

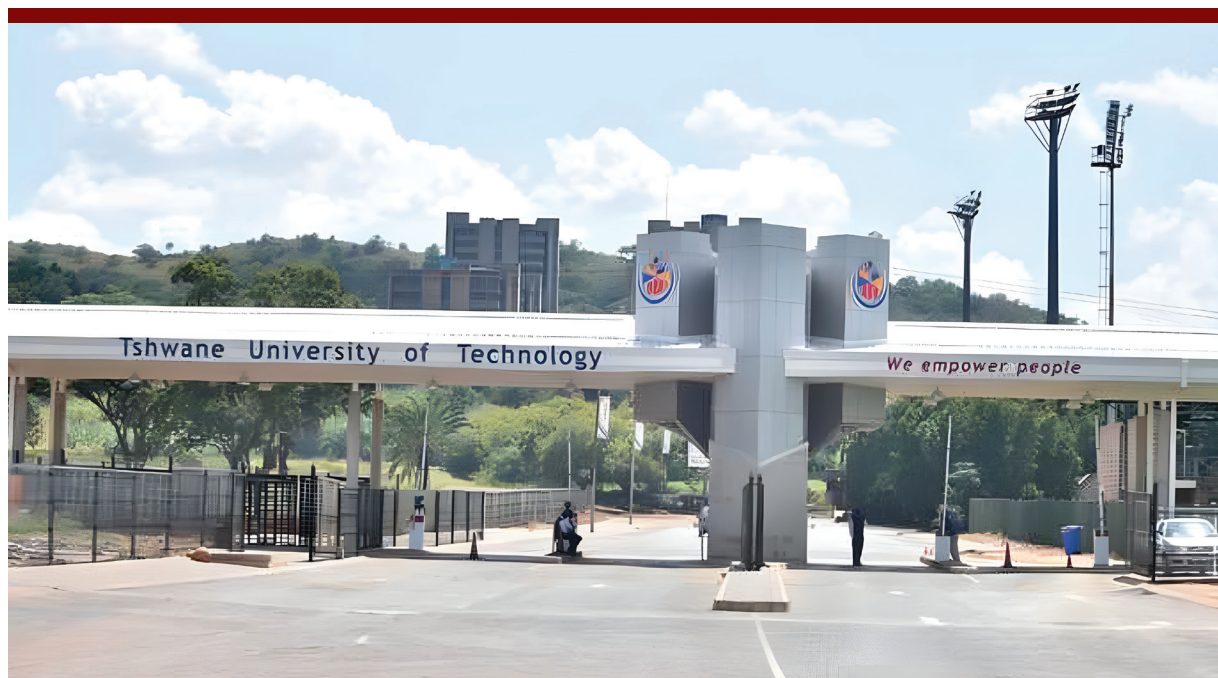
CHAPTER SEVEN

TSHWANE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



Tshwane University
of Technology

We empower people



Teacher Identity and Critical Reflexivity in an Academic Orientation Programme at Tshwane University of Technology

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Introduction: reconstruct

As the case authors, and academic staff developers known as curriculum development practitioners (CDPs) at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), we introduce and provide an overview of the **re**imagining and setting the scene for the **re**building of the Academic Orientation Programme at TUT. This process is narrated using the prefix **re-** to explore the process of reconstructing and continually redesigning the Academic Orientation Programme (AOP) at TUT. Aligned to Behari-Leak's (2017) declaration that change in higher education (HE) will require academics to implement a professional approach to teaching, this case study shares similar views for new academics as university teachers.

This idea influenced us to **re**learn and **re**centre ourselves as we **re**design and **re**imagine professional learning offerings. This case study explores the refinement of the TUT institutional induction programme in alignment to principles emerging from the New Academics Transitioning into Higher Education Project (NATHEP), a national collaborative project funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) through the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG). This case study narrated this process using the prefix **re-** to explore the process of reconstructing and continually redesigning the Academic Orientation Programme (AOP) at TUT. It highlights the necessity of these efforts in response to a constantly changing world, employing critical reflexivity to reflect on past practices with the aim of intentionally constructing a teacher identity.

The focus of the project was on professional learning by university teachers as they transition into their academic roles within the South African Higher Education context. The project also focussed on the transformation of university teachers in HE by developing induction programmes with a scholarly, critical, contextualised and professional approach to teaching (Behari-Leak, 2017). The theoretical framing guiding NATHEP's methodology draws on critical realism (Bhaskar, 1998) and social realism (Archer, 2000) specifically the concepts of structure and agency and how these concepts shape induction programmes while simultaneously being shaped by it. In this case study, the reconstruction of the initial AOP at TUT is conceptualised within the metatheory of social realism in relation to Archer's (2008) morphogenic approach.

According to Archer (2008), morphogenesis occurs in an endless cycle, which is similar to the cycle of redesigning and reimagining professional learning.

Archer's (2008) morphogenic framework not only allows us to analyse the interplay of structure, culture and agency over time, it also allows us to account for why the emergence of change happens (morphogenesis) or does not happen (morphostasis). The structure of the case study will therefore focus on the first period of the morphogenesis cycle of TUT's initial AOP, which is termed T1 (Archer, 2000). This specific part of the cycle describes the conditioning structures and cultures that were in place at the beginning of the initial AOP at TUT. The historic context of the AOP before participation in the NATHEP project will be discussed during this part of the cycle. The next step in the morphogenetic framework involves the analysis of the interaction that took place in a given time period, termed T2 to T3. According to Archer (2000), in this period agents interact with structure and culture. This part of the morphogenesis cycle of the AOP, named the rediscover, relate and redesign phases, is a reflection on the relearning and co-learning of and with the participants in the NATHEP project. The focus was on embedding NATHEP's critical values and principles within the initial AOP with the aim of achieving structural and cultural change. In this case study, we unpack the states of being and becoming and interlink these with the concept of transformative learning.

Relevance

In which we contextualise TUT geographically and within a professional learning regulatory framework

TUT is a university of technology. Universities of technology (UoTs) have less stringent admission requirements than traditional universities, thereby providing access to many students who might not be able to enter the traditional university sector. UoTs focus on providing students with relevant, well-designed, career-focused programmes (McKenna, 2009). Furthermore, the vision and mission of UoTs should focus on improving the capacity of students to generate new knowledge and contribute to increasing technology transfer while the institution offers technology-focused, vocationally relevant programmes that meet the needs of students, the economy and society at large (Du Pre, 2006).

TUT is a large, multi-campus university with six campuses in the greater Tshwane Metropolis, two in Mpumalanga, one in Limpopo, and two distance service points in Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Western Cape. TUT annually enrolls more than 60 000 students and just over 4 000 staff members, whose composition reflects national demographics in terms of race and gender. The student racial profile is 92.9% black and 5.7% white, while the gender profile is 51% female and 49% male (TUT Institutional Audit, 2022).



Figure 37 TUT All campuses, 2022

The majority of the students are first-generation university students. Due to the complexity shaped by the university's size, multi-campus nature and wide geographic footprint, equity of provisioning and consistent alignment of policies across all learning sites is difficult to achieve with severe financial, human, and infrastructural resource implications and constraints. However, the university's management prioritises the equity of resource provision at the different campuses, including the provision of professional learning and development for academic staff.

The conceptual framework for all professional learning and development endeavours is grounded in the TUT mission and vision statement and the TUT Learning and Teaching Strategy. The vision statement of TUT related to the principles of a UoT, is stated as "A people's university that makes knowledge work." The mission also speaks to the identified strategic pillars, described as: "We advance social and economic transformation through relevant curricula, impactful research and engagement, quality learning experiences, dedicated staff and an enabling environment." The TUT Learning and Teaching Strategy includes the foundational assumptions of student-centredness, digital approaches that integrate technology with the process of learning, and the way university teachers and students collectively create learning interactions that are respectful of all students by recognising student diversity and promoting student engagement and inclusivity.

The professional learning of academic staff forms part of the endeavour to enhance equity of service to all campuses. The Curriculum Development and Support (CDS) directorate of TUT is responsible for offering programmes focussing on the professional development of academics. CDS resides under Higher Education Development and Support (HEDS) and all expected functions are fulfilled by us as CDPs to partner with academics in developing relevant student-centred curricula responsive to student employability and socio-economic needs, and to initiate and facilitate effective and targeted professional development opportunities to the university.

Reconceptualising the initial curriculum of the T4L programme

In which we summarise the reconceptualisation of the “Licence to Teach AOP” as the “Teaching for Learning AOP”

One of the professional development programmes offered at TUT is an induction programme termed an Academic Orientation Programme (AOP), aimed at supporting new academics in their role as university teachers. “New” here refers to academics new to the TUT context even if they have higher education teaching experience. The original TUT induction programme comprised an organisational introduction but lacked a teaching focus. This original induction programme was organised and facilitated by human resources. A change in focus from organisational induction to university teacher induction prompted the name change from induction to orientation; therefore reference is made in this case study to the AOP.

This programme was first titled the Licence to Teach (L2T) programme but was renamed Teaching for Learning (T4L) during 2021. By this time, we were part of the NATHEP programme which provided spaces for dialogue and reflection, supporting us in rethinking the name. Through this collaboration, we realised that the name “Licence to Teach” did not reflect the current conversations in higher education learning and teaching, nor did it support the underlying principles of the redesigned AOP professional learning programme and so needed changing. T4L reflects the focus on optimising student learning. We believed that the principles espoused in the TUT Learning and Teaching Strategy could not be recognised and implemented if “learning” was not the distinct focal point of this professional learning programme. During the pandemic the programme was again reconceptualised to fit a more blended approach, where the blend can be adapted on the spectrum from contact to online, based on contextual circumstances. In order to ensure our programme remained dynamic, fluid and responsive, we surrendered to an ongoing process of reconceptualisation and reconstruction, which included a name change, a curriculum change and a change in mode of provision.

The AOP forms part of the university's policy on induction, which states that as part of the probation requirements of permanently employed staff, it is compulsory to complete a formal induction programme. L2T was offered from January 2009, twice a year to all permanently employed academic staff. The purpose of the programme was to familiarise newly appointed university teachers with issues integrally part of an academic's life at TUT. The programme provided a general introduction to learning and teaching at TUT, with a main focus on teaching for optimal student learning. There has been consistent positive feedback from programme participants, creating the assumption that the programme was fulfilling its mandate. During the debriefing processes we however often questioned the positive feedback as we were aware of the programme's possibility to be improved.

The debriefing usually takes place after the completion of the programme, with all CDPs who design and facilitate sessions. During the debriefing we considered the L2T's curriculum and learning design, the attainment of outcomes by programme participants, and our role in that process. We then considered what we could do to improve the programme regarding curriculum, learning design, facilitation, being research-based, and impact on student learning. The NATHEP programme helped catalyse this continuous rethinking process by exposing us to best practices and renewed thinking on theoretical anchors.

L2T had a five-day contact session, during which the underpinning theory for teaching in HE is shared. The session included practice-based assignments and critical reflection on practice through the submission of a portfolio of evidence (PoE). Although framed within the intended curriculum's timeline of six months for completion of the PoE, the reality was that the submissions were mostly individually paced. Participants frequently requested submission extensions and this was always granted to emphasise relational building with colleagues through aspects of the curriculum. Through assignment activities, university teachers learn "on the job", with the guidance, mentoring and support from other participants in the programme including CDPs and the heads of departments (HoDs) of respective departments the university teacher teaches in. The reconceptualised T4L, at the time of writing, facilitated asynchronously online, follows the same pattern as L2T but with more inclusion of digital literacy expectations. After the disruption caused by the pandemic, there was also a focus for university teachers to design and facilitate learning experiences that are adaptable to fluctuating conditions. By changing the mode of facilitation to a fully online programme, we hoped that the participants in the T4L will learn how dynamic learning settings necessitate adaptive interactions between students, university teachers, learning material, and technology functionalities.

The T4L programme continues for six months after the online, asynchronous

sessions. The intended outcomes for the programme are forecasted to be achieved within this six-month timeframe and reads as:

By the end of this programme the participant should be able to:

- write a personal teaching philosophy aligned to provided guidelines;
- facilitate a transformational learning activity within an authentic environment, applying interactive teaching strategies focused on student-centredness and self-directed learning (a teaching evaluation observed by a CDP and the HOD);
- develop outcomes and assessment criteria within a constructive alignment process while following provided criteria;
- apply learning and teaching principles by reflecting on current learning and teaching practices, relevant research, as well as learning theory principles; and
- develop a PoE that reflects evidence of reflective practice in learning, teaching, and assessment in HE.

The preceding paragraph is further clarified by the following summarised depiction:

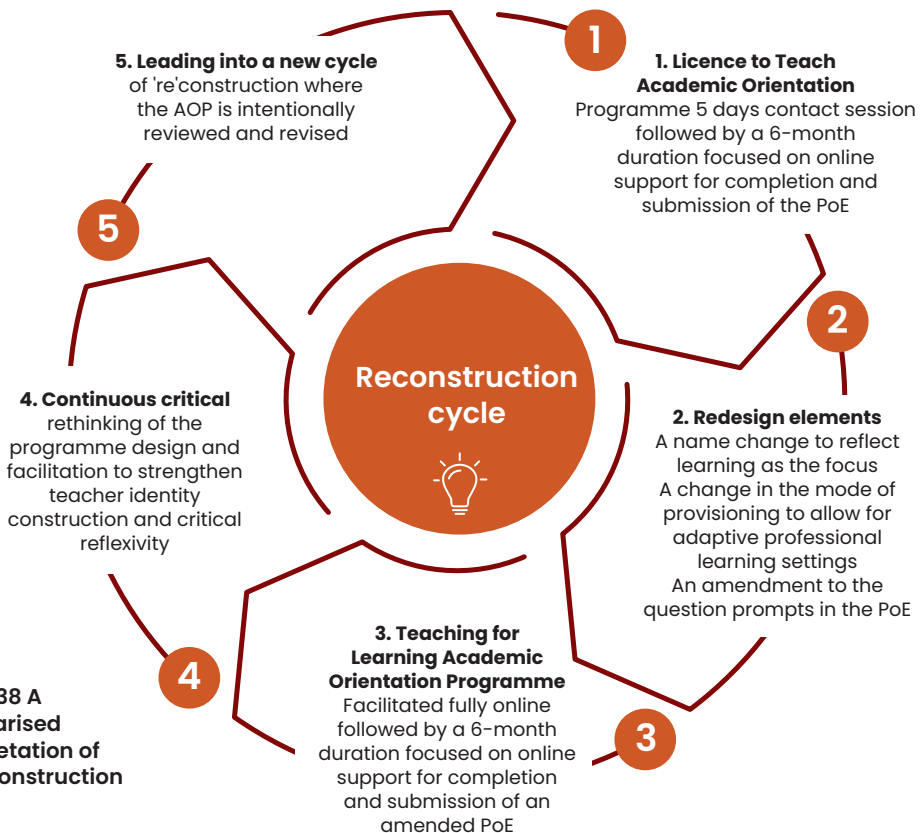


Figure 38 A
summarised interpretation of the reconstruction cycle

Further reflection on the T4L programme currently in

use as the AOP

In which we consider the significance of teacher identity reconstruction and critical reflexivity incorporated in the T4L AOP

Reflecting on the structure of the T4L made it clear that there was an opportunity for lecturers to build their foundational knowledge by exposing them to further knowledge and theory of learning and teaching in HE. The programme also allowed for the development of practical competence through engagement with a transformational learning activity in an authentic environment. The submission of a PoE allowed university teachers to practise self-reflexive thinking. However, the AOP did not support a focus on university teachers' epistemic knowledge by developing their reflexive competence. There was no opportunity to develop metacognition and to think epistemically in order to recognise and evaluate the assumptions and limits of theories of knowledge and to be able to suggest alternatives (Luckett, 2001). This process of transformative learning, if present, would allow university teachers to critically reflect on assumptions, theories and beliefs, and test the validity of these assumptions. This view was based on university teachers being disciplinary experts and often not having engaged reflectively with their teacher role. Taking on a teaching role in HE requires a repertoire of insights which go beyond merely amassing skills and knowledge about disciplinary learning and teaching. It is also about adjusting identities so that new university teachers can dip their toes in the water of this new teaching profession or context with, among others, autonomy, constant changes, and possible compromises. T4L's design and facilitation strategies should echo the demands placed upon new university teachers and support them to intentionally engage in critical evolutionary practice conversations. These conversations could then be followed by reflexive questioning and the opportunity to reorientate their worldviews with new possibilities for practice.

Rediscover

In which we attempt to restore a focused role for the T4L AOP

A key construct that reflects new university teachers' varied responses to the structural, historical, and cultural conditions which enable and constrain their growth as teachers, is that of reflexivity (Archer, 2007). According to a study published by the Council of Higher Education (2017), academics would be able to deal better with challenges related to contemporary higher education contexts by adopting the identity of a reflective practitioner. Critical reflection on one's own

teaching practice stands central to development and growth (Winberg, 2017). The focus on positionality, change, and on transformation as an evolutionary practice frames the concept of reflexivity, which is unpacked below.

The usual expectation of university teachers in the previous L2T programme was to reflect on their teaching and their philosophical beliefs, explaining why they facilitate learning in a certain way. The programme was designed to guide university teachers on how to reflect effectively by, for example, critically reflecting on feedback from students and heads of departments, and reconstructing consistencies between theory and practice. These reflections were done according to guided questions in the PoE, designed to encourage university teachers to become reflective practitioners and to question traditional pedagogies and conduct, as well as traditional ways of assessing student learning. The activities and guiding questions provided to new university teachers prompted them to reflect on, for example, what good teaching is or what they expect from their students. From these two questions it was clear that these types of guiding questions that were in the initial PoE were often ambivalent and did not adequately address the level of reflexivity needed for purposeful learning and teaching practices.

Although this process used in the initial PoE was quite successful to achieve a certain level of critical reflection, we agree with Vorster and Quinn (2017) that it was time for us CDPs to push the boundaries and challenge university teachers to engage with further critical discourses emerging in the field of HE. For university teachers to transition from thinking reflectively to reflexive competence, the integration of knowledge into a reconstructed teacher identity and into a sense of self required a more focused reflective and reflexive approach. The AOP was framed within history and context as focal points, and it was envisaged to provide a space for critical self-reflection on academic practices, for both the academics as participants (university teachers) and as facilitators.

It became clear during the T4L debriefing sessions when considering participant feedback that the AOP did not place enough emphasis on incorporating the macro cultural, historical, and structural conditions of HE in South Africa. It was important to take these conditions into consideration; to develop a better understanding of the changing context that new university teachers confront in higher education in general, and at TUT specifically. The programme did not purposefully guide university teachers to reflect on (one) their teacher identity construction, and (two) their critical reflexivity in a changing higher education context which shapes their academic practices.

Both identity construction and critical reflexivity influence the role of the academic as university teacher. Identity and reflexivity are both framed as dynamic and impermanent features that will continually evolve as university teachers work with

conditions that enable and impede their practices. The dynamic nature of identity construction and critical reflexivity proposes that our work in learning and teaching needs to be informed by stronger discourses that ask more critical questions related to the way new university teachers construct a teacher identity and how they could become more critically reflexive. We identified the concepts of identity reconstruction and critical reflexivity as two crucial points to focus on as we continue to renew the AOP in relation to what we gained from the NATHEP experience. From the NATHEP framework, we focused on reflexivity and how university teachers and facilitators could use reflection for forward action on contextual matters. We also considered how a teacher identity reconstruction process is framed as a dimension of lived experience, and on authenticity and various deep changes required by all involved to actuate enhanced practice.

How then do we position the design, the curriculum, and the facilitation of T4L as a supportive and emancipatory space where teacher identity construction and critical reflexivity become significant aspects? Firstly, identity helps to answer the “Who am I?” question in a cognitive and “learning-as-becoming” construction of the self. Feather (2010) refers to identity as a representation of a person’s psychological make-up, and Clegg (2008, p.329), notes the “fluidity and multiplicity of an individual’s existence and their personhood”. The emergent territory between personal, disciplinary, and professional domains can be confusing as well as intimidating and the AOP can support new university teachers to clarify this by layering teacher identity with their other identities. Secondly, teacher identity helps to frame the AOP as a value-laden social practice. Whether globally, nationally, institutionally, disciplinarily, departmentally, or personally, the AOP needs to enhance new university teachers as critical reflexive thinkers who “question traditional relations of power, ideas, and norms” (Grenier, 2016, p.154). By creating safe, emancipatory spaces in the AOP, university teachers become aware of the social conditioning that enable “the reproduction of specific understandings of the world” (Grenier, 2016, p.154) and how to critically awaken your own “self-aware meta-analysis” (Finlay, 2002, p.209). In this way the aspects of identity construction and critical reflexivity become evident in the AOP’s curriculum activities. Anchoring these curriculum activities in available literature and in the NATHEP framework will receive attention in the section that follows.

Relate

In which we establish a link of theoretical significance by connecting the AOP reconstruction ideas to a brief literature review and the NATHEP framework

In developing our theoretical underpinning of the reconstruction of the programme, we referred to aspects of the NATHEP CRITicAl Framework which anchored the key considerations motivating the changes. We focused purposefully on critical

reflexivity, relevance, responsiveness, and authenticity as guides, influencing our thinking and action. The framework not only guided these changes for the institution but for our own agency as we, with increased intentionality, used our voice and choice.

For our academics to think differently about their teacher identity and critical reflexivity requires a transforming belief about the self. Mezirow's (1994) transformation theory emphasises critical reflection of the self as an individual becomes increasingly reflexive and agentic. Everyone has an image of who they are as a professional; the arrangement of experiences, beliefs, motives and characteristics they use to describe themselves in their professional capacity (Caza & Creary, 2016). Identity is not a stable entity. It is an impermanent feature that is shaped by contextual factors, is dynamic and decidedly fluid. It interacts with personal agency and is based on personal experiences and critique. A strong teacher identity enables a university teacher to confidently and with professional conduct engage with the aspects of their profession, "thereby giving others confidence in their abilities" (Monrouxe, 2009).

Critical reflexivity implies the ability to reflect inward toward oneself and outward toward the cultural, historical, linguistic, political, and other contextual shaping forces (Boud et al., 2013; Schön, 1983). Idahosa (2020) refers to reflexivity as a critical, constant consciousness and the ability to learn and unlearn. It disrupts logic and linear structures of knowing. It is a "process of uprooting and uncovering intertwined layers" and it supports a critical awareness of "systems, rules, discourses and assumptions" that allow individuals to see the many ways of "knowing, being in and understanding the world" (Idahosa, 2020, pp.33-34).

In combining these two concepts of identity reconstruction and critical reflexivity, Cunliffe (2009, p.98) notes how the construction of identity requires a guarantee of reflexivity. Self-reflexivity, which is primary to the identity of university teachers, involves a "dialogue with self about our fundamental assumptions, values, and ways of interacting" (Cunliffe, 2009, p.98).

In Archer's terms (2000), the induction programme needs to support the creation of spaces for university teachers to build their personal properties and powers, to become what she calls "meta-reflexives"; that is, people who can consider their concerns, projects and practices in relation to the wider social concerns and thus be prepared to have their entrenched identities, values, and beliefs challenged (Vorster & Quinn, 2017). As such specific aspects of the NATHEP CRITicAL Framework were instructive in helping to inform key considerations for programme change and design. These theoretical framing and anchors informed the redesign and will continue to influence the ongoing reconstruction of the AOP.

Redesign: step one

In which we reconsider the T4L learning design, its facilitation, and the PoE so as to become more responsive to university teachers' identity reconstruction and critical reflexivity

The TUT Conceptual Framework for Professional Development (CDS, 2017) describes the quintessential university teacher and their competence. Fike, Fike and Zhang (2015) refer to this ideal university teacher as a scholar who epitomises respectful professionalism and who has knowledge, ability and intellect, while Faulkner and Latham (2016) note how exemplary university teachers possess dynamic perspectives that can meet current and future challenges. In addition to these authors, the NATHEP framework references university teachers as, *inter alia*, responsive, rooted in theory and legitimate in their authentic purpose.

Seen against the background of the AOP, the progress of the university teacher from potentiality to proficiency is engrained within their teacher identity. It is this concept of identity, and specifically traversing the gap between personal and disciplinary identity on the one hand, and university teacher identity on the other hand, which the AOP needs to enable more intentionally. In the past, the AOP's curriculum addressed the concept of teacher identity, and certain activities and engagements required of the new university teachers to reflect this evolutionary shift. We believed that to purposefully design for this evolutionary process of teacher identity construction with more depth requires active inclusivity of reflexive prompts in the PoE and purposeful activities in the redesigned AOP.

The PoE was originally designed with guiding questions to support the compilation of a teaching philosophy. These questions, we realised, were often "surface" questions, which required new university teachers to reflect on aspects of, *inter alia*, good teaching, student roles and realities, and teaching strategies. As CDPs, we felt that although this was a good starting point, these types of questions often lacked depth, and were not thorough enough to challenge fundamental assumptions or support a more wholesome teacher identity reconstruction. We anticipated that with the changes we had already made, and with the changes to still follow in the T4L programme, this lack of depth could be addressed. The following figures (Figures 39, 40 and 41) reflect the initial type of questioning (Figure 39), participant reflection on the completion of a teaching philosophy (Figure 40), and participant reflection on the LtT Version 1 programme itself (Figure 41). These figures provide an overview of aspects of the LtT Version 1 programme and indicate the need for revision and modification thereof.



What do I expect from my students?

What is good teaching?

What part of my professional contexts brings me joy?

Figure 39 Example of guiding questions in the previous PoE

~ The writing of the teaching philosophy guided participants in reflecting on their practices

Teaching philosophy/Example 1: "...in fact, I was even helped by that first assignment, the philosophy... because we were given that, and I had to go and read, and okay, these are the thing, I went online, I even asked my friend to give me her notes... and it is all about student engagement..."

Teaching philosophy/Example 2: "...it is interesting, you know, I did my diploma, you know, you would have this template that you have to do 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 – if you are a teacher you have to do this, this, this, this – but the teaching philosophy helps you to think about things, to make a reflection of your reflections as a teacher, so I think it is subjective, but it is also objective according to the context of your subject. So I found it very useful..."



Figure 40 Examples of participants' reflection

Teaching evaluation/Example 1: "The feedback I received after my class visit was not very clear... I haven't really changed anything in my teaching practice since then..."

Teaching evaluation/Example 2: "I really would have appreciated some more specific feedback on my teaching. Feedback that is specific to my situation..."

Relevance of the AOP/Example 1: “The programme is really not aligned to, you know, my everyday teaching, this reality here...”

Relevance of the AOP/Example 2: “When you tell us about teaching hundreds of students at once, then I might pay attention...”

Constructive alignment activities/Example: “We cannot be expected to just write learning outcomes and assessment criteria... it’s demotivating when you struggle so much. More time is needed...”



Figure 41 Examples of participants’ feedback

The PoE was then adapted through redesign to become responsive to incorporating identity construction and critical reflexivity. The PoE in this way was becoming more than just a folder to store assignments. It became an instrument in the process of supporting university teachers to grapple with deep issues. It became a space and opportunity for reflecting on issues of teacher identity construction and taking a positive step towards a deeper engagement with educational issues of the day.

The evolution of the AOP became visible in the curriculum, specifically the activities, and the guiding reflexive prompts in the PoE. We planned for the evolution to be ongoing through redesign cycles for dialogical reflexivity, and to continuously align to the curriculum of the AOP. New university teachers were challenged to share and translate the influence of the “possible presence of premises and narratives” (Grenier, 2016, p.157) on their beliefs and professional or academic conduct. Reflective and reflexive guiding questions challenged university teachers to engage with current learning and teaching conversations in context and to further include community, national and international contexts. The questions aimed to guide university teachers to critically reflect on “the way we construct and absorb knowledge” (Tomkins & Nicholds, 2017, p.5), on the changing nature and forms of knowledge, and on their relationship with knowledges. It also supported them in reflecting on the societal power dynamics of hegemonic influences that they were exposed to, firstly, within higher education, and secondly, the different sources and levels of power within their own relationships with students. These reflections required them to consider whether their teacher–student relationships were missing balance and equity because of unequal power distributions, and whether these uneven assertions of power impeded teaching and learning experiences.

How do I contribute towards students' relevance in a dynamic world and an unfamiliar future?

What is the knowledge base of my field / discipline? Who decides on the knowledge included in the programmes with which I am involved?

How do I design learning interactions so that students can be agentic and accountable about their learning?



Figure 42 An example of guiding questions in the amended PoE

It was anticipated that exposure to the proposed guiding questions in the PoE and the proposed T4L curriculum and design changes would kindle continued engagement with critical reflexivity that will last beyond the duration of the AOP. University teachers would then receive opportunities to continue their learning journey by engaging with other professional learning opportunities facilitated by the Curriculum Development and Support directorate. This reflexive process aimed to support the crafting and adjustment of a university teacher identity in response to the array of perspectives from colleagues and literature (Kreber, 2010). Just as contact and online learning spaces should be safe and emancipatory spaces for students, the spaces of the AOP (including the PoE) should create the same kind of safe space, where university teachers can contemplate, construct, critically reflect, and learn (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015). While individual/personal discomfort is welcome when contemplating personal critical reflections and identity, the discomfort should be authentic and should be part of an evolutionary transformation. The discomfort should not stem from hostile spaces, practices, or facilitation, but from delving into taken-for-granted assumptions and questioning these. We, as CDPs, strived to create space for university teachers to be comfortable in any discomfort that may arise, and aimed to continue to reflect on our role during debriefing and planning sessions. We were once again reminded that the AOP should never stagnate but needed to continuously evolve. Following some curriculum changes, and changes to the guiding questions of the teaching philosophy of the PoE, we aimed for the next cycle of change to focus on theoretical grounding for pedagogical choices within a wider spectrum of professional learning opportunities.

Redesign: step two

In which we consider the redesign as this pertains to theoretical groundings, and to us, the curriculum development practitioners who design, facilitate, assess, and support

TUT's spectrum of professional learning opportunities for university teachers, of which the AOP was an integral first step, required continued rethinking and

restructuring. Agentic university teachers should be able to plan their own journeys through various available learning opportunities. This includes workshops, short learning programmes, and self-directed professional learning opportunities via the TUT Learning Management System, enabling them to build and maintain agency aligned to institutional directives. From previous AOP experiences we know that university teachers who are instructed to complete the PoE, can often choose the road of least resistance and regress into silent compliance. By adapting the curriculum, design and facilitation of the AOP, particularly with regard to the guiding questions in the PoE, we guarded against imposing a teacher identity, and rather provided our academics with democratised learning spaces and interactions where personally relevant identity can be individually constructed. A democratised learning space connects to the concept of decolonisation where individuals construct their own truthful authentic teacher identities. These identities recognise and embrace diversity and the absence of a fixed, marginalised paradigm. Reflecting on the authenticity of identity, the curriculum, facilitation and learning and teaching spaces allow university teachers to embrace their own values and culture as well. This was intentionally designed to be reflective of, and authentic to, previously marginalised cultures.

By drawing on their scholarly nature, new university teachers were encouraged to challenge the complexities of an often-unfamiliar professional environment, and step into critical reflexivity mode to embody their practice as disciplinary university teachers. As explained, previously formulated teaching philosophy guiding questions on “good teaching” were expanded with contextual prompts on, for example, introspection, preconceived biases, knowledge claims, individual and collective engagement with current higher education aspects, social practices and critique, structures, assumptions and rules. A further step required the translation of these concepts into the new university teachers’ own curriculum and learning design for the benefit of students. It required consideration of theoretical grounding for pedagogical choices. CDPs and instructional designers (IDs) (residing at CDS) supported the teacher identity construction and critical reflexivity of the programme participants during and beyond the AOP. As CDS practitioners, our roles continued to evolve on two similar pathways of agentic learning. Firstly, as facilitators of the AOP we needed to continuously construct and reconstruct our own teacher identities. Secondly, we needed to be aware of the broad spectrum of current higher education conversations to engage with critical reflexivity in the design and facilitation of the AOP. As we move forward, we endeavour to continue to focus on three crucial points: firstly, continually question the relevance of the AOP’s curriculum and learning design; secondly, continue to support university teachers as participants with professional identity construction and reflexivity for renewed awareness and enhanced practice; and thirdly, pay attention to our own being and becoming as we continually support the entirety of the AOP.

Conclusion: remind

We conclude the case- study with some continual reminders

A thoughtfully conceptualised professional learning programme should reflect institutional priorities combined with national and global awareness. We became aware that our initial L2T and aspects of T4L did not reflect that intentionality clearly. We recognised that the architecture of the AOP, with its theoretical anchors, needed to acknowledge the perspectives, realities and lived contexts of the institution, individual university teachers as well as the facilitators and designers of the programme. It needed to reflect NATHEP's CRITicAL Framework principles of responsiveness, relevance, authenticity and critical reflexivity.

As AOP designers and facilitators, we had to recentre ourselves, reflect on our own teacher identity construction, and bring ourselves wholly to the AOP evolution through our own reflexive processes. We had to immerse ourselves in the malleability of learning design to ensure we continue with authentic changes, theorised praxis and reflexive conduct. Although this is never easy, we have come to know that the AOP can always be redesigned for more responsiveness and relevance.

We had to be reminded of two significant concepts which are the current focus of adaptation of the AOP:

- To intentionally support the new university teachers' construction of a teacher identity within the transition between subject expert and educationist.
- To intentionally address the new university teachers' taken-for-granted practice assumptions through applying critical reflexivity, and consequently raising awareness of the underlying implications of history, power relations and knowledge production (and reproduction) in learning and teaching spaces.

Both these concepts, that is, university teacher identity construction (the journey of adjusting identities), and critical reflexivity (informed insights and control over influencing structures, history, and cultures) reflect the reconstruction of the AOP, as described in this case study. These concepts are connected to aspects of teaching and learning such as curriculum, design, and facilitation, and more significantly to the role of the PoE as a vehicle and an enabling space for reflection and identity formation, evidence for evaluation, for growth and for motivation. The CDPs who design curricula and activities for the AOP aim to continue to reflect on the epistemological and ontological access created by this design process and evaluate whether the AOP provides such access for university teachers to experience the threshold of intersectional, reflexive identities. The following acknowledges this imperative, namely, that through the construction of a professional identity, individuals are able to claim purpose and meaning for themselves and explicate how they contribute to society (Caza & Creary, 2016).
