on the path of contextual responsiveness and relevance, thereby ensuring the curriculum and all that pertains to it adapts to the changing times and the crisis which education, both basic and higher, are currently facing.

Contemporary meaning on the other hand, as a curriculum potential, explores meaning - meaning in context of both time and place. It seeks to answer the question, what significance does the content in question, or the experience, knowledge, ability, or skill, to be acquired through this topic, already possess in the minds of the students who are to study the topic? What significance should it have from a pedagogical point of view? Such meaning in context in consideration to or in conjunction with prevailing circumstances would ensure that meaning is constructed as it pertains to both the now and the future. Curriculum responsibilities and charges that speak to everything disorienting or reshaping the way we see, and experience education and its effects all work towards creating contemporary meaning, meaning which is Afro-centric and takes into consideration local issues in the drive for responsiveness. Next to contemporary meaning is future meaning. While contemporary meaning looks at

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what the content offers the student in terms of meaning construction in the present, future meaning looks at what kind of meaning the content would have for the student in the future. It seeks to answer the question, what constitutes the topic's significance for the student's future? Curriculum content should hold potential for future meaning. In other words, the meaning constructed in the classroom should hold potential for future meaning, as well as ensure logical connection between the now and the future. Without any potential for future meaning, the content is questionable. Exemplary value, contemporary meaning and future meaning explore the essential ingredients, features, and significances that constitute the educational potential of the content, while contemporary and future meaning necessitate an analysis or the unpacking of educational meaning and significance of those essential elements - an analysis which is crucial for disclosing the curriculum potential inherent in the content. By discerning those essential elements and elucidating their possible manifestations and significance, the chapters in this book have evoked alternative meanings and notions which speak not only to theory and theorising but to responsiveness and praxis. In other words, the discussion of educational potential and its actualisation presupposes a careful analysis of curriculum for educational meaning and significance - an analysis that is guided by an educational ideal and informed by a theory of educational content that underlies curriculum material (Deng, 2011; Gudmundsdottir *et al.*, 2000).

The fourth curriculum potential, content structure, explores the organisational patterns of knowledge within the curriculum as well as the materials which would be used in the facilitation of teaching and learning. How content is structured, determines the pace of learning and if such learning would be effective. If structured inappropriately, students would be faced with content structures which are incoherent and do not offer a proper opportunity for development. It therefore seeks to answer the question, how is the content structured? Content structure, in other words, how the content is structured has been placed in a specifically

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pedagogical perspective by exemplary value, contemporary meaning and future meaning or the questions they seek to answer. Such structure is what necessitates the need for tutors and tutorship. The final potential pedagogical representations seek to interrogate pedagogical inclinations inherent in the content and how such inclinations or representation ultimately shape the exemplary value, contemporary meaning, and future meaning which such content is supposed to carry. It seeks to answer the question, what are the special cases, phenomena, situations, experiments, persons, elements of aesthetic experience, and so forth, in terms of which, the structure of the content in question can become interesting, stimulating, approachable, conceivable, or vivid for students of the stage of development of this class or for whom the content is being prepared? This makes the chapters in this book which deal directly or indirectly with curriculum implementation quite critical as they explore this phenomenon and try to articulate new pathways for teaching and learning on the continent.

Potentials four and five, or content structure and pedagogical representations, or the questions they seek to answer, concern the means of actualising the potential - in terms of content structure and pedagogical representations - which becomes outgrowths of analysing the content in terms of educational potential, for such potentials are the ultimate goal of education. Deng (2011, pp. 545-546) argues that *“it is important to note that the search for methods (ie, the means for actualising potential) is the final step - the ‘crowning’ moment in instructional preparation”*. As such, engaging or discussing educational potential and how it would be actualised, presupposes a careful analysis of curriculum content for educational meaning and significance, *“an analysis that is guided by an educational ideal and informed by a theory of educational content that underlies curriculum material”* (Deng, 2011, p. 546). Such an analysis is relatively unknown to the African tradition of curriculum and instruction. Since much of what patterns in Africa with regard to curriculum and its pedagogical representations or inclinations of meaning is borrowed from the Global North and its traditions,

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teaching is not construed in terms of delivering a body of 'objectified' knowledge and skills to students (Fomunyan, 2014). Fomunyan continues that teaching and learning and by extension curriculum implementation is seen as a 'fruitful encounter' between content and the student or the co-construction of knowledge between the lecturer and the student using the content and the various capital which they possess. Under such circumstances, the lecturer, or teacher as the case might be, is expected to analyse and unpack content in a way that opens up its educational meaning and significance. Hopmann (2007, p. 117) takes this discussion a step further when he argues that the central question in the drive to improve education and enhance educational potential is "*if and how the educative substance could be opened up for the students as intended,*" or more exactly, "*if and how it became open in their individual meeting with the content in the given teaching process*". This book therefore offers an intricate look into some of the happenings in the educational landscape, as a way of informing possible directions for theorising and change.

Curriculum potential is inextricably associated with the notion of curriculum matters and responsiveness and this centres on the cultivation of the intellectual and moral capacity of students who would be able to respond to the contextual realities in their nations. The analysis of curriculum potential is most often largely limited to the questions of what potential the content is reckoned to have and how this potential can be actualised. Some scholars overlook the social and the cultural or even the political expectations or demands on schooling as well as the translation of those expectations or demands which carry implications for the meaning and significance of curriculum content (Fomunyan, 2014).

In summing up the conversations in this book, it is vital to the criticality of theory, theorising, and praxis on the overall well-being of teaching and learning in general and the student in particular. From a contextual perspective and alternative curriculum theories, the meaning and significance of content is determined and shaped by a theory of content, and this would explore a particular way of conceptualising,

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selecting, organising, and transforming content for institutional, curricular, and pedagogical purposes. From this perspective curriculum materials contain not merely content but also a theory of content (Deng, 2011). In the classroom, the meaning and significance of content have to do with classroom enactment of teaching and learning and in such processes the teacher or lecturer translates the content, more precisely, the theory of content into instructional events and activities within a particular instructional context and towards particular educational purposes. As such, what constitutes the content, what meaning and significance that content has, and how students can experience this meaning and significance are thus determined by the teacher's interpretation of educational purposes and the theory of content, which is ultimately shaped by his or her understanding of students, of self, of pedagogy, and of the instructional context (Hopmann, 2007).

Therefore, curriculum theory, theorising, and praxis as constituents of curriculum studies give the theoriser the opportunity to extend the discussion on curriculum which has primarily focused on the potential contribution of curriculum content to the development and growth of students to the contributions of other curriculum constituent elements like pedagogy, assessment, technology or resources, instruments, matters, charges, and responsiveness, amongst others.

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