Shifting the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to concrete: A case study analysing the decolonisation achievements, challenges and opportunities facing a multi-campus for-profit private higher education institution in South Africa today

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Statement of Original Authorship

The work in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for any other awards or credit at this or any other institution of higher education. To the best of my knowledge, the thesis is wholly original. All material or writing published or written by others and contained herein has been duly referenced and credited.

Garth Holmes

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Abbreviations

AFDA	Africa, Film, Drama and Arts (The School of Motion Picture and Live Performance, also known as The School of the Creative Economy)
AI	Artificial Intelligence Appreciative Inquiry
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BEEE BPoC	Black Economic Empowerment and Equity Black and People of Colour
CLVA CT	Continued Learning Value Assessment Cape Town
CVPs	Company Value Points
DBN	Durban
EVA	Education Value Assurance Committee (AFDA)
EVAM	Entertainment Value Assessment Matrix
FG	Focus Group
FMF	Fees Must Fall
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
HD	Historically Disadvantaged
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Standard Authority
HWU	Historically White Universities
JHB	Johannesburg
KPAs	Key Performance Assessments
LOREC	The Liverpool Ethics Committee
NFVF	National Film and Video Foundation
NSFS	National Student Funding Scheme
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
PE	Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha)
PHEI	Private Higher Education Institution
PNTS	Prefer not to say

RMF	Rhodes Must Fall
SLL	Student-Led Learning

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Abstract

Like the present society, higher education is experiencing unprecedented disruptions and change. In a global world being driven by exponentially advancing digital technology, uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity continue to characterise the post-positivist society, with the massification, commodification, and homogenisation of higher education impacting on the role and relevance of higher education today and in the future. Thus, higher education needs reimagining, with decolonisation being the key aspect, especially in terms of countering the colonial-apartheid hegemonies that previously shaped both society and higher education. The study uses an idealistic and pragmatic mixed-methods approach and singular case study to analyse and question the extent to which AFDA, a private, for-profit and multi-regional private higher education institution in South Africa has contributed towards the shifting of the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to action. Using a general questionnaire and two focus groups, this study headlines the analysis and interpretation of the on-campus lived experience of a sampled group of students and alumnus in a faculty of AFDA. The key findings demonstrate that the failure by the South African society to transform itself is directly mirrored in its State universities sector which, like higher education worldwide, faces unique and conflicting challenges regarding remaining relevant and simultaneously decolonising its institutions and curriculum. Like State universities, private higher education institutions have a financial and moral responsibility to meet the challenge of future-proofing themselves for the future. In this respect, the study found that the achievements of AFDA's innovative but epistemically disobedient and socio-constructive liberationist curriculum outcomes have, over the last three decades, contributed to transformative nation building and socio-economic empowerment.

Framed by the decolonisation theory, AFDA can be said to have contributed to the shifting of the decolonisation conversation in higher education from rhetoric to concrete action.

Keywords: Mixed-methods approach case study, institutional and academic curriculum, socio-constructive, liberationist curriculum, decolonisation, colonial apartheid, multi-regional for-profit private higher education, epistemic disobedience, extreme contexts

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The socio-economic rise of Africa, Asia, China, and South America has resulted in a global shift in economic power relations that are characterised by growing migration patterns, increased urbanisation, rising literacy levels, and an exponential advancement in technology (Albrechts, 2016; Goldin & Kutarna, 2016; Singularity, 2017). All these factors contribute significantly to the ongoing disruption of an expanding higher education (HE) sector (Altbach, 2007; Jansen, 2017), and its growing engagement with the "imagination of the masses and their past, present and future" (Matus & McCarthy, 2008, p.80).

The extent of the disruptive trajectory of a post-colonial (Fanon, 1963; Manathunga, 2018; Memmi, 1955), post-positivist (Abaszadeh et al., 2020) and post-modernist society (Lyotard, 1979), challenges the previous narratives, processes and structures of the age of Enlightenment and its imperial-colonial endeavours (Altbach, 2007; Hoppers, 2009; Lyotard, 1979; Mbembe, 2015). As a counter-colonial strategy, decolonisation is a complex and sensitive aspect of a disruptive trajectory that is intricately entangled in the transition from traditionally fixed narratives to those that require a more dynamic growth mindset or mindshift (Dweck, 2015; Senge, 2006), particularly in terms of the challenges impeding the decolonisation of HE.

Key to understanding the challenges facing higher education the post-1994 era in South Africa are the complexities of the country's *extreme* contexts and political as

well as socio-economic realities (Hällgren et al., 2017; Presti & Sabatano, 2018). These *extreme* conditions include endemic corruption, political fragmentation, unemployment, high rates of murder cases, gender-based violence and growing poverty (Bona, 2018; Cele, 2023; Habib, 2019; Jain et al., 2020). Together with the attendant rise of a woke-and-cancel culture (Kanai & Gill, 2020; Velasco, 2020), and its capacity to be part of the decolonisation protests and *vice versa,* South Africa's reputation as the protest capital of the world continues to pose multiple threats to its higher education sector, in one way or another (Lancaster & Mulaudzi, 2021).

The likelihood of South Africa's state universities failing in their decolonisation ambitions is further exacerbated by the durability of imperial-colonialism and what Jansen and Walters (2022, p.4) refer to as the lack of systematic studies regarding "how a radical idea [like decolonisation], is received, encountered and transformed in the daily churn of institutional life". In his publication *Statues and Storms*, former Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Max Price concurs that "Tackling these issues [of decolonising UCT], has raised the dilemma of how to colonise the culture while recognising the multiple stakeholders that the university must take into account and the desire of many to preserve the old order" (2023, p. 85). Similarly, the ongoing consecration of the merits of university structures, disciplines, and knowledge of the Global North (Keet, 2016), remain faithful to meeting the ends of colonisation (Lange, 2019; Leibowitz, 2017; Manathunga, 2018; Soudien, 2019). Most of South Africa's state universities rely on their Global North ranking to successfully attract top academic researchers, lecturers and students. Inadvertently, this contributes to a certain degree of

unwillingness and lack of urgency to transform academic curricula (Jansen, 2017, 2019; Luckett & Shay, 2017).

The politically driven nature of the 2015-2018 public university protests that sought to decolonise higher education at South African universities, nevertheless, succeeded in advancing the departure of the decolonisation conversation. However, it did not significantly shift the decolonisation of universities beyond the existing and cosmetic changes, unfulfilled institutional declarations and rhetoric (Mutekwe, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Evidently, decolonisation, as the latest buzzword in higher education, has often instigated quick fixes and what Le Grange et al. (2020, p.27) refer to as "colonial washing", where a university attempts to give the impression that it has decolonised the institution.

The traditionally resistant-to-change higher education sector (Brown, 2014), was further disrupted by the impact of a global pandemic, namely coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) (du Plessis et al., 2022; Kele & Mzilen, 2021; Wangenge-Ouma, 2021). COVID-19 thrust HE into what Schwab (2016) earlier described as the cyber-technology-driven world of the 21st century, creating greater access and conveniences to learning. In the process, increasing access, but increasing the digital divide which, in South Africa, is characterised by unequal or limited home-learning environments, disparate digital skill proficiencies, limited or no access to the internet, data resources and learning and wellness support for less privileged students (du Plessis et al., 2022; Kele & Mzilen, 2019; Meda et al., 2019).

The anticipated democratisation of knowledge through digital access has, ironically, strengthened the Global North's digital knowledge and resource hegemonies created by colonial apartheid. This divide has further accelerated the neo-liberal capitalist tendencies of global massification, homogenisation and commodification of higher education (Altbach, 1998, 2013; Altbach & Forest, 2007; Matus & McCarthy, 2008; Pandey & Moorad, 2003). These external political, socio-economic forces and hegemonies have all played a key role in disrupting higher education both globally and locally, thus impacting on the existing challenges that face the South African HE sector built on the fragmented pillars of apartheid (Mbembe, 2015, 2016, 2019; Soudien, 2019). In so doing, this has perpetuated institutional inequalities, the lack of equity and increased discriminations, which occur on local campuses on a daily basis.

Directly aligned to the above technological disruptions is the growing presence and impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on every aspect of our lives and the dynamic knowledge production requirements for 21st century graduates (de Matos – Ala, 2019; Mollick & Mollick, 2023; Schwab, 2016). Similar to the rise of technology in higher education due to COVID-19, AI may present numerous opportunities for accelerating the democratisation of knowledge production, but this typically threatens existing traditional learning structures and institutions, particularly in terms of the homogenisation and the control of knowledge production that benefits the neo-liberal project at the expense of colonially subjugated nations (Mollick & Mollick, 2023; Singularity, 2017; Schwab, 2016).

1.2 The genesis and motivation for the research study

Several factors informed the genesis of and motivation for the study and these included the impact of the #FeesMustFall and other *#Fallist* movements (2015-2018 student protests) which, at various junctures, threatened to indefinitely close universities across South Africa. Like most Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in South Africa, AFDA did not experience on-campus disruption instigated by the protests. However, the threat of contagion and support for the various movements was palpable and prompted the need to understand the passion and anger driving the call for the decolonisation of universities and their curricula. Evidently, the key to the call for decolonisation was a relatively new concept, and it gave the South African youth a new voice, where decolonisation superseded transformation as a more radical approach to addressing the perpetuation of institutional inequality and discrimination in South African universities (Habib, 2019; Jansen, 2016; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni 2018; Price, 2023). It was at this moment that the researcher began to understand what was meant by the call for decolonisation and the potential risks posed by the 2015-2018 protests. The researcher began to contemplate the notion of reframing AFDA's transformative nation-building and socio-economic empowerment goals under the umbrella of decolonisation, especially in terms of the lack of acknowledgement of the role played by PHEIs such as AFDA, whose socio-constructive liberationist curriculum (Freire, 1993, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978) and its epistemically disobedient character (Mbembe, 2015; Mignolo, 2007) was largely discounted by traditional academia in South Africa.

1.3 The impact of #FeesMustFall and other *Fallist* movements

The 2015-2018 #FeesMustFall (#FMF) and #RhodesMustFall (#RMF) public university protests would produce one of the greatest crises faced in HE since the dawn of South Africa's democracy in 1994 (Webbstock & Fisher, 2016). The largely politically-driven protests (Benatar, 2021; Jansen & Walters, 2022) called for the removal of colonial symbols and the end to double to triple-digit fee hikes in historically White universities (HWUs) between 2005 and 2015 (Shaik, 2020). The contagion of the protests did not directly affect PHEIs, but spread to all of South Africa's higher education institutions (HEIs), with some of them having been more affected than others (Habib, 2019; Le Grange, 2016; Naicker, 2016). The call for the decolonisation of South Africa's HE, morphed into a fragmented political agenda and rendered decolonisation as a metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012), reflecting the failings of South Africa's post-1994 transformation, identity politics and the ongoing perpetuation of inequality (Habib, 2019; Jansen, 2016, 2019; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni, 2018).

The protests often resulted in activists engaging in violent confrontations with authorities, campus security, and the police (Benatar, 2021; Habib, 2019). At times the activists threatened to indefinitely shut down the academic year for universities in South Africa (Jansen, 2017). The #FeesMustFall and other protest movements under the *Fallist* banner, challenged, instigated and emboldened the questioning of the ongoing perpetuation of inequality and discrimination in South Africa and its higher education sector (Le Grange, 2019; Luckett & Shay, 2017; Mamdani, 2019; Shaik, 2020). In so doing, giving the South African youth a new voice, one which called for *decolonisation over transformation* (Kgosiemang, 2018), a voice no longer

characterised by patience and hope, but by impatience and anger (Von Bever Donker et al., 2017).

1.4 The risk of on-campus protest for AFDA

AFDA, like most PHEIs in South Africa, relies on fees paid by students as its primary revenue (Singh & Tustin, 2022). As an unsubsidised, private and independent institution, with four multi-regional campuses (Gallifa & Batallé, 2010; Groenwald, 2018; Nel, 2007), AFDA cannot risk an increased probability of on-campus protests. Like all PHEIs in South Africa, the ever-present threat of protest contagion the four AFDA campuses are exposed to poses a serious moral, academic, financial and safety threat to the sustainability of the institution. The financial cost and reputational damage that an indefinite or ongoing protest may have on the institution's ability to complete the academic year, has the capacity to terminate its existence. This particular risk, and the reality surrounding it, served as one of the three key motivations for the study.

1.5 South Africa's shift from transformation to decolonisation

The impassioned conversation regarding the shift from transformation to the decolonisation of universities and the nationwide protests pervaded South African staff rooms, lecture halls, and dining rooms (Jansen, 2017). Government, political parties, the public, academics and academic institutions and families were divided on the conceptual shift from South Africa's popular Rainbow Nation politics of transformation, to decolonisation, which is more radical than the former (Jansen & Walters, 2022; Kgosiemang, 2018). The conceptual shift from transformation to decolonisation contributed directly to the second motivation for the study. As one of

the two founding members of AFDA in 1994, the researcher wished to understand what the decolonisation of HE meant beyond the rhetoric, slogans, political grand-standing and posturing that tended to derail the original intentions of the protests (Habib, 2018; Jansen, 2017, 2019; Jansen & Walters, 2022).

1.6 The lack of acknowledgement of the role and status of PHEIs in South Africa

Further to the issues of the risk posed by protest action and the researcher's need to understand what the decolonisation of HE and its curricula meant to AFDA, the study was also motivated by a third and underlying frustration regarding the sometimes *invisible* challenges that marginalised the educational efforts of South African PHEIs like AFDA. Compared to the historically White and state funded universities, PHEIs face the lengthy, complex and high-risk costs incurred for the accreditation of new qualifications and learning sites for PHEIs in South Africa, which is of the most stringent in the world today (Ellis & Steyn, 2014). Private higher education is a relatively new and growing sector both globally and nationally. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have an important role to play, as they offer an alternate education, usually linked to either social mobility, specialised credentials or direct employability (Ellis & Steyn, 2014; Kruss, 2007; Somerville, 2021).

However, issues related to legitimacy, quality of education, regulation and perceptions of *immoral* profiteering from education continue to promote a negative stereotype of PHEIs (Kruss, 2007; Somerville, 2021). These and other contextual factors (see Chapter 2), put PHEIs at a distinct disadvantage compared to their State-owned counterparts. In so doing, they contribute to the dominant politically driven

hegemony a number of universities and their on-campus political alliances hold in terms of South Africa's decolonisation narrative (Ellis & Steyn, 2014; Jansen, 2016; Singh & Tustin, 2022).

1.7 (Re)framing the call for the decolonisation of higher education from AFDA's epistemically disobedient perspective

Although it was initially an imperative to mitigate the risks posed by external threats like the #FeesMustFall and various other protests, as well as a means of expressing the frustrations caused by the negative stereotyping of the role of PHEIs in South Africa, the researcher set out to foster an understanding of what the decolonisation of HE in South Africa expected from those who wanted to be part of the conversation. This study was initially influenced by the work of many authors and academics, such as Fanon (1963), Jansen (2017, 2019), Leibowitz (2017), Manathunga (2018), Mignolo (2007, 2009), Mbembe (2015, 2016) and others. The researcher began to understand that a more inclusive, rather than a stereotypical replacement of one form of knowledge for another, was a distinctive counter-colonial strategy designed to mitigate the impact of the Global North's dominance of knowledge production (Manathunga, 2018). The notion of scaling the knowledge of the Global South which was competitive and critical of the existing hegemonies (Leibowitz, 2016), and the concept of re-centring local knowledge and placing the former on the periphery (Hoppers, 2009; Lingard, 2009; Mbembe, 2016), allowed the researcher to begin making tentative and distinct alignments with the concept and AFDA's socio-constructive (Vygotsky, 1978), liberationist (Freire, 1993, 1994) curriculum.

Further to the above, Mbembe (2015) and Mignolo's (2007, 2009) call for epistemic disobedience, rallied with the initial wishes of AFDA's founders to offer a unique vocational approach to the teaching of film that was beyond the traditional Global North's academic approach used by South African universities. AFDA's student-centred, *Easy-to-get-into, Hard-to-get-out* approach, was designed to provide increased access to a degree qualification for many students who were part of South Africa's unequal primary and secondary education under apartheid (HESA, 2014; Webbstock & Fisher, 2016). Similarly, access for those whose alternate intelligences (Gardner, 2010) did not meet the math or language intelligence thresholds of the out-of-date National Matriculation certificate.

Central to the establishment of AFDA in 1994 was the spirit of making learning fun and the anticipation that all students were capable of learning through actively building on their learning self- esteem and self-belief (Leonardi, 2007). Bata Passchier, the co-founder and author of AFDA's curriculum development over the last three decades (Appendix 1), did not set out to *decolonise* higher education, as decolonisation per se, was not part of the South African transformation narrative. Irrespective of the fact that decolonisation would become a key aspect of the higher education narrative, Passchier's curricula focus has always been to ensure a locally relevant and value-laden curriculum based on the institution's goals, values and educational promise as stated in Chapter 1 (AFDA On-boarding, 2020; Bell-Roberts, 2022).

The early socioeconomic and transformational approaches to AFDA's academic and institutional curriculum included the abolishment of sit-down or

written exams. In 1994, many in the South African HE sector considered maintaining traditional colonial standards as key to the identity and reputation of the University (Price, 2023). Focus on individual student performance, trumped the intricacies and complexitities of collaborative assessment strategies (Flicker et al., 2010; Le et al., 2018; Sansivero, 2016). At AFDA, these collaborative and alternative assessment strategies included peer and institutional audience as well as industry, both of which contributed to individual and collective student assessment.

Further to the decolonial stance taken by AFDA, the institution's *Try, Try and Try Again* policy, allowed students to repeat their practical examinations until they were able to gain the required 80 percent pass rate. All of the above formed the key aspect of making learning fun, simultaneously developing learning self-esteem and this allowed students to gain the necessary professional and creative skills and competencies required for them to participate in the entertainment sector. In so doing, students fulfil AFDA's overall goal, which is to:

> "*Develop a value-driven educational institution that contributes to transformative nation building and rewards all stakeholders by providing a relevant, stimulating, rigorous and globally integrated learning experience that empowers students with productive innovative skills, enabling graduates to grow sustainable creative economies*" (AFDA Annual Yearbook, 2022, p. 4).

Central to the achievement of the goal was Passchier's socio-constructive liberationist curriculum which, in hindsight, reflected the learning theories developed by Vygotsky (1978) and Freire (1993, 1994). Passchier's home-grown curriculum was uniquely designed and developed to focus on developing graduates' cognitive, creative, aesthetic, technical and attitudinal skills that are necessary in projecting South Africa's post-1994 cultural voice as a tool designed to create inspirational local entertainment products (Bell-Roberts, 2022). These, in turn, were destined to grow local audiences and, by extension, the industry sector.

As part of shifting the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to concrete action, Fallist movement's conceptual shift from transformation to decolonisation (Jansen, 2017; Kgosimang; 2018; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni, 2018), and the feasibility of using these concepts in an interchangeable fashion, allowed the researcher to embark on a research journey that proposed the reframing of AFDA's goals in line with the decolonisation agenda. This process has sought out the validation of AFDA's existing epistemic disobediences and the goals of its socio- constructive curriculum as a key aspect of validating the decolonisation of its curriculum from an educational and politically neutral point of view.

1.8 The significance of the study

The significance of the study is grounded in the opportunity for adopting a singular case study to intuitively and interchangeably use its contextual intelligences (Khanna, 2014) as part of its sense-making of the lived experiences of the participants and its researcher, to navigate the study's idealist-pragmatic goals. As a means of gaining greater insight into the situatedness of the educational

significances of the study, it is important to provide the reader with certain reminders into the nature, design and development of AFDA's socio-constructive (Hirtle, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978) and liberationist curriculum (Freire, 1993, 1994). In the first instance, AFDA's various early curricula (1994-2015 [Appendix 1]) were largely developed independently and without any conscious awareness of the decolonial theory and concepts like epistemic disobedience (Mbembe, 2015; Mignolo, 2009). Key decolonisation principles, such as widened access, re-centring knowledge and epistemic disobedience were part of AFDA's transformative and institutional socio-economic goals and values, as stated in Chapter 1 and AFDA On-boarding for Teaching Staff (2020). Over the last 28 years, various iterations of co-founder Bata Passchier's project-led socio-constructive curricula (see Appendix 1), are based on his Entertainment Value Assessment Matrix (EVAM), and have been developed and practised at AFDA over the last three decades.

Through re-centring indigenous student project outcomes focused on the development of a new democratic cultural voice which contributes to 'healing the wounds of the past', the students of AFDA are involved in the collaborative origination of inspirational and culturally relevant local entertainment content outcomes (team projects) designed for local audiences and, by extension, the world. The critical aspects of AFDA's curricular ambitions have always been centred on developing a unique cultural voice as counter-hegemony to Hollywood, thus addressing the social and cognitive injustices of the past (Bell-Roberts, 2022). In retrospect, it is clear that, as part of its transformative goals, AFDA unwittingly embraced a politically neutral and more re-humanised approach to the transformation of higher education in terms of its pedagogy and assessment tools

(Freire, 1993, 1994; Halagao, 2010; Heleta, 2016; Lorde, 2018). The approach caters to the demands made on the 21st century graduate (Dede, 2010), as well as the more participatory and inclusive demands required to decolonise higher education. This process is defined by the framework of South Africa's post-1994 transformation and its focus on social justice (re-humanising), rather than addressing the wide cache of pertinent concerns and political ambitions that ordinarily emerge in conversations centred on the decolonisation discourse (Ammon, 2019; Horstemske, 2004).

Understanding how and where a PHEI like AFDA is vulnerable to both a fast-changing, pluralist global society, and the failures of a post-1994 South Africa to consolidate its new-found democracy, is key for the reader to appreciate the significance of the study. Evidently, both of the above contextual forces simultaneously consolidate challenges and injustices inherited from the past, and create new opportunities for a society to remediate and advance its future. AFDA was established and developed in this particular *zeitgeist* over the last three decades.

Given the competitive nature of the HE sector (Kruss, 2007; Somerville, 2021), AFDA has differentiated itself from traditional university education curriculum and its pedagogic conventions, purposefully and unwittingly advancing its transformative nation building and socio-economic empowerment goals through its curriculum innovation and epistemically disobedient character and spirit. Through the reframing of curriculum innovations and decolonial characteristics under the banner of decolonisation, AFDA's achievements, failures and absences in terms of transformation are brought under a particular spotlight – one which seeks to validate or oppose the significance of its curriculum development and

implementation as the key driver to the achievement of its goals, values and educational promise.

Given the intricacies of curriculum innovation and the need for local and global institutions to attend to greater priorities at a particular time, the subsequent hiatus, paucities and marginalisation of curriculum design and innovation (Barnett & Coate, 2004; de Matos-ala, 2019), it is plausible to re-examine AFDA's curriculum development, as what Barnett and Coate refer to as a *significant act* (2004, p.3). An act which the study asserts contributes to the shifting of the decolonisation of higher education from rhetoric to concrete action.

Further to these significances, the study offers the reader a number of unique perspectives on decolonisation of HE institutions, which include the daily challenges and opportunities an independently owned, for-profit, private institution (1994-2017) and publically listed (2018-present) South African HE entity, offering niche qualifications in the creative economy and operating in extreme local contexts (Presti & Sabatano, 2018). These daily challenges and opportunities are viewed through AFDA's centrally controlled, multi-regional campus structure, and the institution's need to future-proof itself for the global and local rigours of 21 st century HE (Dede, 2010).

1.9 The methodology (paradigm), research methods, and the study's overall goal and key argument

As a means of determining whether AFDA as a South African PHEI, has contributed towards the shifting of the decolonisation agenda from rhetoric to

concrete action, the study adopts various post-modernist (Lyotard, 1979), post-colonial (Fanon, 1963; Said, 1975), and post-positivist theoretical frameworks (Panwar et al., 2017) to support the situated nature of the study. These various *post-frameworks* have much in common, especially in terms of their contrarian stance towards the traditional positivist research principles of rationality, orderliness and determinism (Abaszadeh et al., 2020; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). The latter traditionally informs the ontologies and epistemologies of the imperial, colonial and apartheid eras. The environments, agents and elements which inform post-positivism are aligned with post-modernist (Lyotard, 1979) and complexity theories (Morrison, 2006), where characteristics of "non-linearity, unpredictability, feedback sensitivity and co-evolution prevail" (Abaszadeh et al., 2020, p. 53). These, in turn, are inextricably aligned with the uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity of Barnett's super-complexity (Barnett, 2020; Bengsten, 2018), to meet the traditional challenges of incremental change, as well as the consequences of exponential change – an unprecedented phenomenon that impacts on every aspect of how people live, work and learn (Goldin & Kutarna, 2016).

As part of a response to the healing process , the study employs an interpretative approach that headlines the responses (Creamer, 2011; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993) of 89 volunteer AFDA teaching faculty, students and alumni volunteers. The participants' responses to the questionnaire and two focus groups allows for a "multi-voiced text" to emerge and headline the findings of the study (Creamer, 2011, p.368). The front-lining of multi-voiced perspectives contributes to the authenticity of the study and its participative and inclusive requirements to validate and oppose AFDA's decolonial achievements, absences and failures.

As a key aspect of the research process and its findings, the study acknowledges the entanglement of the ontological and epistemological nature of the reality of the existing beliefs (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012; Mbembe, 2015), which together with the cognisance of local contexts and global forces, impacts on the study and the responses of its participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The entanglement of these two has further accounted for the situated nature of knowledge in an interpersonal relationship (Bukamal, 2022), and impacts on the reading, reflection and orientation of the responses (of the research participants) within the stated contexts. In so doing, providing an interpretative tool for the subjectivity-objectivity of the researcher – and by extension, offering the reader an opportunity to draw their own conclusions (Creamer, 2011; Schneider, 1991; Wolf, 1992).

The study adopted a pragmatic-idealist spirit (Senge, 2006), using a mixed-methods approach and a holistic, singular-case study (see Chapter 3) in a situated context (Berthoff, 1990; Creswell, 2009; Galdon et al., 2019). In terms of defining its stance on decolonising HE and the curriculum, the study chose a politically neutral approach, which engages with various principles of decolonisation that focus on the restoration of human dignity through the concept of 'humanising the dehumanised' (Freire, 1993, 1994; Giroux, 1983; Halagao, 2010; Hartman, 1997; Heleta, 2016; Lorde, 2018; Wa Thiong'o, 1986).

The initial motivation to find ways of defusing the risk of student protest contagion, and the need to ensure that AFDA is recognised as a reputable, progressive and generative HE organisation with epistemically disobedient qualities,

lies at the heart of the research study's key argument: Is it possible for a PHEI like AFDA, to go beyond the existing rhetoric of the decolonisation of HE and curriculum and failed declarations, to propose an alternate, generative (concrete) case study of an institution that has practised transformative curriculum innovation and epitemically disobedient strategies that are counter-colonial and designed to transform the society and empower its graduates? Has AFDAs transformative and socio-economically empowering ambitions of its overall goal (see p.12), socio-constructive liberationist curriculum, shared values and indigent Khoisan motto Sada tanisen, gera kura da (our actions create us), contributed to the shifting of the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to concrete? If affirmative, the study, through the interpretation of the participants' responses and various HE and decolonisation theories, seeks to generate various themes and sub-themes to identify the failures, absences and successes over the last three decades, to draw various conclusions that may be useful to the actualisation of the broader decolonisation of HE conversation in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review primarily serves to provide the reader with the necessary theories and perspectives on the key external and internal forces that impact on the situatedness (Bertoff, 1990) of the holistic case study (Yin, 2003). Further, it serves to elucidate, validate and recognise certain issues that are impacted on by the broader paradigm and theories used by the study. The literature review, together with the genesis and motivation for the study (see Chapter 1), similarly contributes to the theoretical support for the subjective-objective perspective of the insider-researcher's argument.

To effectively respond to the title of the research study, numerous theoretical understandings are required to weigh the pros and cons of the argument proposed by the study, especially in terms of the global and situated forces, which impact on South Africa's higher education (HE) in a post-modernist, post-colonial 21st century world. Together with the impact of the geo-political shifts in the global economic power, growing populations, literacy and migration patterns, a dynamic but disruptive 21st century presents numerous challenges to higher education today and in the future, particularly in terms of the decolonisation of its HE institutions and curriculum (Goldin & Kutarna, 2016).

The broad description of the impact of the dominant global forces on higher education allows the reader to contextualise the extreme contextual challenges and

opportunities that HE in South Africa faces on a daily basis. It is here where the challenge of transforming their HE sectors to meet the social justice and cognitive justice (Leibowitz, 2017) needs of post-1994 South Africa has the unenviable task of also having to ensure that their graduates are able to compete in the competitive global vocational and skills market (Dede, 2010; Singularity, 2017). This particular dilemma is compromised by South Africa's failure to transform the socioeconomic conditions of the majority of its population, thus contributing significantly to the failure of South Africa's primary and secondary education sector to provide an equal education for all HESA, 2014; Webbstock & Fisher, 2016).

Once an understanding of the distinctiveness of the complexities and challenges of academic and institutional curriculum is in place, the literature review provides the reader with various existing definitions and theories of decolonisation. The study acknowledges the existence of a wide range of post-colonial decolonisation revolutionaries, theorists and educationalists that range over a diverse span of time and space that colonialism and decolonisation have impacted on civilisation. It, however, chooses to adopt a view of decolonisation, which focuses on a transformative educational lens, and one which empowers individuals through the 'humanisation of the dehumanised' as espoused by Fanon (1963), Freire (1993, 1994), Halagao (2010), Lorde (2018) and others. Similarly, Mignolo's (2007, 2009) counter- colonial epistemic disobedience, forms part of the study's decolonial framework as a means of scaling and centring for the Global South knowledge that is competitive and critical of the Global North. This is an approach that seeks to enlarge the production of knowledge within a particular context, and chooses, where and

when appropriate, to centre local knowledge and place the existing knowledge hegemonies on the periphery (Mbembe, 2016; Monathunga, 2018).

Given the above failures, challenges, hegemonies and opportunities that exist for the decolonisation of HE in South Africa, the literarture review examines the role of the HE curriculum, its diverse definitions, purpose and contestations. For the purpose of the study, the concept 'curriculum' is divided into the academic and institutional curriculum. What becomes evident is that existing and competing hegemonies contending within university structures limit radical ideas like the decolonisation of HE and its curriculum (Jansen & Walters, 2022). Similarly, the paucity of research on curricula and their design, both locally and globally, is understood to be hamstrung by greater priorities and this is confined by the rigidity of the long-standing university discipline structures and their experts (Barnett, 2000; Barnett & Coate, 2004; Keet, 2016).

The review further demonstrates the rise of private higher education in post-1994 South Africa, a phenomenon which has not reached the absorption rate average of its global counterparts (percentage), but which has nonetheless benefited from the failure of the country's universities to absorb the large numbers of students who qualify to enter a university and acquire a degree qualification. Ammon (2019), Ellis and Steyn (2011), Kruss (2007), Singh and Tustin (2022) and Somerville (2021) concur on the ongoing challenges PHEIs face, including South Africa's stringent labour and accreditation processes, and the stereotyping of private providers being academically diluted, expensive and elitist. Similarly, the negation of the role PHEIs play in providing an alternative, more personal, student-led learning and teaching

experience that focuses on sector-specific skills and employability (Krus, 2007; Singh & Tustin, 2022; Somerville, 2021).

2.2 Global forces impacting on higher education in South Africa

In a globalised world driven by the disruptive nature of exponentially advancing technology (Goldin & Kutarna, 2016; Morrison, 2006; Siemens, 2005; Singularity, 2017), the 21st century society is experiencing a tectonic shift from a static, modernist, and analogue society (governed by the rational-logic of the Age of Enlightenment), to a dynamic post-modernist, non–linear and plural society (Albrechts, 2016; Lyotard, 1979). As academic proprietorship and traditional privilege boundaries in higher education are eroded (Matus & McCarthy, 2008), new expectations arise from the changing market demands and needs, forcing HE to re-imagine how it will remain relevant in the 21 st century (Dede, 2010).

Globally, higher education is undergoing several fundamental changes, as it attempts to counter the pending obsolescence of the 'golden era' of universities (Altbach, 2013; Altmann & Ebersberger, 2013; Barnett, 2000). It further faces the growth of web-based learning and the exponential advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) (Lanvier, 2014). Together with the impact of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), an advancing reliance on technology is evident (du Plessis et al., 2022; Wangenge-Ouma, 2021), challenging higher education to adapt to the required attributes of the 21st century graduate in an unprecedented fashion (Dede, 2010).

The lingering effects of imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, and neo-liberalism, with their attendant epistemologies, ontologies, hierarchies, and hegemonies, continue to perpetuate colonial-apartheid inequalities and discrimination (Altbach, 2013; Chasi, 2020; Mbembe, 2016; Vorster & Quinn, 2017). These occur in HE in various guises, including the state shifting its financial burden onto the public sector (Scott et al., 2007), the privileging of privatisation, and the strict financial management of higher education institutions (Singh & Tustin, 2022). Neo-liberal and neo-colonial tendencies also continue to erode national identities by reducing local languages and culture, to perpetuate the ongoing and homogenising effect of the global capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Smith, 2008), whilst still maintaining the existing hegemony.

Nevertheless, a growing challenge to the existing global hegemonies posed by the rise of Asia, Africa, and South America, and the shift in global geopolitical and economic power dynamics, cannot go unnoticed (Goldin & Kutarna, 2016). So too, the shifts in migratory patterns, urbanisation, and literacy levels across the globe have increased the demand for access to learning (Altbach, 2007; Barnett, 2000; Singh & Tustin, 2022). The effects include a sizeable shift in the traditional demographics of the student body in universities and HE today (Barnett, 2000, 2009; Kruss, 2007; HESA, 2014; Webbstock & Fisher, 2016). The growing demand for higher education and the possibilities created by exponentially advancing access to technology, has led to an ever-increasing proliferation of epistemological shifts through images, texts, and ideas actively engaging with a broader and more diverse constituency and online grassroots society (Jenkins, 2006). The result is a spatially shrinking and borderless society that assimilates multiple inputs of previously

unvoiced discourses, subjectivities, identities, cultures, desires, and needs (Smith, 2008), all of which have the capacity to be speedily transmitted across the globe (Koolhaus et al., 2001).

2.3 Higher education in post-1994 South Africa

Aligned and coinciding with the global shifts and challenges, the political, social, and economic contexts that demonstrate risk, disruption, and unique challenges (especially if prevalent and or coinciding), represent an extreme context that goes beyond the capacity of organisations to meet these challenges in a sustained fashion (Hällgren et al., 2017; Hannah et al., 2009). South African HEIs face the impact of the global uncertainty, complexity and the ambiguities of the 21st century, as well as being subject to the ongoing risk of the South African society's inability to transform itself (Vorster & Quinn, 2017). The growing challenges of poverty and unemployment (Bona, 2018; Budlender et al., 2020), endemic corruption, poverty, and political fragmentation (Cele, 2023; Habib, 2019) continue to compromise higher education in South Africa and the ever-present threat of daily protest (Lancaster & Mulaudzi, 2021).

Extreme contexts, as found in South Africa, require unique responses, behaviour, and insights (that are not necessarily found in traditional contexts) (Hällgren et al., 2017; Hannah et al., 2009). Whether public or private, in striving to meet the local and global challenges of the 21st century (Bending, 1996; Mabofua, 2020), each higher education institution’s context has its own unique character and capacity to mitigate the further perpetuation of inequality and discriminatory practices. It is this particular premise that frames AFDA’s politically neutral, hopeful

and pragmatic idealism, as a key aspect of the study's post-positivist nature (Abaszadeh et al., 2009; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984).

Given the duality of the local (extreme) and global contexts, the question arises whether it is possible for South Africa to meet the challenge of addressing both the qualification and skills demand of the highly competitive 21st century workplace, as well as the onerous and well-documented post-1994 higher education in "pursuit of equality, democracy, and social justice" (Singh & Tustin, 2022, p. 22). While the South African education sector has most notably succeeded in widening access to higher education for historically disadvantaged individuals (HESA, 2014; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019; Webbstock & Fisher, 2016), the statistics are significantly lower than the 73.6 percent gross enrolment ratio (GER) of OECD countries (OECD, 2018). The stated ratio of South Africa's national GER, has shifted from 17 percent in 1994 to the current 25 percent, which falls short of a 30 percent GER forecast for 2025 and anticipates the enrolment of approximately 600 000 new students into HE by 2030 (Hadley, 2019; Figure 2.1: The prospects and challenges for PHEIs in South Africa). The projected capacity shortfall of universities to absorb the increasing numbers of qualifying matriculation certificate learners into a degree course (as their preferred choice over diplomas and certificate training),the low throughput rates, extended degree completion windows, and the lack of equitable representation of Black academics in teaching faculties and leadership, remains a challenge for HE (HESA, 2018; Kruss, 2007; Somerville, 2021; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019; Vorster & Quinn, 2017. Further to these views, the failure of primary and secondary education remains among the chief culprits for the challenges facing universities in South Africa (Chetty et al.,

2015; de Matos-Ala, 2019; Habib, 2019; Jansen, 2018; Le Grange, 2019; Shaik, 2020).

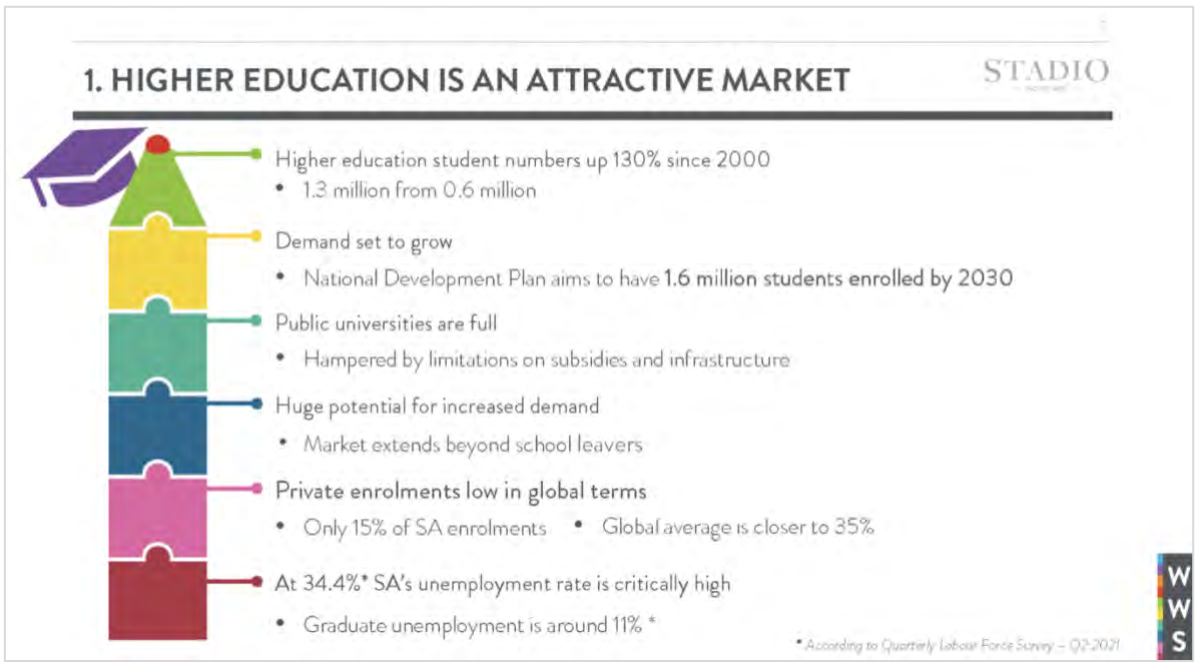
South Africa's failing socioeconomic conditions and the lack of capacity of the nine comprehensive universities (academic and vocational), six technical universities, and eleven historically White universities to absorb the ever-increasing demand for those qualifying to enter HE and the negative perceptions of the dwindling academic standards, has opened numerous opportunities and growth prospects for PHEIs (Ammon, 2019; Kruss, 2007; Sing & Tustin, 2022; Somerville, 2021).

2.3.1 Private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in South Africa (post 1994)

The private higher education sector is one of the fastest-growing, heterogenous and diverse sectors (Altbach, 2007, 2013; Tilak, 1992), where 33 percent of the 57 million global students are enrolled in PHEIs (Levy, 2018a; Somerville, 2021). Independent for-profit (PHEIs) are relatively new to the post-1994 South African HE landscape (HESA, 2014). They, too, are part of the global growth experienced by PHEIs and form approximately 15 percentage of South Africa's 1.2 million post-secondary school students (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2016; Somerville, 2021). Figure 2.1 below further illustrates the prospects and challenges for PHEIs in South Africa today, and includes the absorption demand from the market beyond the capacity of universities due to the massification of higher education (Kruss, 2007; Somerville, 2021; Tankou et al., 2019), as well as the negative consequences of South Africa’s high unemployment rate of 34 percent , compared to the unemployment rate

of its graduates which stands at 11 percent. The potential for PHE is therefore significant in South Africa, and a 104 percent growth between 2010 and 2017, compared to the growth of state university numbers (16 percent), is significant (DHET, 2019a; Somerville, 2021). The growth, nevertheless, lags behind other developing countries, where PHEIs accommodate three times more enrolments than South Africa (37 percent). In countries such as Brazil, 71 percent (2012) and Chile, 84 percent (2013) of students are enrolled in PHEIs (Singh & Tullis, 2022, cited in Bothwell, 2018).

Figure 2.1: The prospects and challenges for PHEIs in South Africa



Source: Hadley (2019)

PHEIs offer students alternate and portable degree credentials (Kruss, 2007), with a focus on specific vocational skills needed to meet the needs of any given sector (Bennasconi, 2006; Tankou et al., 2019). While they outnumber state universities (133 institutions), PHEIs' student enrolments (185 000) are significantly smaller. In

certain cases, they are sometimes perceived to surpass standards in certain disciplines of public institutions (Somerville, 2021). PHEIs form a range of heterogenous, independent and non-state higher education providers, and do not necessarily conform to the elitist stereotype accorded to PHEIs in South Africa (Kruss, 2007; Somerville, 2021). Although many of their challenges replicate those of State institutions, it would appear that the public comprehensive and technical universities in South Africa tend to have similar issues regarding their status and resources, when compared to the eleven historically White universities (Meda et al., 2019).

Due to their recent (1994) entry into the higher education landscape, PHEIs, compared to state universities in South Africa, do not carry the colonial burden of centuries-old colonial knowledge hegemonies. Private providers of higher education are, by definition of their size and student numbers, more nimble than their State-owned counterparts. They do not necessarily have the limitations of their traditional and hierarchical structures in terms of dealing with the concept of the unexpected and radical impact of decolonisation (Jansen & Walters, 2022). Although many PHEIs rely on existing or re-purposed curricula and syllabi, they attract a diverse student population. In many instances, PHEIs, including AFDA, offer student-centric outcomes based on practical modes of learning that have transformative learning characteristics and transformative outcomes that align (albeit commercially), with socio-constructive liberationist curricular attributes (Freire, 1993, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978).

Higher education academics and theorists nevertheless continue to hold stereotypical views of private higher education, maintaining that these institutions are elitist, exploitative, and offer graduates diluted academic outcomes (Auerbach & Dlamini, 2019; HESA, 2014; Le Grange, 2009). Certain stereotypical attacks on PHEIs see privatisation as a force that is "transforming it [HE] into a horrifyingly efficient and prosperous business enterprise" by putting profit before people (Lange, 2019, p. 67). Many academics, like the Minister of Higher Education (2009- present) and the former Head of the South African Communist Party (1998-2022), Dr Blade Nzimande, uphold a socialist leaning towards education, which is *incompatible* with the capitalist notion of profit (Somerville, 2021). Accusations levelled against PHEIs include putting brand loyalty and value before relevance and commitment to a socio-political cause (Lange, 2019). Similarly, Leibowitz (2017) asserts that the profit-first mission of PHEIs is responsible for epistemological discord without objectivity. The root cause of these negative perceptions is often the result of the so-called fly-by-night HEIs that pervaded the South African HE sector post-1994 (Ellis & Steyn, 2014).

South African PHEIs face some of the world's most costly labour and stringent educational regulatory frameworks (Ellis & Steyn, 2014). This is primarily due to insufficient personnel and resources to deal with the high demand for accreditation and monitoring by the various regulatory authorities (Webbstock & Fisher, 2016). As a result, extended turnaround and delayed formal responses, high accreditation costs and the resources required to capitalise growth, all add to the high risk of registering new qualifications or learning sites (Stander & Herman, 2017). Whilst conforming to these stringent accreditation requirements and beyond what public universities are

required to do, PHEIs are not given university status – a key factor in a highly competitive school-leaver market, which generally prefers the status of a university; neither do PHEIs benefit from alternative sources of state-owned financial revenue (Singh & Tustin, 2022) required to sustain the institution beyond the annual budgetary allowances and capital investment required for growth. They rely on annual student fees as their primary source of income (HESA, 2014; Singh & Tustin, 2022). PHEIs are not eligible for State subsidies and funding from the National Student Funding Scheme (NSFS). Similarly, they rarely source significant additional revenue from corporate sponsorship, private endowments, and campus resource development capital (Singh & Tustin, 2022). Therefore, it is difficult to deny the fact that universities today, much to the indignation of many traditional academics, are commercially corporatised, line-managed and run on budgets and the need for increased revenues in order to maintain and develop their reputation (Ellis & Steyn, 2011; Tankou et al., 2019). Similarly, in a commercially driven society, many universities have adopted a corporate arm which, although aligned to the university in name, is largely commercial and inclined towards profit-making (Somerville, 2021).

The prevailing scepticism towards PHEIs by scholars contributes to the negative perceptions of PHEIs in the public domain, without offering insight or context into the commercial and moral challenges facing PHEIs (Lange, 2019; Le Grange, 2009). The negative stereotype works to the detriment of PHEIs in a highly contested market, competing for prospective students, and negating the status and role that PHEIs play, especially in broadening access to HE where the state cannot absorb the demand for students (Ellis & Steyn, 2014; Singh & Tustin, 2022). PHEIs

rely on their reputation and marketing for them to attract an ever-vacillating number of enrolments that determine the annual budget spend and capitalisation of the institution (based solely on student fees). If not strictly monitored and frugal, this could threaten the existence of the institution.

Besides providing part of the solution to the state's inability to meet the absorption demand for higher education in South Africa (HESA, 2014), a PHEI like AFDA offers alternate enrolment access for learners, particularly those who do not meet the minimum or required entry requirements to register for a degree qualification (Bell-Roberts, 2022). Similarly, they offer alternate qualifications in both niche and broad fields in the creative industries and in business innovation (AFDA On-boarding for Teaching Staff, Section C, 2020). In so doing, slowly developing perceptions that formally accredited PHEIs are an alternative option, with more flexible and innovative learning approaches fixed on skills and employability (Brink, 2010, p. 259, as cited in Kele & Mzilen, 2021; Ellis & Steyn, 2014; Somerville, 2021).

If AFDA were to extend its decolonisation efforts beyond its epistemic disobediences and curriculum innovation, a number of questions would arise in terms of the capital required to pursue this agenda. Unlike State universities, numerous commercial realities exist for PHEIs in terms of recapitalising the decolonisation of higher education as recommended by Mbembe (2019, citing Hountondji, 2008). PHEIs cannot match the same decolonisation and welfare demands such as after-hours transport, health services, funeral costs, feeding schemes, counselling and other material costs (Jansen, 2017) to match their public

counterparts. PHEIs, more often than not, have to find new ways of meeting their social and learning responsibilities through alternate and mostly frugal approaches. These are likely to be focused on prioritising student satisfaction, their acquisition of tangible skills, practical outcomes and increased prospects of employability (Ellis & Steyn, 2014; Singh & Tustin, 2022).

Central to the consideration of the unseen commercial disadvantages of PHEIs is Houtandji's (2008) recommendation meant to ensure the financing of the (re) capitalisation of decolonisation to meet Africa's intellectual and material needs, thus offering a competitive counter-hegemony to the existing dominance of the global North (Mbembe, 2019). The recapitalisation of the decolonisation process is not necessarily a key aspect of the public debate. However, it is key to the battle of ideas and the forces shaping the commercial decisions that contribute to the realisation of their decolonial ambitions. Luckett and Shay (2017) allude to the redistribution of resources as part of the transformation imperatives of universities beyond the affirmative, especially in funding the resources and facilities needed to provide recognition and representation for students in curriculum, and its delivery for those historically excluded from these curriculum transformative imperatives.

2.3.2 Private higher education, multi-regional campus institutional structures

Private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in South Africa are made of what Somerville (2021) describes as religious, cultural and identity-based, elite, semi -elite and non-elite institutions. AFDA falls into the semi-elite category, just like many South African private, for-profit institutions, where the student body

comprises previously privileged and newly entitled students (Somerville, 2021). Although AFDA was independently started and owned by its two founders between 1994 and 2017, it currently falls under the ownership of Stadio Higher Education , one of South Africa's largest education groups listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

PHEIs are faced with a specific dilemma in terms of expanding their businesses through additional academic qualification offers to the market. This is largely due to the high financial risks and stringent accreditation processes (Groenwald, 2018; Nel, 2007) of the Council of Higher Education (CHE), South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), Department of Education (DoE) and the Higher Education Standards Authority (HESA). Although anecdotal and based on AFDA's experience over the years (1994-current), expansion through opening regional campuses is less risky than developing a broader range of undergraduate programmes on a single site. Nevertheless, expansion either way, poses several challenges in terms of capitalisation and restrictions imposed by the various accreditation authorities listed above.

Multi-campus HE worldwide has many definitions and classifications, which identify its structures, modes of operation, and teaching and learning (Davison & Ou, 2018; Groenwald, 2018; Harrison et al., 2010; Nel, 2007). AFDA is a private, listed, for-profit, multi-regional institution that is managed through a central autonomy to provide purposeful or niche teaching and learning opportunities. Multi-regional campuses are required by the CHE, as these campus sites have no choice but to offer accredited programmes held by the 'mother campus' which, in the case of AFDA, is

the Johannesburg campus (Bell-Roberts, 2022). Programme parity in the content, quality of learning, equipment and resources on regional campus sites is strictly regulated by the CHE. AFDA's classification as a multi-campus institution forms a critical aspect in terms of understanding the key contexts of the research study (Baxter & Jack, 2008), providing insights into AFDA's transformational ambitions inside and outside of the political and socio-economic agenda and the dominant decolonisation narrative of South Africa's public universities.

Multi-regional campuses offer PHEIs opportunities to expand their businesses and ensure sustainability by offering access to their unique learning brand to prospective students in smaller cities. The development of these campuses also contributes to greater cultural diversity in its staff and students and facilitates and allows for the sharing of intellectual capital and central resources (Davison & Ou, 2018; Groenwald, 2018; Harrison et al., 2010; Nel, 2007). Multi-regional campus structures do, however, have several distinct challenges. While these are not exclusive to multi-regional campus structures, they include boundaries of autonomy and compliance (especially where smaller and newer campuses feel alienated owing to the distance between itself and the central autonomy), feelings of inferiority in resource allocations, and communication breakdowns between themselves and the central autonomy (Groenwald, 2018; Nel, 2007).

With ineffective leadership and poor communication between the centralised autonomy and the regional campuses, issues like standardisation of policies, the curriculum, and institutional culture can result in campus drift and feral practices. Work-around strategies (visible and invisible), faculty and student resistance or

apathy may prevail, contributing to the dilution of the goals of institutions and their need to have learning and teaching parity (Harrison et al., 2010). Further to this issue, multi-regional campuses often deal with a paucity of leadership, faculty, management, and administrative talent in their particular regions, as well as a lack in industrial presence and experts related to the qualifications offered by the institution (Stander & Herman, 2017; Nel, 2007; Groenwald, 2018). These are essential considerations to bear in mind as far as the AFDA case study is concerned, particularly in terms of AFDA's transformational ambitions both within and outside of the hegemonies of the decolonisation narrative of South African public universities.

2.4 Higher education curriculum

As a dynamic and contested construct, a curriculum has substantial political, economic, and social issues at the heart of its design, particularly in terms of balancing situated nation-state ambitions and the effect of global demands on society (Jansen, 2019; Matus & McCarthy, 2008; Pinar, 2003; Smith, 2008). In many instances, government policy, regulations, national concerns, and responsiveness to national priorities determine the design of higher education curricula (Pinar, 2003). The influence of curriculum design can either positively or negatively impact nation-states, depending on the capacity of institutions to execute the curriculum goals and objectives as intended by curricular design. Similarly, unintended consequences often accompany the rational intentions of curricular design and systems (Galdon et al., 2019).

The academic curriculum is one of the critical drivers of the ambitions, goals, teaching philosophy and pedagogic ideologies of most higher education institutions. It serves as a vital tool to ensure cognitive justice. Pinar's (2003) concept of *potentia* and Le Grange's (2019) view on engaging the past, present and future as part of the decolonisation of knowledge processes, provides certain insights into the scaling of knowledge in the context of the Global South which, together with strategies of attaining social justice, contributes significantly to the transformation of higher education institutions (Leibowitz, 2017; Manathunga, 2018; McCaffery, 2010; Schunk, 2012).

As such, the curriculum is a highly contested concept, and a practice inextricably lodged in a range of power battles that traverse contrary political, social, and or economic agendas (Jansen, 2017; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni, 2019). While multiple interpretations and definitions of the curriculum exist, the study adopts Barnett and Coate's (2004, p.5) interpretation which, by their admission, offers a simple definition as part definition and part delineation, "Curriculum is a set of educational experiences organised more or less deliberately, and pedagogy is concerned with acts of teaching that bring off the curriculum". They, too, offer a more encompassing definition of curriculum in HE, which allows for the broad church of meanings given the innate intricacies associated with curriculum (de Matos-Ala, 2019). Similarly, according to Webster and Ryan (2014, p. 429), its existential and humane character is emotionally and politically loaded and serves " as a pedagogic vehicle for effecting changes in human beings through a particular encounter with knowledge ". Given the above definition, the sensitivities and

complexities of curricula reform in the post-994 South Africa cannot be underestimated.

Webster and Ryan (2014) assert that the higher education curriculum in a post-colonial world is a dynamic space where the curriculum designer can bring something new into being. These modes and forms of consciousness and decision-making are critical in understanding the underlying risk in curriculum design and the traditional longevity associated with its hiatus and lifespan (de Matos – Ala, 2019). In attempting to determine what to put in, or what to leave out in terms of balancing the competing needs of the curriculum, it is not difficult to realise that in the process, the curricul will inevitably ground, validate or marginalise some, but not others, in the determination of its design and implementation. Ultimately, the decolonisation of curricula must look at other 'W' questions such as: "Who is doing it? Where? And How?" (Shahjahan et al., 2021;Walsh & Mignolo, 2018, p. 108).

In order to foster life-extended, self-regulated, learner-led learning that empowers and transforms learners, global trends in HE demonstrate the following: an explicit focus on skill competencies embedded in the curriculum (critical thinking, collaboration, goal setting, good citizenship, creativity, and communication); character qualities (like curiosity, initiative, resilience, flexibility, social and cultural awareness) and literacy like reading, writing, use of ICT and civic responsibility (Dede, 2010; Fullan & Scott, 2014; Iversen et al., 2015; Silva, 2009; Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

For the study, an institution's academic curriculum and organisational culture (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2007) are divided into two distinct but integrated parts to meet the challenges of the interconnected character of intellectualism (academic curriculum) and institutionalisation (organisational culture) as defined by Pinar (2003). Although they are different entities, the distinction between the academic curriculum and the organisational culture does not mean they exist in a vacuum. They are inextricably entangled, dependent on and dictate to each other (de Matos – Ala, 2019).

Similarly, separating the two does not rank one above the other, but rather facilitates a more focused approach to the critical elements considered in achieving the institution's ambitions. As pedagogy serves the curriculum (Barnett & Coate, 2004), so too, the institutional or organisational culture serves the academic curriculum (including its attendant pedagogic delivery of the various qualifications). In so doing, this enables the provisioning of the monitoring and management of the institution's goals, values, traditions, ceremonies, human resources, reputation, and relationships, as well as the daily administrative and financial operations (Le Grange, 2019).

In the case of the decolonisation of the academic curriculum, a focus on cognitive justice (Leibowitz, 2017) prevails as an explicit and generative tool designed to expedite transformation. In the case of the institution's organisational culture, the focus is not necessarily on theoretical or academic demands, but rather on providing social justice through a strategic pursuit of its goals and the day-to-day pragmatics required to ensure and preserve the institution's reputation and

sustainability (Furlong & Cartmel, 2009). While institutions often have good intentions to act morally and ethically to provide meaningful teaching and learning experiences for all stakeholders, they are prone to harmful, discriminatory, and other social improprieties. In HE, this is sometimes the case where a hidden curriculum exists, inculcating silent or implicit values, behaviours, and norms in the educational setting (Alsubaie, 2015). The academic curriculum and organisational culture articulate and represent attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours which are inevitably transferred or passed down without conscious awareness (Alsubaie, 2015; Jerald, 2006).

As is the case with AFDA and other South African universities, the institution's organisational culture and its academic curriculum, consciously and unwittingly perpetuate historically accepted values, norms, practices, and hierarchies that retain aspects of their colonial-apartheid tendencies (Heleta, 2016; Le Grange, 2019). These inevitably contribute to the day-to-day on-campus micro-aggressions on South African university campuses, which include both explicit and implicit acts of White authority, toxic masculinity, identity, race, and other forms of discriminatory behaviour (Brookfield, 2020; Kanai & Gill, 2020; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Velasco, 2020). As the Vice Chancellor from 2008 to 2018, Max Price (2023) concurs with the above notions, and alludes to the numerous decolonisation dilemmas facing the University of Cape Town (UCT) at the time of the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protests, where institutional inequalities, neutral and or unconscious bias towards Black students were largely normalised due to certain complacency.

These local and global contextual factors, in one way or another, contribute to the intricacies of curriculum innovation and change (de Matos– Ala, 2019), which inevitably lead to the experienced hiatus or absence of curriculum change from one curriculum to another. In so doing, this unwittingly and purposefully supports the concept of the resilience of colonialism and the dominant knowledge, that is, epistemological and ontological hegemonies of the Global North (Hoppers, 2009; Manuthunga, 2018; Parker, 2019).

2.5 Understanding decolonisation

As a global phenomenon, the colonisation and decolonisation processes largely follow the traditions of colonial, post-colonial, and decolonial theories. These theoretical traditions are characterised by the revolutionary voices of the early post-colonial theorists and activists like Aime Cesaire (1955), Albert Memmi (1957), Frantz Fanon (1963), and Edward Said (1978). The theories and narratives emanating from these early post-colonial voices were influenced by the internal and external forces situated in a particular context in history (Gordon, 1985; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Given the vast landscape of time and space traversed by colonialism, many interpretations and experiences of colonialism exist. It is accepted that colonialism is primarily expedited through European subjugation of the land, resources, culture, ontologies, and epistemologies of various nationalities, communities, and groupings systematically and haphazardly exploited, purged, assimilated or belittled in the name of progress and modernisation (Altbach, 2007; Fanon, 1963; Hopper, 2009; Lingard, 2009; Memmi, 1955; Said, 1978; Soudien, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

For wa Thoing'o (1986), decolonisation is not the endpoint, but the beginning of a new struggle, a process of transparently seeing ourselves as the colonised and acknowledging that the modern West is neither the centre of African consciousness and cultural heritage, nor an extension of Europe. Chilisa (2012) concurs that decolonisation is not an event, but rather a process to challenge a contemporary world context, which does not necessarily mean or involve destruction (Chilisa, 2012; Le Grange, 2009), an approach that heeds Fanon's caveat against the retrogressive de-Westernisation of knowledge in the Global North (Molefe & Asanti, 1993, as cited in Matus & McCarthy, 2008). Essentially, this is a more dynamic view of decolonisation, which is consistent with its disruptive and resistant characteristics that oppose and challenge traditionally dominant orthodoxies in a particular context rather than a generalised fashion (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Decolonisation ultimately means different things for different people in different contexts (Jansen, 2017; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni, 2018; Vorster & Quinn, 2017), which includes being an antidote to colonialism in a society that increasingly questions the dominance of the Western experience (Heleta, 2016; Moyo, 2020). These contested concepts and diverse experiences for the settler and the colonised, provide a sensitive and complex terrain for society to meet the challenges and opportunities in terms of redressing the brutal consequences of colonisation through decolonisation (Halagao, 2010). It remains a sensitive and misunderstood concept that has become a global buzzword (Chasi, 2020; Shahjahan et al., 2021).

The key to unlocking the consequences of colonisation requires an acknowledgement of the geopolitical struggles over knowledge and the colonial

mentality (Biko, 2004; Mbembe, 2016; Mignolo, 2009). The dependency and fervour for the colonial master's language, his culture, the denigration of oneself and aspiring to be like the coloniser, appear to be critical aspects of the colonial conditions (Biko, 2004; Fanon, 1963; Freire, 1994; Halagao, 2010; Mbembe, 2019). The dominance, limitations and exhaustion of the global North's Cartesian – Newtonian-based scientific hegemony, whose historically subjugated, excluded or trivialised global South knowledge (Hopper, 2009; Lingard, 2009), is a well-acknowledged reality, especially regarding the challenges facing the decolonisation of knowledge and its production environments. One of the many challenges decolonisation creates is its tendency to "superficially graft" itself to challenges of social justice outside the domain of HE, and inevitable entanglement tendency to obstuficate the issues at hand (Benatar, 2021; Tuck & Yang, 2012). The decolonisation conversation is a complex, often subjective, and emotionally charged counter-hegemonic concept that remains an unresolved and ongoing challenge for HE across the globe (Swain, 2019).

2.5.1 View of decolonisation adopted by the study

The study acknowledges the diverse interpretations, contestations, and ranges of decolonisation that have taken place over a protracted period time and diverse contexts. It therefore chooses to adopt a particular view of decolonisation, which it believes is well-suited for the cognitive and social justice aspirations of the research (Leibowitz, 2017; Manathunga, 2018; Mbembe, 2015, 2019) and its idealist-pragmatic approach (Senge, 2006). Fanon (1963), Memmi (1955), Freire (1993, 1994), Lorde (2018), Heleta (2016), Halagao (2010), Ammon (2019), citing Horstemke (2004), and Shahjahan et al. (2021), exemplify the emancipatory empowerment and healing aspects for "the humanising of the dehumanised," as a

fundamental aspect of decolonisation (Halagao, 2010; Moyo, 2020). The study focuses on the development of the socio-economic empowerment of individuals and basic human rights as a means of countering the brutal effect of colonial apartheid (Fanon, 1963; Freire, 1993, 1994; Memmi, 1957).

The re-humanising process essentially calls for the emancipation and empowerment of the previously exploited through their personal actions and remedies (Freire, 1993; 1993; Hartman as cited in New Yorker, 2012; Lorde 1994). This is liberation process in which the *dehumanised* learn or re-learn their history and culture through personal responses to a curriculum and social integration space that promotes self, empathy and emotional development to unite the colonised (Halagao, 2016). In so doing, this develops critical thinking, personal and professional development (Freire, 1993, 1994; Halagao, 2010); this is a process which, in essence, accommodates a more hospital, but counter-colonial acceptance of all forms of knowledge, rather than an approach that seeks to purge or replace existing knowledge. And one that seeks to be transformative through participatory and inclusive processes to foster the enlargement of knowledge (Leibowitz, 2017; Manathunga, 2018).

In the case of the current study, a process that seeks to underwrite the correction and decolonisation of higher education, which by its epistemically disobedient character and re-centring of local knowledge (Mbembe, 2016; Mignolo, 2007;), rallies against the tide in the Global North and its insidious veil of progress, homogeneity, and modernisation (Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni, 2018; Torres, 2011, as cited by Vorster & Quinn, 2019).

2.5.2 The decolonisation of knowledge

Conversations and contestations within the post-colonial knowledge debate are sometimes framed between Dar and Makerere's views of the role of universities in the 1960s and 1970s (Jansen, 2019). While the Dar (es Salaam) school asserts the university's role as a function designed to serve national interests and provide social justice, Makerere views the university as a place of excellence, where academic freedom and the accommodation of universal scholars are prioritised (Jansen, 2019). Africanist and founding father of the Republic of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere described the dilemma facing historically subjugated institutions as the risk associated with mindlessly adhering to imaginary "international standards," which could compromise goals for national growth, as well as the risk associated with making the university turn inward and become more closed off from the outside world (Teffera, 2020).

Chilisa (2012) corroborates the dilemma facing previously subjugated colonies, warning against the internationalisation of indigenous knowledge and its relevance and the inability of previously subjugated colonies to critique Western knowledge or accommodate the local frame of reference in a meaningful way. Internationalisation compromises the validity and integrity of the indigenous culture and knowledge (Chilisa, 2012; Le Grange, 2019). Moorad and Pandey (2017) echo Chilisa's (2012) views, proposing the need to respond to global shifts in higher education without sacrificing the positive aspects of cultural values.

The desire of the excluded minorities and oppressed populations in terms of developing their lost trans-generational capacities through the systemic

deconstruction of Northern knowledge and systematic reconstruction of Southern knowledge (Rose, 2020), is a key aspect of decolonising knowledge and the curriculum (Hoppers, 2009; Leibowitz, 2017; Lingard, 2009; Manathunga, 2018). Key to the reconstruction exercise is a need for dialogue between the South and the North as a means of enlarging knowledge. In so doing, this ensures the scaling of Global South knowledge that is comparative and competitive in relation to Global North knowledge (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012; Leibowitz, 2017, 2018; Manathunga, 2018).

Ngugi wa Thoing'o (1986) and Steve Biko (2004) expressed notions centring on the decolonising of the mind, which are valuable for analysing the relationship between knowledge for the Global North and the Global South, as well as its content, language, issues of race, exploitation, and its subjugation. These notions are affirmed by insistence by Manathunga (2018) and Leibowitz (2017) that scaling comparable knowledge and critique of knowledge hegemonies in the Global North requires dialogue between the two. Halagao's (2010) research of senior Filipino students engaging with post-colonial concepts of migration, alienation, and identity assimilation, demonstrates the transformative and transient power of engaging with the trauma of colonisation in teaching and learning experiences.

In a research project conducted on the Maori minority in New Zealand, Smith (2000), acknowledges the ongoing impact of colonialism in the guise of neo-liberalism. The researcher advocates resorting to a more radical and immersive political consciousness in training and critical thinking process as an antidote; in so doing, offering counter-hegemonies to the ongoing colonisation of HE through its

commodification and privatisation. Immersive political consciousness training, as well as force-coercive strategies (Gordon, 1985; Mirci & Hensley, 2010), is reminiscent of the approach taken by South African student activists to accelerate the decolonisation conversation through creating a national crisis (Jansen, 2017).

The purging of one form of knowledge hegemony is for all intent and purpose, useful for initially addressing the indigenisation and proprietorship of knowledge. Mbembe (2015), Jansen (2019), Le Grange (2019), Lange (2019), and Keet (2019) warn against the trap of Africanisation and a tendency to mythologise Africa as a homogenised culture (Naude, 2019). When occurring, a construct of indigeneity, as pristine and the Global North, may prevail (Jansen, 2017, 2019). A more contemporary approach, as proposed by key educationist and scholars and decolonisation theorists in South African higher education, such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015), Mbembe (2016), Fataar (2018), Manathunga (2018), LeGrange (2019), Soudien (2019) and others, propose a more hospital approach to all knowledge. This approach ensures that a higher education sector that lives in the global shadow of the exponential shifts and changes of the 21st century (Matus & McCarthy, 2008; Mbembe, 2015) is able to re-centre and scale local knowledge and access and make use of Global North knowledge from the periphery (where and when appropriate). Fataar's (2016) advocacy for centring African knowledge or *Africa centredness* corroborates Mbembe's (2015) re-centring claims (2016, 2019). Similarly, it acknowledges Manathunga's (2018) enlargement of knowledge through a more hospital approach by advocating that this can be accomplished by ensuring conceptual relevance in a way that does not conflict with pre-existing logical coherences and notions by utilising both local and global contexts (Fataar, 2018).

2.5.3 Decolonising curriculum

Decolonising the HE curriculum is part of a worldwide call referred to by some scholars as an attack on White curricula (Swain, 2019), and indicates a certain resistance that Global North advocates tend to have towards any interrogation of their existing curricular hegemonies and consequences of colonialism on former colonies. These advocates do not necessarily consider the negative and in many instances, inhumane consequences of colonialism on HE (Heleta, 2016). Similarly, a lack of urgency to transform universities to address the changing higher education landscape, and its new role in the context of the 21st century, where curricular reform and innovation lie in the shadow of global capitalism and the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) (Mbembe, 2019; Parker, 2019; Schwab, 2016). This is an ongoing and dynamic process, which requires the curriculum to constantly meet the needs of the present, while simultaneously attending to its past and future (Moorad & Pandey, 2017).

The recent popularisation of the concept of decolonisation of HE and its curriculum as a buzzword (Le Grange et al., 2020), is consistent with the more significantly raised global consciousness meant to address inequality and discrimination in society and higher education and its curriculum (Altbach, 2007; Kanai & Gill, 2020; Shahjahan et al., 2021). Institutions, activist communities and student movements have identified decolonisation as one of the top-10 trends in terms of influencing transformation (Swain, 2019). United Kingdom-based universities, such as Birmingham University, University of London (The London School of Economics and Political Science), Kingston University, and Cambridge University, are responding by re-assessing curriculum, making programmes more

inclusive and accessible, and allowing students to see themselves reflected in a globally relevant curriculum (Swain, 2019). Despite these efforts and intentions to reform the curriculum, the disparate contexts for HE remains broadly identified across North-West hegemony on one side, and the subjugated Global South on the other (Hopper, 2009; Lingard, 2009). In one way or another, American and European knowledge hegemonies essentially remain the "centre of the universe" (Asante, 1998; Moyo, 2020, p.3).

Numerous perspectives and research concepts dealing with curriculum theory and post-colonial curriculum models exist to facilitate the changing face of higher education in the 21st century (De Kock et al., 2019; Le Grange, 2019; Matus & McCarthy, 2008; Pinar, 2003; Smith, 2008). Conversations and contestations dealing with anti-colonial or counter-hegemony strategies include purging, assimilating, augmenting, re-centring, and centring indigenous knowledge (Jansen, 2017; Lange, 2019; Le Grange, 2019; Mbembe, 2019). All of these form part of a diverse family of valuable perspectives which, in one way or another, rediscover or reconstruct the value of cultural existence and ways of knowing, being and seeing (Autio, 2016; Barnett, 2021; Fataar, 2018; Leibowitz, 2017; Manathunga, 2018; Mbembe, 2016; Roberts, 2016; Sabar & Mathias, 2016; Webster & Ryan, 2019; Williams, 2017).

As mentioned previously, South African HE faces the dual challenge of global shifts in HE, as well as the onerous extent of its post-1994 'extreme' socio-economic context and the subsequent 'designed-to-fail' expectations of a higher education sector built on the fractured foundations of colonialism and apartheid (Von Bever

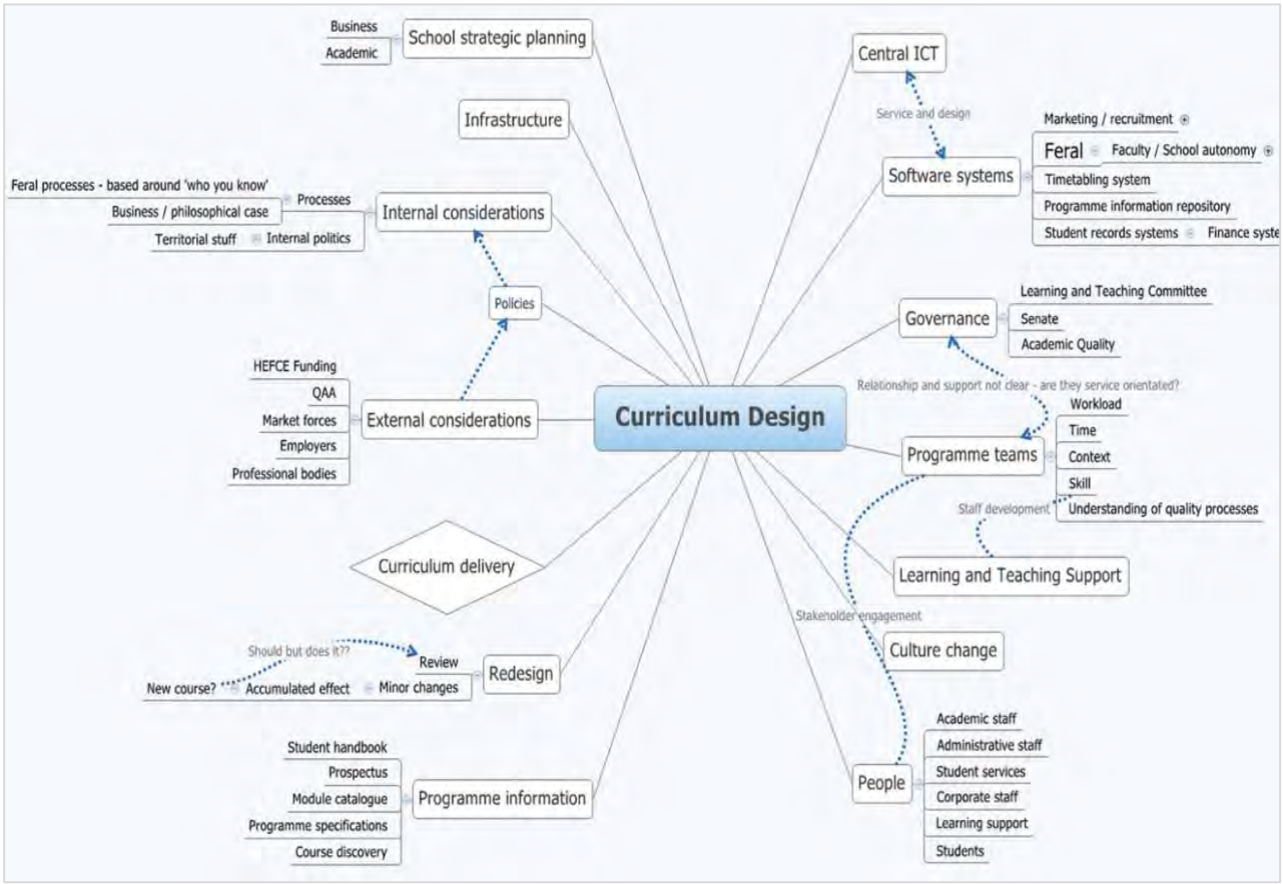
Donker et al., 2017; Voster & Quinn, 2017). These extreme contexts, together with the intricacy of developing new curriculum, or revised academic curriculum alignments *in - situ* (Barnet & Coates, 2004; de Matos– Ala, 2019), are significant challenges that are often overlooked by critics of South Africa's post-1994 HE transformation achievements, absences and failures. They do, however, corroborate Jansen and Walter's (2022) assertion that in practice, the impact of decolonisation on universities, represents a radical concept that cannot be realised nationally by universities due to what they refer to as *the durability of colonialism*, and its long-standing academic structures, disciplines and experts, as well as its associations and pacts with society, industry and the corporate world.

2.5.4 The paucity and intricacies of curriculum design and change

In the ever-growing demand for a relevant HE, the curriculum conversation is often marginalised, despite its importance to the development of human capacity in the 21st century (Barnett & Coate, 2004; Le Grange, 2019; Parker, 2019). Globally, HE has generally chosen to apportion blame to the paucity of curriculum design on the more immediate challenges and opportunities of the 21st century society (Barnett & Coate, 2004). These challenges include the globalisation, massification, and commodification of higher education, its various convergences, and the need to adapt to the disruptive impact of technology (Barnett, 2007; Branson, 2008; Jenkins, 2006; McCaffery, 2010; Schunk, 2012).

Figure 2.2: Curriculum change

Zoom to magnify image.



Source: Brown (2013)

Further to this context, the extent of the intricacies and complexities of curriculum design (de Matos – Ala, 2019), its integrated implementation across an institution and the multiple resources indicated in Figure 2.2 above (Brown, 2013), assist in illustrating reasons for the paucity and hiatus of curriculum design. Given the transformative imperatives of the decolonisation of the curriculum, a further conundrum exists in adopting an inclusive and participatory approach to curriculum design, where faculty and students are not necessarily either experts or trained personnel in curriculum design (de Matos – Ala, 2019).

Furthermore, as much as public universities are held accountable to their *not-easy-to-shift* institutional hierarchies (Jansen & Walters, 2022), particularly in terms of the liberation of knowledge from the bounds of their century-old disciplines (Keet, 2014, 2019), South African universities, especially PHEIs, are accountable to institutional constraints and national regulatory structures which, in the case of South Africa, are regarded as the most stringent in the world (Ellis & Steyn, 2014),

Brown's (2013) framework provides the complexities of structures and personnel that need to be considered when making changes in curriculum design and its implementation (Figure 2.2 above). Given the pervasive impact that curriculum design and implementation may have on every aspect of the institution, as evident in Figure 3, it becomes clear that the intricacies, complexities and need for experts to decolonise the curriculum, is no simple task. Central to the intricacies and complexities of curriculum change are the conceptual contestations and the attendant risk of choosing which knowledge structures to include or exclude. Similarly, the cognitive loads and the appropriate cultural acknowledgements the curriculum designer needs to complete the intended design (de Matos– Ala, 2019). Mignolo and Walsh's (2018) big “W” questions, echo de Matos – Ala’s (2019) intricacies of curriculum design asking: "Who is taught? Who should teach? Moreover, how have they (learners) been previously taught, and what have they been taught?. Mazibuko concurs, asking: "What is the purpose of the curriculum? How is it determined? How does curriculum change? What makes the curriculum relevant? "Whose curriculum is it?" (Mazibuko, 2017, p. 28).

Together with the chosen pedagogics that accompany the curriculum design, the consideration of the developmental levels of the administrative, faculty and student, all of which add to the burden of curriculum research, innovation, and implementation (Barnett & Coate, 2004; de Matos– Ala, 2019). Further, traditional change management factors, such as teacher and student resistance to change *per se* (Branson, 2008; Brown, 2014), whether driven by inconvenience, or an unwillingness to give up the "immortal state" of an entrenched knowledge hegemony, contribute to the lack of curriculum design both globally and locally (de Matos– Ala, 2019, p.288; JISC, 2006). All of these contribute to providing reasons for the "hiatus" between old and new curricula (de Matos– Ala, 2019, p.288), as well as the distinct lack of academic curriculum design evident in HE today (Barnett & Coate, 2004). By extension, one can assert that evidence of innovative change meant to meet the challenges facing HE (including decolonising the curriculum), should be, in the context of paucity of curriculum research and innovation, considered a "significant achievement" (Barnett & Coate, 2004, p.3), in what amounts to a radical, high-risk and costly exercise (Jansen & Walters, 2022; JISC, 2006). This is an assertion which contributes to the argument of the study, which seeks to analyse the impact of the failures, absences and achievements of its various socio-constructive liberationist curriculum of AFDA as a means of reframing its transformational and socio-economic empowerment goals and epistemic disobediences under the banner of decolonising HE and its curriculum.

Much like the global tendency to attend to greater priorities than curriculum research and design, more urgent priorities for transforming South Africa's post-1994 HE sector prevailed. These included the success by the post-1994 era to widen

access to universities for the historically excluded students, as well as the restructuring of the regulation governing accredited public and private higher education institutions, and the emphasis on compliance to ensure quality learning policies and practices (DOHE, 2019; Webbstock & Fisher, 2016).

Curriculum design, research and innovation were relegated to the margins (Jansen, 2017; Le Grange, 2019; Soudien, 2020). A higher education reality involved the tendency to enact changes to the curriculum that was largely shallow and cosmetic (Jansen, 2017, 2019; Vorster & Quinn, 2017). Shahjahan et al. (2021) and Meda et al. (2019), point out that the purging of offensive content, the addition of African studies, and the introduction of various add–on courses that addressed African indigeneity had been part of the early post-1994 transformational achievements. Similar views can be expressed regarding the unfulfilled declarations of hastily convened decolonisation workshops, seminars and forums, and the changing of the names of buildings (Benatar, 2021; Jansen & Walters, 2022; Habib, 2018). Lange (2009) corroborates this view, claiming that "nothing truly changed in the curriculum in terms of substance, that is in content, pedagogy and assessment" (as cited by Ammon, 2019, p.9). Anderson concurs, stating that the decolonisation of curriculum claims is no more than "institutional posturing" (2018, as cited by Jansen & Walters, 2022, p.21). Le Grange et al. (2020) studied the universities of Stellenbosch, Potchefstroom, KwaZulu-Natal and the Nelson Mandela University in Gqberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) and found that most decolonisation efforts of these institutions:

- Were instrumentalist and focused on quick fix solutions

- Did not develop beyond symbolic gestures and clear disjuncture between goals and implementation, resulting in unfulfilled declarations of the hastily arranged seminars, workshops, talk shops and committees
- Acknowledged that decolonisation in South Africa is in its infancy
- Made little progress in medium of instruction
- Neglected African philosophy
- Witnessed very little change in science and tech fields
- Ensured individual pertinences dominated conversations, rather than considering views on decolonisation per se.

In defence of the *Fallist* failures to make any significant contribution, Fataar (2018) claims that students and activists were not allowed to participate or contribute meaningfully to the decolonisation of the curriculum, resulting in the media and traditional academics discounting or ridiculing their efforts. Nonetheless, the more dominant and politically driven slogans to purge knowledge hegemonies of the Global North allowed many critical issues regarding curriculum to be overlooked in terms of balancing relevance and excellence for a glocalised 21st century curriculum (Botha, 2007; Jansen, 2019; Ndamane, 2018).

Further to considering Fataar's (2018) observations regarding the lack of student participation in curriculum design, is Jansen's (2019) assertion that much of the research on the decolonisation of the curriculum, workshops and transformation committees that were formed by universities, were not necessarily led by educational or curriculum experts (Jansen, 2019). This particular conundrum is a caveat, which de Matos – Ala (2016) points to as a key challenge for dealing with the intricacies of

curriculum design, where a lack of expertise is compounded by the call for a more inclusive participation process in the designing of a new curricula.

If considering the above reasons for paucity of curriculum design and the failures and absences of the 2015-2018 movements to significantly decolonise the curriculum, it is reasonable to claim that South African state universities do not necessarily have the capacity to decolonise their curricular. In practice, they remain faithful to the imperial-colonial and apartheid university structures, and the decolonisation conversation, especially in terms of the curriculum, remains "rhetoric of critique and little substance" and that "a poverty of inventiveness has led to a retreat to indigenization" (Jansen, 2019, p. 61-62). Albeit the unfairness related to comparing large state university with smaller private institutions, the assertions on the lack of post-2015-2018 decolonisation of state universities and their curriculum, supports the significance of AFDA's academic and institutional curriculum innovations. As clearly stated above, AFDA's decolonisation efforts are not general, but rather specific in their conceptual (goals, values and educational promise), empirical (as expressed by the lived experience of participants of the study) and practical implementation over the last three decades in the post-1994 era (Bell-Roberts, 2022).

That being the case, and given the impact of global forces, particularly in terms of the durability of colonialism and the extreme contexts (Hällgren et al., 2017; Presti & Sabatano, 2018) of the South African education sector built on the fractured pillars of colonial apartheid (Jansen, 2019), the study asserts the significance and reframing of the development of AFDA's various socio-constructivist liberationist

curriculum approach (Vygotsky, 1978; Freire, 1993, 1994), as a “significant act” (Barnett & Coate, 2004, p. 3). Irrespective of its acknowledged failings and absences (as identified in the analysis and interpretation of the research participants’ responses), it is evident that the epistemological disobediences, transformative nation building and the socioeconomic empowerment of its graduates have, in one way or another, contributed to scaling knowledge and know-how in the Global South regarding the decolonisation of the curriculum through a socio-constructive liberationist curriculum approach.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 offers the reader an in depth view of a mixed-research approach which uses a holistic case study to gather the responses of 89 AFDA teaching faculty and alumni to determine the failures, absences and successes of the institututions transformation efforts since its establishment in 1994. The largely qualitative nature of the study, using thematic analysis as its primary analysis tool, primarily headlines the responses of the participants of a general questionnaire and two focus groups to develop a challenge -opportunity mindset as a key aspect of finding new ways and processes to mitigate the lack of transformation in AFDA, as well as identify ways of building on the key successes of the institution and its socio-constructive liberationist curriculum.

Although case studies are not considered paradigms, they tend to occur within particular paradigms (Toma, 2011). The broad paradigm of exponential change spurred on by technology has led to a blurring and, in many instances, the disintegration of traditional national boundaries (Matus & McCarthy, 2008). These factors have contributed to the emergence of a globalised and pluralist society that has infinite access to knowledge and perspectives (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Panwar et al., 2017). These continue to disrupt an *old order* of an elite few that, through imperialism and colonisation, either dehumanised, ignored or exoticised the subjugated as part of ensuring epistemic hegemony (Freire, 1993, 1994; Halagao, 2010; Hoppers, 2009). The disruption of the old order, and its consequences, offers

the necessary background or support to claims made by the study regarding the complexities, sensitivities and ambiguities of the post-modernist world, a world in which the challenges presented by the concept of decolonisation and its growing impact on society (Chasi, 2020; Shahjahan et al., 2021), have created the need for a mind-shift to humanise the dehumanised (Halagao, 2016; Senge, 2007).

A mixed-methods approach, comprising both a singular and holistic case-study, as adopted by the study, is consistent with the pluralist paradigm and other theoretical propositions underpinning the research. Miles and Huberman (1994) concur that a mixed-methods and multi-case study approach is consistent with the more loose and emergent analytical frameworks (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Like Barnett's (2000, 2020) super-complexity, these frameworks are mutable and multiple. The approach allows for the application of the more creative and dynamic aspects of the research, and facilitates the situatedness of the 59 (Yin, 2003). The mixed-methods approach employs multiple paradigms, elicits forms of qualitative-quantitative data, uses a diverse sample of participants, and is characterised by an emergent back and forth interpretative process (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009) to headline the responses of the 89 participants (Creamer, 2011; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). In so doing, the study generates an interpretative, but authentic mixed voices (Struebert et al., 1997; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The mixed voices of the participants are intended to contribute to the determination and validation of the lived reality regarding the achievements, failures and absences of AFDA's socio-constructive liberationist curriculum as a significant act (Barnett & Coate, 2004), and as one which contributes to the shifting of the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to concrete action.

3.2 The research paradigm

Given the mixed paradigm, the methods and research approach adopted by the study heed Focault's caveat, the study is likely to traverse a terrain "where nothing is naïve, and everything is dangerous" (Focault, 1983; Lather, 2006, p.43). This ominous binary is consistent with the particular *situatedness* (Bhaskar, 2013; Hawk, 2016), of the AFDA case study, where the study focuses on the analysis and interpretation of personal expressions and events in a unique contextual environment. These contextual structures, events, and expressions of the study are akin to the contextual *intelligences* of Robert Sternberg's Triarchic Theory, where the analytical, creative, and practical contextual intelligences (Khanna, 2014) are utilised where and when appropriate, and as part of the multiplying and mutating frameworks of super-complexity (Barnett, 2000, 2020). These intelligences provide insight into the qualitative and inferential quantitative data and its interpretation of AFDA as a private multi-regional higher education institution (HEI) in post-Apartheid South Africa.

The study acknowledges the entanglement of a number of acknowledged 21st century theories which are transitionary and emergent. In essence, the study adopts a post-positivist and pluralist approach which is contrary to the positivist principles of rationality, orderliness and determinism (Abaszadeh et al., 2019; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984); the latter informed the ontologies and epistemologies of the imperial, colonial and apartheid eras. The environments, agents and elements which inform post-positivism are aligned with post-modernist (Lyotard, 1979) and complexity theories (Morrison, 2006), where characteristics of "non-linearity, unpredictability, feedback sensitivity and co-evolution prevail" (Abaszadeh et al.,

2019, p. 53). These, in turn, are inextricably aligned with the uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity of Barnett's (2000) super complexity.

The Complexity Theory (Siemans, 2004; Morrison, 2006) has proved useful in the past to assist society in solving complex problems in open systems (like higher education), often producing complex solutions that adapt to finding alternate solutions. The Super-Complexity Theory (Barnett, 2000), on the other hand, is not necessarily different, but acknowledges the ever-multiplying and mutating nature of frameworks in a situated and pluralist society undergoing exponential change. The post-1994 South Africa, for example, not only deals with the complexities of transforming its post-colonial apartheid society, but it too, has to deal with the demands of global exponential changes and the consequences of its *extreme* contexts (Hällgren et al., 2017; Presti & Sabatano, 2018); these contexts, as alluded to earlier Chapter 2), more often than not, require unique or experimental approaches to deal with challenges in a way that is non-linear, relative and non-determinist.

The paradigms alluded to above, are key to understanding the entanglement of the ontological and epistemological approaches used in this study (Mbembe, 2015), as part of finding hopeful and pragmatic ways (Bengsten, 2018; Senge, 2007) of shifting the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to the concrete phase. In the case of this research paper makes a mind-shift or spirit that speaks to the decolonisation of knowledge and attendant institutions from multiple perspectives. As such, this allows the Global South to express itself in a qualitative fashion within its own context and pertinences, as well as accessing whatever existing knowledge and technologies that are appropriate to the validation and scaling of knowledge that

is critical and competitive – a notion that is central to Mignolo (2007, 2009) and Mbembe's epistemic disobediences and (re) centering of knowledge (2015, 2016, 2019).

The Complexity Theory (Morrison, 2006) and Barnett's (2000) Super-Complexity Theory are key theories which form part of the 21st century post-modernist paradigm through which the study is lensed. Their adaptive qualities provide the opportunity for the mutating and multiple frameworks that characterise the 21st century beyond the rational and logical schematics of the modernist world and the tendencies of the age of Enlightenment. Morrison's and Barnett's respective theories on complexity (2006) and super-complexity (2000, 2020), facilitate the mutative and multiplying characteristics of 21st century frameworks, and further proposes a more and hopeful mind-set for the study, rather than only observation and cynicism (Barnett, 2020; Bengtsen, 2018), as a means of developing concepts and processes that contribute to the decolonisation of higher education institutions.

Post-1994 South Africa, as pointed out before, not only deals with the complexities of transforming its post-colonial apartheid society, but it too, has to deal with the demands of global exponential changes and the consequences of its *extreme* contexts (Hällgren et al., 2017; Presti & Sabatano, 2018) and, more often than not, these require unique or experimental approaches to dealing with challenges in a non-linear, relative and non-determinist way. By extension, super-complexity offers a framework for a mind-shift that an institution like AFDA can use to embrace its *contextual intelligences* (the insider-researcher and the AFDA teaching faculty and students); and forms part of the study's ambition to accommodate the multiple

perspectives, subjectivity, inferences, and contestations of interest that exist in case studies (Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Rose & Seltzer, 2020).

In adopting an idealist (creative) but realistic (pragmatic) approach, cognoscente of its situatedness (Berthoff, 1990; Graeber, 2016; Hawk, 2016; Khanna, 2014) and its multi-pluralist paradigm, it would appear that Barnett's (2020) super-complexity and other aligned theoretical assertions used to bracket the study, are helpful in framing, supporting and making sense of the rapidly changing contexts of society and HE in the 21st century. Super-complexity further offers a view that is consistent with knowledge production's disruptive character, mutative nature, and the entangled ontologies and epistemologies existing in the 21st century. Both no longer seek silo-like classification, but rely on each other as part of the pluralist and contextual sense-making process of the day (Barnett, 2000; Goertz & Mahoney, 2012; Mbembe, 2015).

The study proposes that Barnett's (2000) Super-Complexity Theory and its ideas are well suited to the mutative dynamics of the study's idealistic-pragmatic frameworks that infuse an optimistic and hopeful spirit for future *stakeholders* participating in AFDA's decolonisation project and its pragmatic expectations. The realities of South Africa's HE can create a sense of hopelessness, though there is evidence of hope (Cook, 2020). This thus necessitates a decolonisation mindset that adopts Barnett's hopeful and optimistic approach to higher education, rather than resorting to sceptical observation (Bengtsen, 2017).

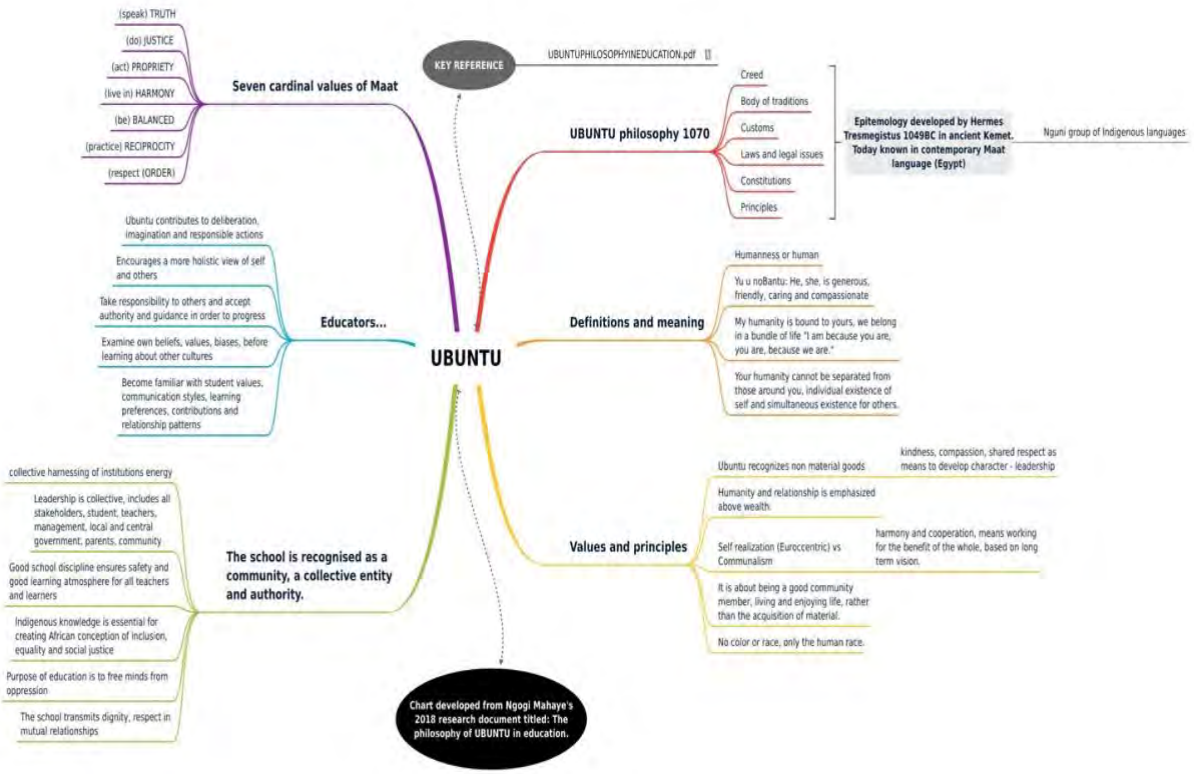
The utopian and imaginative ideals of super-complexity are aligned to and underwritten by a host of optimistic understandings of finding and creating spaces where something new can be brought into existence (Webster & Ryan, 2019). These are aligned, by example, to the study's adoption of a *humanising* approach to the decolonisation of higher education (Freire, 1993, 1994), and is critical to the part-idealist, part-pragmatic axis to find complex solutions to complex challenges in facing higher education (Jäppinen, 2014). In so doing, this enlivens more creative, critical and speculative opportunities like Freire's "looking and looking again" approach (Berthoff 1990, p.362), and Leibowitz's (2017, p. 100) "thinking the unthinkable".

Super-complexity aligns itself with other idealistic theories, such as Ubuntu, which by further example, is a relevant and living philosophy (Naude, 2019) that is consistent with the pluralist character of the challenges of developing a post-colonial curriculum and skills for the 21st century society (Dede, 2010; Fonesca et al., 2019). Ubuntu offers universal and communal (humanist) concepts, primarily focusing on the collective rather than the individual (Mahaye, 2018) as reflected in Figure 3.1: The philosophy of Ubuntu in education. The principles of Ubuntu contribute to the realisation of prominent 21st century HE ideals of participation, consensus, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and metacognition (Pritchard, 2017). Similarly, Ubuntu offers important counter-colonial concepts that reject the notion of perceiving Africa as an extension of Europe, questioning the universality of Global North knowledge and contesting the perception of Africa as a homogenous entity (Naude, 2019). Together with mutuality, listening, engaging, and respecting the other as central tenets endemic to the principles of Ubuntu's, these humanist ideals

are central to the re-imagining of the transformation of curricula and knowledge production in the 21st century (Dede, 2010; Dew, 2012; Trilling & Fadel, 2009.

Figure 3.1: The philosophy of Ubuntu in education

Zoom to magnify image.



Source: Mahaye (2018)

3.2 Research Methods

The study initially proposed to use the collective, optimistic, narrative and word-building research approach of an appreciative inquiry (Clouder & King, 2016; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Hammond, 1998). As a progressive and commercial research tool, appreciative inquiry offered an antidote to the growing lethargy and negativity in South African attitudes with regard to its *hopelessness,* focusing on

finding solutions by *building on what works* in an organisation. The second option looked at the capacity of action research to facilitate change in practice, raise consciousness and challenge existing knowledge (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005) through collective research. However, this particular approach fell beyond the academic research parameters of the University of Liverpool, as the researcher was not permitted to use the institution's faculty and students as co-researchers. Whilst the commercial and progressive character of appreciative inquiry initially seemed a good option for the study, Yin's (2003, 2018) rationale for using a holistic, singular case study was persuasive and in alignment with the overall goal of the study, which is, to produce an authentic account of the lived experience of the AFDA teaching faculty, students and alumni, which included the following:

- Its suitability for investigating a contemporary phenomenon, in depth and within its real world context, especially when boundaries between a phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident (Yin & Davids, 2007, Yin, 2018).

- Its suitability for an interpretivist or relativist approach which is able to construct multiple observer-dependent realities and meanings.

- Its capacity to mitigate a tendency by the case study approach to be generalised through transparency, theoretical explanation, data audit trails and adaptability of the context in another context that, in so doing, provides a "manner in which to shed empirical light for others to share" (Yin, 2018, p.710).

- Providing the researcher with the required latitude to address more complex issues.

- Allowing the researcher to employ multiple and mixed-methods approaches as a means of collecting a rich array of data.

- Facilitating a diverse scope of elements which, in the case of the AFDA case study, included individual and group projects was well as institutional elements.

The assertion of Yin (2011) and Toma (2011) assertion that case studies were well-suited for the mixed approach adopted by the study, resulted in a further adoption of a holistic singular case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Similarly, the case study offered to address the 'why' 'what' and 'how' of phenomena in the multiple contexts expressed in the research, particularly where it is difficult to separate the boundaries between the former and the latter (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003).

Although designed as a singular case study of one organisation, the study spans a unique multi-regional campus context (Davison & Ou, 2018; Harrison et al., 2010; Groenwald, 2018; Nel, 2007). Comparisons are not drawn between the campuses in the way that a multiple case study would (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The singular case study draws on a collective of data drawn from purposefully identified volunteer participants from all four AFDA campuses and an opportunity to focus on understanding contemporary phenomena within their natural settings (Heck, 2011

Yin, 1989). In so doing, the singular case study provides the researcher with a unique opportunity to focus on and gain insight into the realities of the participants and their day-to-day teaching and learning experience of AFDA through the interpretation of their verbatim and expressive responses as a headline feature of the study (Toma, 2011; Stake, 1995).

The holistic singular case study is further helpful in terms of the study's pluralist paradigm (Yin, 2003), where the participants' multiple views and opinions are all procured and considered to respond to the questions posed in the various data collection processes adopted by the study. In essence, a post-positivist approach seeks out the empirical reality, rather than a study constrained by an objectivity that seeks certainty (Cohen et al., 2007; Toma, 2011). Heck (2011) concurs, claiming that mixed-methods case studies typically use a post-positivist and interpretative approach that accommodates both high and low inference-making, allowing for interpretations [by the researcher] within their context and more, importantly generalisations that go beyond the context.

The contextual nature of the case study (Creswell, 2009) allows for the integration and converging of various research models, sampling, data collection, analysis, and reporting (Green, 2003) as part of the construction of the social realities of the four AFDA campuses (Green et al., 1989; Harwell, 2011). This particular singular mixed-methods case study approach uses multiple types of data, sources of evidence, and tools to collect and analyse data (Heck, 2011). Green (2003), too, asserts that the mixed-methods approach offers more varied design possibilities and means of conducting an inquiry.

Creswell (2003) further concurs with the notion that the use of qualitative research facilitates broader views that acknowledge personal bias, values, and interests and often gathers multiple perspectives using interactive methods that are focused on generating meanings and understandings that can be used to develop ideas and concepts (Stake, 1995; Toma, 2011). Although the use of qualitative and quantitative methods is considered different from the mixed-methods approach, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) assert that mixed-methods (approaches) imply the use of multiple methods, tools, and research approaches to enhance the creative research opportunities rather than limit them through any particular research dogma (Harwell, 2011). In the instance of the AFDA case study, qualitative and quantitative data are used in combination in a fashion that not only concurs with Serlin's (2011) concept of closing the schism between methodologies, but also highlights where the one complements, covers and or highlights the other (Toma, 2011).

For this study, qualitative data delivers what is commonly referred to as a thick narrative (Geertz, 1973) which, according to Toma (2011), is necessary for the epistemological assumptions researchers make about knowledge production and the ontological assumptions they make about their being in society (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012). The dynamic and adaptive shifts of the entanglement between the epistemological and ontological assumptions play a key role in guaranteeing the authenticity of any given research (Toma, 2011). This particular view of the former's impact on the latter is consistent with Mbembe's (2015) and Barnett's (2000) views regarding the inevitable entanglement of both, particularly in terms of the 'context'

or ‘situatedness’ informing the investigator’s interpretation of the participants’ response or *vice versa*.

In the AFDA case study, quantitative data are both independent and embedded in the qualitative data, thus providing descriptive statistical data that are optimised through counting and aggregation (Sandelowoski et al., 2009); or inferential statistics that use computational linguistics (Cambria et al., 2007; Lui, 2020) that are useful for making certain inferences to inform qualitative data. These are not necessarily scientific in the manner in which quantitative research is traditionally validated, but rather, offer the research certain creative opportunities, or what Rose (2011) refers to as the development of *quantitative thoughtfulness*. In so doing, this offers multiple interpretations for the research and its readers to compliment or refute other interpretations or conclusions (Stake, 1995; Toma, 2011).

Further to these assertions regarding the suitability of a mixed-methods case study approach as a suitable paradigm for the research, the different data collection sources, methods, and pluralistic paradigms offer the research opportunities for data triangulation (Creswell, 2009), covering any weaknesses of some with the strengths of others (Cohen et al., 2007). Additionally, the case study facilitates an integrated back-and-forth research process (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). The iterative characteristics of the back-and-forth process inevitably produce various mutating analysis frameworks that provide the investigator with retrospective, sequential, concurrent, or consequential approaches (Green et al., 1997; Harwell, 2011), many of which instigate or prompt the need for the daily reflections of the researcher’s

dynamic, subjective-objective interpretation of the data as it is collected and ruminated on.

Similarly, multiple data sources provide further opportunities for the triangulation of patterns, similarities, and differences (Creswell, 2009), and in the case of the back-and-forth nature of the data analysis of the AFDA case study, makes provision for various analysis approaches (see Figure 4.1), all of which contribute to the sense-making of the themes drawn from the data (Guba & Lincoln, 2008). These, combined with the quantitative counts, frequencies, and aggregations as deployed by the study, contribute to the study's credibility -one which endeavours to embrace a hopeful and pragmatic spirit that facilitates the inevitable entanglement of the epistemological and ontological needs of the study through combining theory and practice (praxis) as a tool designed for the betterment of the institution.

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) further advocate the emancipatory and transformative ideals of mixed-methods approaches (Roslyn, 2011). Toma (2011) corroborates the validity of focusing on the representation of participants in the study to facilitate change (Stake, 1995). These views are consistent with the study's transformation and decolonisation goals which, in the spirit of decolonisation, are contrary to the Cartesian-Newtonian priorities of the age of Enlightenment (Hopper, 2009; Lingard, 2009). Yin (2003) and Creswell (2009) assert that a mixed-methods approach is suitable for a singular case study which, according to Heck (2011), is useful for the conceptualisation of meaningful research studies in education - especially if the case study begins with a research problem that asks what ought to be discovered. (Heck, 2011). In the instance of the AFDA case study, to ascertain if a

framework works to assert whether AFDA shifted the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to concrete action, it may be asked: “What is broken, what works, and how can we fix it?

3.3 Data Collection Tools and Resources

In keeping with the mixed-methods approach adopted by the research study, four data sources were chosen to analyse the organisational culture and the academic and curricular challenges facing a PHEI like AFDA. First, a voluntary online-~~general~~ questionnaire (survey) comprised of open and closed questions. The survey was used to collect a large body of data (Cohen et al., 2007), which includes descriptive statistics and qualitative data reflective of the lived experience of the participants. In the second and third instances, an online focus group comprising staff and students constituted the ten participants. This method used a less formal open-ended question structure to gather data in a closer and more economical and personal fashion (Heck, 2011). Lastly, even if some researchers may be skeptical of these particular histories (Gasman, 2011; Peterkin, 2010), access to all appropriate institutional documentation to support any claims and assertions made by the research (Gasman, 2011).

Given the exponential acceleration of information and communication technologies (ICT) and the rapid and ongoing development of artificial intelligence (AI) in research software (Lanier, 2014; Liu, 2020), the study chose to use the online, paid-use survey and a research tool called Survey Monkey (SM). Like many other online survey applications, SM offers progressive advantages and access to research tools that were traditionally the preserve of an elite few. Besides convenience, SM is

compatible with most ICT platforms, reduces time and cost, can gather and collate information from large databases, thus aiding analysis (Young, 2016).

SM further offered a standardised, professional layout and design template options which facilitated ease of navigation for participants. It aided the distribution and receipt of the direct uploading of the results, a 24-hour support service with data security features, automated descriptive statistics and graphs, and multiple response transcriptions of each respondent to each question. These analytical and statistical tools include automated, inferential data analyses, personal descriptive data and analyses, and overall duration and day-by-day graphs tabling the collection of responses. See SM link below: (https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-rtmbE_2F56ZNrM1kuvVJRo_2Fg_3D_3D/).

3.3.1 The online questionnaire

The general questionnaire is a well-established method used for the collection of data that offers some advantages to the research, including reducing costs, convenience for the researcher and respondents, real-time access, design flexibility and mitigation of research-related fraud (Cohen et al., 2011). The disadvantages of the questionnaire include low response rates to the questionnaire and low engagement rates if the questionnaire or survey exceeds 8-10 minutes (Cohen et al., 2007). This was the case for the questionnaire used in the current study. Having said that, the web-based Survey Monkey online software provided participants and the research with advantages which included: increased access, anonymity, convenience, faster distribution, and automatic compilation of results, a sentiment indicator, a word cloud, and a data-audit trail (Varela et al., 2016). These provided the study with

further conveniences in terms of managing the extensive data collected through the questionnaire and provided the necessary descriptive statistics and qualitative data collected from the closed and open-ended questions posed to participants (Cohen et al., 2007; Flicker et al., 2010).

The Survey Monkey data collection platform provided two options for the responses to the 69 completed questionnaires. The first was a collection of 69 responses to each question, and the second option provided individual participants with responses to all the questions. See Survey Monkey analysis tab for the individual and the question responses link: (https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-rtmbE_2F56ZNrM1kuvVJRo_2Fg_3D_3D/).

The chronological sequencing of the questionnaire, staff focus groups and the student focus group (in that chronological order) provided the research with the advantage of introspecting on collected data in such a manner that could remedy any failings or absences detected in previous data collection processes or associated research events (Green et al., 1989; Harwell, 2011). The data from focus groups also served to triangulate the data procured through each data collection method (Creswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 2008).

One of the key conveniences associated with using the Survey Monkey platform was that it provided the participant with a consent form as required by Liverpool Ethics Committee (LOREC) (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AsVvxbFxW6rkxCRV2xbBAiS8OhucE8vX/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=109906544013226976889&rtpof=true&sd=true).

Questions 1 -10 constitute these questions and facilitate the secure archiving and auditing of voluntary consent obtained from the participants. See questions 1-10 in Survey Monkey link under analysis tab, individual responses: (https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-rtmbE_2F56ZNrM1kuvVJRo_2Fg_3D_3D/).

3.3.2 Questions 11-12 of the online questionnaire

Questions 11-12, which follow in the above link, are not necessarily used as comparative data but as part of its ambition to achieve a fair representation of the 2019 AFDA student race demographics (70 percent) and a balance between the institutional statuses of the participants, made up of staff, students and alumni. The descriptive statistics form part of a subliminal text and audit trail used to validate the research's ambition to achieve representational race and AFDA status demographic validity.

Question 11 asks for voluntary disclosure of participants' identity as Black, White, Coloured, Indian, Other, or Not Specified PNTS (prefer not to say). Although Black participants, Indians, and People of Colour are described individually, they are grouped as one statistic for the study as BPoC (Black and People of Colour).

Question 12 asks for voluntary disclosure of the institutional status of the participants and offers *faculty, student, alumni, alumni/faculty, or PNTS*. Questions 11 and 12 accommodate the rights of individuals to refrain from identifying themselves (PNTS and or not specified) and contribute to increased anonymity for participants (American Educational Research Association, 2011).

3.3.3 Design and purpose of questions 13-20 of the online questionnaire

Questions 13-20: See under Analysis Tab (individual responses): (https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SMrtmbE_2F56ZNrM1kuvVJRo_2Fg_3D_3D/). The eight open-ended and semi–constructed questions were designed to collect a broad perspective of the lived AFDA academic and institutional curriculum experience of the participants within a particular context (Berthoff, 1990). The anonymity presented by the online nature of the questionnaire allowed participants to express themselves freely, thus allowing the researcher to collect authentic and collective perceptions of their lived experiences (Ercikan & Roth, 2011) in terms of issues dealing with discrimination, transformation and limitations as well as achievements of the AFDA academic curriculum and organisational culture. In so doing, this contributed to the entangled epistemologies of learning and teaching, and the personal ontologies and emotions (Albrechts, 2016; Mbembe, 2015), typically found in mixed-methods case studies that use multiple paradigms, approaches and analyses (Toma, 2011).

The eight open-ended questions were designed as part of the holistic and singular case study objectives to the question (Baxter & Jack, 2008): '*What is broken, What works, and How do we fix it?*' All these occur in the unique context of AFDA's multi-regional organisational culture in a post-1994 and post-COVID-19 South Africa.

Question 13 was related to the objective: To establish the general sentiment of on-campus discrimination experienced by staff, students, and 2015 alumni towards one another as well as the institution. These sensitive but real-life accounts of the types of on-campus discrimination-related challenges faced by AFDA, whether professional, personal, in learning or in teaching, are critical to the study in terms of identifying *What is broken* (AFDA transformational failures and absences). Furthermore, these, by extension, provide opportunities for finding ways of remediating these issues as part of the spirit of optimism and hope proposed by the study (Bengtsen, 2018).

Question 14 was designed to see the extent of the lived professional, personal, learning, and teaching experiences of faculty, students, and alums that are transformational or non-discriminatory as a means of *building on what works,* a conceptual approach consistent with the tenets of the appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), a business development strategy that focuses and builds on what works.

The purpose of Question 15 was two-fold. Firstly, it sought to establish the extent of the gap existing between the theoretical idealism of AFDA's various curricula and the practical realities of its day-to-day delivery and reception. The question serves to identify response data that contributes to *What is broken, What works, and How it can be fixed*. The responses are essential in finding new knowledge, analysing the extent of endorsing *what works and how we can fix it,* and providing evidence that either asserts or refutes the stated challenges facing a private higher education institution such as AFDA. In the second instance, Question 15 seeks

to ascertain the level of the participants' understanding of AFDA's distinctive socio-constructive and project-led curriculum innovation compared to traditional university curricula.

Question 16 deliberately seeks to identify whether or not participants are aware of AFDA's decolonial or epistemically disobedient properties, and whether participants can indicate these properties. As in Question 15, the responses contribute to endorsing or opposing the reframing of transformational achievements and absences under the banner of decolonisation.

Question 17 seeks to identify both the limitations and the recommendations from participants, which could contribute to the existing and new knowledge required to meet the optimistic challenge–opportunity mindset that accelerate transformation through the decolonisation of the academic curriculum.

Like Question 17, Question 18 seeks to identify both the limitations and the recommendations from participants, as these could contribute to the existing and new knowledge required to meet the challenge–opportunity mindset for accelerating transformation through the decolonisation of the institutional curriculum that informs the academic curriculum.

Question 19 seeks to procure participants' perceptions regarding the development and implementation of four aspects of the AFDA 2.0 curriculum, which they would experience in the AFDA 1.0 and AFDA hybrid Curricula. Other than the 2015 alums and the students, a large proportion of faculty attended the various

AFDA workshops and research exercises conducted by EVA (the Education Value Assurance Committee of AFDA), from 2017 – 2020, as part of the development of the AFDA curriculum 2.0 (see Appendix 1 and https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f9anUrfZX8sfAmnpvXXlTdDv_q9MNA_n/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=104840866944126065186&rtpof=true&sd=true). Many teaching staff, students, and alums or staff were also involved in the piloting of Contextual Studies (one of the five curricula courses designed for the 2.0 curriculum) in 2019, as well as in the premature implementations of aspects of 2.0 as a hybrid curriculum strategy designed to mitigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Question 20 asserts that society resists change and such confrontational, radical, or life-threatening events as #BlackLivesMatter, #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall, and COVID-19 magnify, exacerbate and accelerate transformation. Given this scenario, the question asks how these events impact the decolonisation of higher education.

3.4 The faculty and student focus groups

The separate teaching faculty and student focus groups were designed to procure a more personal account of the collective lived experience of the participants and the meanings behind these experiences. Several scholars affirm this particular characteristic of focus groups, where the format allows participants to interact with one another, discussing various topics for the research (Cohen et al., 2011; Gill et al., 2008; Hydén & Bülow, 2003). Similarly, Guba and Lincoln (2008) refer to the transactional relationship between the researcher and the participants as part of

negotiating and procuring data relevant to the attainment of the study's objectives. Both FGs gave participants a unique opportunity to air their views in a socialised environment, affecting how they may have responded if they were alone (Cohen et al., 2007; Gill et al., 2008). In so doing, this further advanced the democratic and transformative ambitions of the study (Heck, 2011) and providing triangulation opportunities for the research (Creswell, 2009.)

Other than the required adapting of the focus group questions intended for both of the focus groups (see Appendix 3, 4 and 5), the context, criteria, and format for both focus groups were identical. A two-hour window for each of the two online focus groups made up of ten purposefully selected participants was conducted online due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic on gatherings. While this would hypothetically dilute the advantages of face-to-face encounters like observing and interpreting the various participators' body language, relationships within the group, and their overall mood, the online Zoom platform had its advantages, such as: increased anonymity for participants, and the convenience of recording the event. It includes the welcome, introduction, and Zoom chat box, providing additional opportunities for participants to express themselves. Zoom further allowed the research to draw participants from all the four AFDA campuses. The drawing of participants from all these campuses would not have been possible due to the attendant costs if done in a real-time, face-to-face format. Given the site-specific nature of the research and its mixed-methods approach, the focus group research design allowed for a less structured, open-ended question approach. The approach allowed the conversation to be led in a discretionary manner, allowing both the

researcher and the participants to steer the conversation as and when required (Cohen et al., 2007).

The two-hour teaching faculty FG was scheduled for Saturday, November 14, 2020, to prevent it from clashing with AFDA timetables, duties, and responsibilities (as required by the ethical clearance rules stipulated by the Liverpool Ethics Committee (LOREC). The two-hour student FG was scheduled a week later, allowing the study to use the teaching faculty's experience and data as well as making the necessary adjustments for the student FG. Compared to the seven questions posed for the teaching faculty FG, only three questions were posed to the student FG to mitigate against the limitations of the size of the FG and the two hours scheduled for the exercise (Appendix 4 and 5). A further optional reading document (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IENPEUPG_wxJf-AKR4bv8CAtmuZ1mx9i/view?usp=sharing) was provided to the student focus group, addressing several essential decolonisation issues for the student FG to read.

The focus group event was held almost two months after the questionnaire was administered. Once committed, volunteers were sent the finalised dates and times for the focus groups via the researcher's private e-mail account (determined by availability). Similarly, participants received reminders to submit their consent forms and were encouraged to peruse the optional reading and the proposed questions. The optional reading material on AFDA's goals, its learning approach, and Julie Nxadi's Fostering of Belonging slide show or workshop contributed to the mitigation of any potential conflict between participants and reading materials on decolonisation per se, as well as decolonisation of curricula. To facilitate further

clarification on the focus group activity, participants were given contact details via e-mail.

The focus group size was initially oversubscribed to mitigate the probability of no-shows (Gill et al., 2008). The large number of participants would subsequently impact the two hours prescribed for the FG. Similarly, the round-robin style allowed participants to express their views, but proved time-consuming due to repetition, participants drifting off topic and certain personalities dominating the conversation. Although the researcher had hoped not to be prescriptive or dominant in the conversation, it was often imperative to steer the conversation back to the topic or cut short certain participants, as is ofeten the case in focus group data collection activity (Gill et al., 2008).

3.5 Institutional Documents (Secondary data)

Although institutional documentation can be biased, incomplete, and sometimes challenging to authenticate (Heck, 2011; Merriam, 1988), it offers the case study research a particular illumination of the institution *in situ*. As one of the founding partners of AFDA, the researcher had access to and was familiar with the administrative, curricula, marketing, and media documentation produced and received by the institution over the last three decades. These formally published, self-published and unpublished documents served as part of the archives and institutional memory of AFDA and included minutes of meetings, workshops, training, on-boarding procedures, institutional research, policy, and regulatory documentation.

Given the study context, several key documents have been used to validate the study's claims, assertions, and assumptions. These institutional documents are mainly accessible through links, references, and appendices provided herein and include:

- The AFDA Yearbook (2022) is a document produced annually by the AFDA National Registrar. It forms part of the annual reporting and it is in compliance with the requirements of the Council of Higher Education (CHE) and the Higher Education Qualifications Committee (HEQC). The contents of the Annual Yearbook are legally binding and provide a detailed description of the institution, its goals, values, educational promise, qualifications, teaching and learning approaches, and policies. These are some of the critical elements that have been referred to in the study.

- The AFDA Book (Bell-Roberts, 2022) is a self-published book that refers to many of the critical elements outlined above but also provides a more colourful description of AFDA's history and the development of its campuses over the last 28 years. It acknowledges the many individuals who have built the AFDA campuses and brand. Over two-thirds of the book is dedicated to the AFDA alumni and the impact that they have made on the South African Motion Picture and entertainment industries in South Africa, bearing testimony to the success of AFDA's socio-constructive and liberationist curricular innovations.

- The AFDA Staff On-boarding Programme (2020), which is available on request, covers similar detail to the latter and former documents as described

above. Still, it focuses more on the AFDA goals, learning and teaching approach, assessment strategies, course descriptions, and institutional policies. It, too, facilitates handover processes, reporting lines, and the student disciplinary code.

- The AFDA National Registry (2022) provides access to all statutory documents, AFDA student and staff statistics, as well as reporting, and accreditation documents. The EVA Secretarial Archive holds the following: all minutes of meetings, documentation, and evidence regarding qualification accreditation, the academic curriculum, term narratives, lesson plans, institutional research, monitoring of campus performance; classroom observations, faculty transformation, staff training, staff onboarding; tutor training, research and new curriculum design. The Institutional Senate holds the minutes and documentation of quarterly reporting to the Chief Executive Officer. It includes the national head of finance, marketing, EVA, human resources, campus operations, and the Chief Operations Officer (COO). The regional campus Senate meetings hold all minutes of meetings with the regional learning programme and regional heads of department.

- The AFDA Term booklet is an all-encompassing document which demonstrates the structures, subject disciplines, outcomes and assessment formats of AFDA's socio-constructive curriculum and its implementation *in action*. (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f9anUrfZX8sfAmnpvXXlTdDv_q9M

NA_n/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=104840866944126065186&rtpof=true&sd=true).

The documents cited above provide the study with the necessary qualitative and quantitative data and opportunities not only for the two forms of data to validate each other, but also as proof of AFDA's unique learning system. Finally, an extensive record of AFDA archiving, social media and marketing in digital and analogue forms are available as and when appropriate (AFDA website: www.afda.co.za; Instagram:@afda.co.za).

3.6 The research sample

In order to enrich the reader's comprehension of the research sample, it could be useful to refer to the various documents that are listed under Section 3.5 (above), as it provides a detailed context for the participants of the research who are registered across the following qualifications:

- Bachelor of Arts in Motion Picture and Live Performance
- Bachelor of Arts Honours and MFA in Motion Picture and Live Performance
- Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing
- Bachelor of Commerce in Business Innovation and Technology
- Post-Graduate Diploma in Creativity and Innovation in Business
- Higher Certificates in Motion Picture Production, Performance, Media, Radio and Pod-casting

At the time that the research was conducted, AFDA's teaching faculty comprised approximately 160 staff operating on a standardised student-to-faculty and student-to-equipment ratio of 25:1. Of the 160 AFDA teaching faculty, approximately a third are AFDA alumni, some of which were appointed as part of AFDA's Honours (4th year) bursary programme. The programme is directly aligned to AFDA's faculty transformation strategy, and contributes to fulfilling the institutions such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEEE) and Equity Act (The DTIC, 2023). Together with these alumni, the teaching faculty is relatively young and comprises a diverse range of academics, industry professionals, and experts, none of whom are formally qualified as higher education experts per se. In terms of CHE regulation, all faculty staff members are required to have a minimum academic qualification that is one standard higher than what they lecture in. Most faculty staff members are, as required by the institution, involved in improving their academic qualifications and, where possible, maintaining personal and professional outputs. Many of these staff members have completed or are enrolled in the AFDA MFA programme as part of a strategy meant to transform and develop the institution's intellectual capital.

The balance of the faculty's teaching staff comprises graduates of South Africa's public universities. Initially, these faculty staff members find themselves in the unfamiliar terrain of a private, for-profit multi-regional campus in a higher education institution environment that is project-led, student-centred, and focused on employability. Faculty staff members that teach courses in programmes such as Live Performance and Business Innovation are trained mainly at public universities. Others hold diverse qualifications and hail from different career paths. Professional

staff members from the industry often face difficulty adapting to the rigours and formalities of administration and planning at higher education. Similarly, they are part of an inconsistent and fluctuating motion picture industry (National Film and Video Foundation, 2021), where the ebb and flow of seasonal production can contribute to high rates of staff turnover at AFDA.

AFDA's distinct focus on its goals, the absence of tenure, negligible welfare support, and focus on generative outcomes through prioritising team learning over individual learning, pose a significant challenge for staff and students to comprehend and actualise the teaching and learning differences between AFDA and those of traditional state institutions.

AFDA students form part of a diverse continuum of school leavers coming from an unequal, outdated, and in many instances, an under–resourced secondary school system, one that has failed the large majority of its learners (Benatar, 2021; Jansen, 2017). Like many PHEIs, AFDA is a semi-elite private and independent institution (Kruss, 2007; Somerville, 2021) that charges fees that are higher than those charged by State universities. Although these fees are higher due to the non – subsidisation of private higher education by the state, 70 percent of the AFDA student fee payers are BPoC, reflecting an inversion of the stereotype identified by Kruss (2007), that PHEIs are the domain of a White elite (2007). AFDA students are creative, enjoy the practical aspects of their qualifications, and are focused on employability and the credentials offered by a semi-elite institution, albeit in a non-traditional career as part of Richard Florida's (2004) creative class and economy. This particular aspect of the industry generally allows them to pursue their creative

passions and ambitions outside of an 08:00-17:00 office-bound job. The motivation for incorporating senior students in the research was based on the need for the research to engage with those who had a lived experience ranging between three and four years of the AFDA curriculum and learning approach.

The alumni were primarily sourced from the AFDA 2015 cohort, providing the research with a group of students who had had an adequate post-graduation period to realise the benefits or failings of their AFDA learning experience. The AFDA alumni are prominent and pervasive in South Africa's developing motion picture, entertainment, and associated industrial sectors (Bell-Roberts, 2022; National Film and Video Association, 2021).

Given the political nature of the day-to-day experience of most South Africans dealing with the legacies of apartheid, the decolonisation of higher education, and the urgency of the challenges of South Africa's new democracy, it is important to note that AFDA staff and students are not formally involved in any on-campus political activities. AFDA's multi-regional campuses across Johannesburg (established in 1994), Cape Town (established in 2003), Durban (established in 2011), Port Elizabeth (established in 2015) and Gaborone-Botswana (established in 2015 and discontinued in 2018), uses a central autonomy and distributed and standardised leadership, and learning and teaching approach (Davison & Ou, 2018; Groenwald, 2018; Harrison et al., 2010; Nel, 2007), as described in Chapter 2). The student representative committee, Continued Learning Value Assessment (CLVA), on each campus monitors and maintains the quality and parity of learning, teaching, facilities and equipment through a quarterly assessment completed by students and reported

on to the institution's Senate. Staff issues are managed through the Deans of the campuses and the institution's centralised Human Resources department.

AFDA's socio-constructive liberationist learning and teaching environment is collaborative, highly competitive and, annually, it generates over 700 outcomes (short films, music videos, documentaries, theatre productions, media, television content, music albums and new businesses). All graduation work is formally archived and made available from the registry of each individual campus. Various project–led learning cycles that mimic industrial practices facilitate the acquisition of cognitive, intellectual, aesthetic, technical and attitudinal skills required to concetualise their ideas which, in turn, are perceptualised through the presentation of their research and the modelling of narrative concepts. Once given the green light by an assessment panel, the production teams concretise (produce a body of work), which is then marketed, exhibited and distributed to garner audience or market responses. These responses form part of the overall student assessment scores. The above learning process should be considered an important feature of the AFDA's learning system. It forms a vital part of the contextual framework for interpreting the responses of the participants of the research, especially in terms of the dynamics of collaboration, which can foster cohesion and polarise staff and students (Johnson et al., 2007).

The racial demographics of faculty staff and students vary from campus to campus. The overall national race demographic of BPoC students at the time of the research stood at approximately 70 percent (AFDA HR Department and National Registry, August 2020). While race is not used as a comparative tool in the research,

the study proposed a target of 70 percent representation of BPoC based on the overall racial demographic of the AFDA student cohort across the four campuses.

Student racial demographics illustrate a progressive transformation of the student body over time. This, however, as is the case for historically White university HWU (Price, 2023), is not the case for AFDA's teaching faculty. At the time of the data collection, the national average of 37 percent of AFDA teaching faculty were Black, Indian, or People of Colour (BPoC), with 63 percent of White lecturers making up the balance of the learning faculty (AFDA National Registry, 2020).
It should be noted that when it became apparent in the early receipt of the questionnaire responses that the BPoC race demographic of respondents that completed the survey was 29 percent lower than expected, purposeful sampling (Suri, 2011) of BPoC was employed in a non-coercive fashion, which was in line with LOREC's guidelines and marginally contributed to an increase in the study's race demographic ambitions.

A number of reasons are cited for not achieving the proposed target of 70 percent. These include adherence to the non-coercive or voluntary imperative set by the study's ethical bunds; the non-completion of questions, survey fatigue (due to the high number of surveys employed as part of the COVID-19 emergency curriculum and implementation) and lower-than-expected responses from BPoC students and teaching faculty:

- The time required for the average completion rate for the questionnaire (plus or minus 31 minutes), the open-ended question approach.

- COVID-19 and the exacerbation of the digital divide (where students and staff lacked the necessary data, personal computers and motivation that they may have had in a typical campus environment.
- The impact of the eleven *Prefer-not-to-say* (PNTS), and three *Other* descriptive statistic options were not helpful in terms of asserting the proposed 70 percent BPoC participant sample, as they constituted 15.8 percent of the overall composition of the racial demographics. Therefore, the 70 percent BPoC was a theoretical ideal that did not fully transpire.

However, the overall qualitative response was not impacted on in any material fashion in terms of the study's findings and recommendations. The listing of the participants' descriptive statistics is not used as a comparative tool, but rather as a measure of transparency to ensure a valid representation of BPoC in the findings. The two focus groups would fare much better in achieving the proposed 70 percent target, with an overall 65 percent representation of BPoC participants, which provided the necessary triangulation between themselves and the questionnaire substantiating the researcher's earlier assertion regarding the theoretical ideal of the BPoC participant composition (70 percent).

3.6.1 The recruitment of the research participants

The recruitment of a voluntary sample for the research followed all confidentiality and non-coercive strategies (as required by UoL Ethics Committee [LOREC]). The contact details of approximately 140 members of the teaching faculty and over 400 senior students were requested from the AFDA National Registry through e-mail. A random selection of staff, students and alumni followed from the provided lists.

Invitations for voluntary and confidential participation in the questionnaire were done via the researcher's private e-mail. The invitations included the PIS (participant information sheet) and utilised the Liverpool letterhead to ensure that participants knew the research was an independent study. The focus group participants received these participation information sheets (PIS) through their personal institutional e-mails, which were completed and returned to the researcher via e-mail (https://drive.google.com/file/d/11HuMjJjX5c2pnIc-zUX2omB4iyFd17WQ/view?usp=share_link

A link to the Survey Monkey questionnaire was provided and included Questions 1-10 (the consent forms) (https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SMrtmbE_2F56ZNrM1kuvVJRo_2Fg_3D_3D/).

The initial process of completing the questionnaire was slow and many of the questionnaires were incomplete (see proposed reasons below). Further participants were randomly selected from the database acquired from the National Registry and were added to the invitation list. At the same time, those who had not responded were reminded of the opportunity to participate in the research. The questionnaire research window was indefinitely kept open, and although 118 participants had filled out the consent forms and the descriptive statistical questions, only 69 fully completed the questionnaire.

As with the questionnaire, responses to the invitations to the focus group participants were slow and required that reminders be sent out. Potential BPoC participants were purposefully targeted to develop a sample group that was representative of the AFDA student race demographic across its four campuses (70

percent). The questionnaire would finally yield a BPoC total of 52.5 percent, which was larger than the number of White participants in the questionnaire (see Table 3.1 below).

Table 3.1: Questionnaire responses including race demographics (Participant #1-#69)

Race	Percentage of questionnaire demographic
Black	28.9 (n=20)
White	43.9 (n=30)
Coloured	5.8 (n=4)
Indian	5.8 (n=4)
Other	4.3 (n=3)
PNTS	11.5 (8)
BPoC Total	52.5 (31/59)

Once the potential participants of the focus groups had read the PIS and agreed to participate via electronic mail to the researcher's contact address, the proposed dates for the two focus groups, optional reading material (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IENPEUPG_wxJf-AKR4bv8CAtmuZ1mx9i/view?usp=sharing), the proposed questions, and the FG consent form were supplied via the researcher's electronic mail. Members of the management and leadership were declined participation in the focus group to ensure that the teaching faculty did not become inhibited or compromised by the potential of authority or power differentials and dynamics (Brooman et al., 2015; Iversen et al., 2015). After sending out further reminders, the study was then able to secure what

was considered an appropriate sample for each focus group, including achieving the race demographic of Black and People of Colour (see Tables 3.2; 3.3; 3.4 and 3.5)[*], as well as an equitable split of the teaching faculty, students and alumni.

Table 3.2: Breakdown of race demography of teaching faculty FG (Participant #79)

Race	Percentage	Number of participants
Black	60	6
White	30	3
Coloured	10	1
Indian	0	0
Total BPoC	70	7

Table 3.3: Breakdown of race demography for student FG (participants #80-#89)

Race	Percentage	Number
Black	30	3
White	40	4
Coloured	10	1
Indian	20	2
Total BPoC	60	6

**

Table 3.4: Breakdown of overall BPoC of the participant sample

BPoC participants	**Percentage**
Student FG	60
Faculty FG	70
Questionnaire	53
Total	**61**

Table 3.5: Overall summary of Research Participant Status (Participants #1-#89)

Faculty	**Faculty/Alum.**	**Alumni**	**Students**	**Total**
28	13	14	34	89

3.7 Positionality of the researcher

As the founder and Chairman of an independently owned and recently listed business entity (Johannesburg Stock Exchange in August 2017), it is understandable that a number of moral and ethical research challenges exist regarding the positionality of the primary researcher, especially a 66 year old South African, White male who is part of the hierarchy of the institution on which case study is based. During presentations to AFDA faculty and students on the topic of decolonisation in 2018, the researcher became aware of the sensitivities of proprietorship over the

concept of decolonisation (Fanon, 1963; Halagao, 2010; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni, 2017). Similarly, the extent of the challenges of the researcher's perceived status and the sensitivity of the chosen topic of decolonisation became more evident when the UoL's Research Ethics Committee clearance, elevated the research study ethics clearance to the UoL's highest ethical body, LOREC, primarily due to the sensitivity of the topic and the perceived vulnerability of the participants.

Although described later in the thesis (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2), part of describing the researcher's positionality and power-authority issues in regard to the sample group, requires that a number of key factors be considered:

- Although no longer physically present on AFDA campuses at the time of the field research, the researcher has remained involved with AFDA as a consultant. Since 2017, the researcher has been serving on AFDA's Education Value Assessment (EVA) committee. The researcher's role is largely concerned with online staff training and enrichment, overseeing faculty teaching observation and ensuring new faculty staff candidates meet AFDA's appointment criteria. This includes vetting candidates' education qualifications, their suitability for the advertised post, a review of their industrial experience and determining whether they contribute to that particular campus's Black Economic Empowerment and Equity transformation requirements (BEEE).

- Over the 28 years of AFDA's development of its five campuses across South Africa and Botswana, the researcher assumed many roles and

responsibilities, which included, being the original founder (1994) and co-founder (1997), Executive Director and Chairman of the AFDA board (1997-2017), National Marketing Director (1994-2017), discipline champion in production design and producing (1994-2003), spear-heading development of AFDA's five campuses (1997-2015), Buildings and Operations Director (1994-2000), Dean of the Cape Town campus, head of motion picture medium Cape Town (2012), national head of staff training (2017-present), and lecturer across multiple disciplines and programmes (1994-2017). The broad and extensive range of responsibilities provide the research with unique insider-researcher capacities (Costley et al., 2010), but simultaneously, creating objectivity and authority-power differential issues for the study (American Education Research Association, 2011; Bukamal, 2022; Massoud, 2021).

- Coupled with the sensitivity and contestations relating to the topic of the thesis, the researcher's awareness as an insider- researcher was consistently raised (Creamer, 2011), particularly regarding the requirements for validating the interpretative and subjective-objective nature of the research's data collection and analysis processes and conclusions drawn from the study.

- It therefore stands to good reason that the researcher's personal, professional and scholarly subjective-objectivity, interpretative approach and assumptions and assertions to achieve the research aims, is well suited to a less scientific and more human concept of research,

where “it is impossible [for an investigator] to fully remove any bias or projection, but the more investigators learn to pay attention to their inner emotions and thoughts, the better they will be able to separate them from the participants to avoid reproducing the ‘objectifying and imperialist gaze’ associated with traditional Western qualitative methods (Massoud, 2022; Winfield, 2021).

- In view of Winfield’s (2021) post-positivist approach, the researcher consciously and intuitively acknowledged and reflected on his personal subjectivity-objectivity - particularly in terms of his authority, status and the impact of power differential that could exist between him and the participants (Brooman et al., 2015; Bukamal, 2022; Iversen et al., 2015; Massoud,2022), where power is often conferred by position and requires the other to accept (O’Brien et al., 2020). The former has been addressed through the rigour of the UoL LOREC committee approval. The latter, in the ongoing back-and-forth research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009) and ongoing reflective processes that questioned the researcher’s subjective objectivity (Boud, 2001).

- Throughout the research process and its final completion, the researcher has constantly drawn and reflected on how these factors impact on his thinking and how he could mitigate the unintended consequences of his unconscious Whiteness and White authority (Pfotenhauer, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Similarly, the potential incompatibility for some participants in terms of the oppressor healing

the oppressed (Freire, 1993), or Lorde's (2018) assertion that the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

- To some extent, as is usually the case of the insider-researcher, these incompatibilities are tempered by the value of the researcher's intimate knowledge of AFDA in each department, plus the inevitable scrutiny and expected bias that his research integrity will be put under as the founder and ex-chairman of AFDA. The detail of the various strategies adopted by the study relate to the use of Guba and Lincoln's (2008) research framework to question the trustworthiness of the research.
- As such, a growing understanding of the researcher's positionality and its dynamic and shifting nature (Bish, 2018, cited in Bukamal, 2022), remains an important part of his daily back-and-forth introspection, where the researcher constantly needed to be reminded of his ignorance of the other, to put himself in the shoes of others, introspect on his Whiteness and privilege, and heed the dangers of cathetersising his White guilt to the pain and suffering of others (Von Bever Donker et al., 2017).

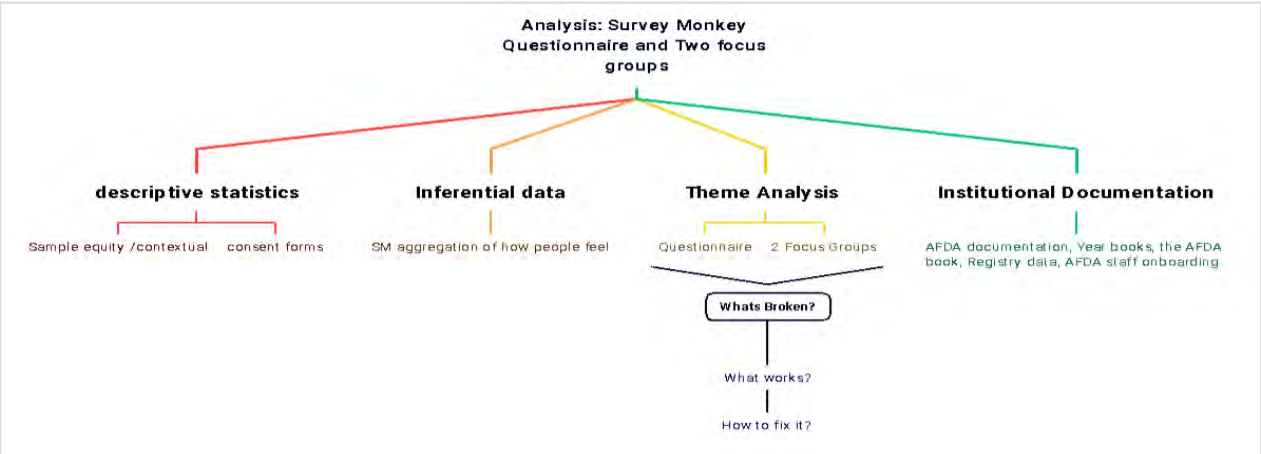
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The analysis of data procured through the questionnaire and the two focus groups utilised four types of statistical and data analysis methods, which include descriptive statistical analysis, inferential statistical analysis, thematic data analysis, and the use of institutional history documentation and statistics to support any inferences and assumptions regarding AFDA as the singular case study subject, (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4:1 Research analysis overview

Zoom to magnify image.



Source:Researcher

The use of the four types of analysis is consistent with the study's methodological pluralism and mixed-methods paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Young, 2016). As a means of serving the transformative objectives of the study, it utilises an interpretative approach to analyse participants' viewpoints in a manner that highlights their voices (Vaismoradi et al., 2013, p. 398, as cited in Struebert et al., 1997), The quantitative descriptive statistics provide insights into the study's race

and status contexts, while the inferential statistical analysis provides an aggregated guideline *for how people feel.* Both offer the participants' qualitative responses with high and low inference-making capacities that are dependent on the response's content. They offer the research a mixed toolkit to make and support the themes emerging from the back-and-forth iterations and the convergences and divergences between and among the different data sources to deliver and crystallise the emergent structure and themes of the findings and discussion.

4.2 Quantitative descriptive statistics

Quantitative descriptive statistics, according to Fisher and Marshall (2009), are important and dependent on the role that the research would like it to play in describing the characteristics of a sample, particularly in terms of any divergences or convergences that it would like to emphasise (Cohen et al., 2007). In the instance of the AFDA case study questionnaire, the automated descriptive statistical analysis and graphs were neither utilised comparatively, nor utilised to quantify any particular demographic, but it was primarily used as a means of providing the necessary data to establish the necessary race and status equity as demographics of the study (see Tables 3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 3.4 and 3.5). Whilst not purposefully forming part of the study's research objectives, the descriptive statistics and analysis provide certain contextual interpretative opportunities and insights for the reader. The use of descriptive statistics in the two focus groups would offer a similar opportunity to the study, except that the two focus groups were not anonymous and provided the study with several necessary up-to-date and day-to-day analyses to assist the monitoring of representation targets and administration of the study which included a completed consent form

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AsVvxbFxW6rkxCRV2xbBAiS8OhucE8vX/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=109906544013226976889&rtpof=true&sd=true), as well as the personal descriptive race and AFDA role identity or status statistics of each participant (See SM link: (https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-rtmbE_2F56ZNrM1kuvVJRo_2Fg_3D_3D/).

As stated previously, the race and status of the questionnaire respondents were used as part of the contextual background for interpretative-qualitative analysis. Added to the measure of transparency provided by the study was the tagging of each participant's verbatim quote with race and status, which also provided added context to enhance the reader's assumptions and interpretations without distracting the research from its transformative goals.

4.2.1 Quantitative inferential research (data) analysis

The Survey Monkey (SM) sentiment indicator formed part of the automated-inferential research analysis used in the study. The SM sentiment indicator utilises computational linguistics (Liu, 2020) and artificial intelligence strategies (Lanier, 2014) to provide a rough or "loose aggregation of data" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 392) of how people feel. In this instance, this relates to how participants felt regarding their lived experiences of the AFDA institutional and academic curriculum and the impact of colonialism, apartheid, transformation, decolonisation, coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), and #BlackLivesMatter.

Natural language processing (computational linguistics) offered the research the capacity to process large caches of data (Liu, 2020; Young, 2016) and provide it

with indications of the polarisation of a thick narrative (Geertz, 1973) made up of the opinion, sentiment, appraisals, emotions, and attitudes in the participant responses of the questionnaire (Cambria et al., 2017; Liu, 2020). As a more automated analytical tool for qualitative research analysis, it may not have the uncontaminated qualities of quantitative research. However, in the case of the current study, it is used to provide particular insights and support to the thematic analysis underpinning the research.

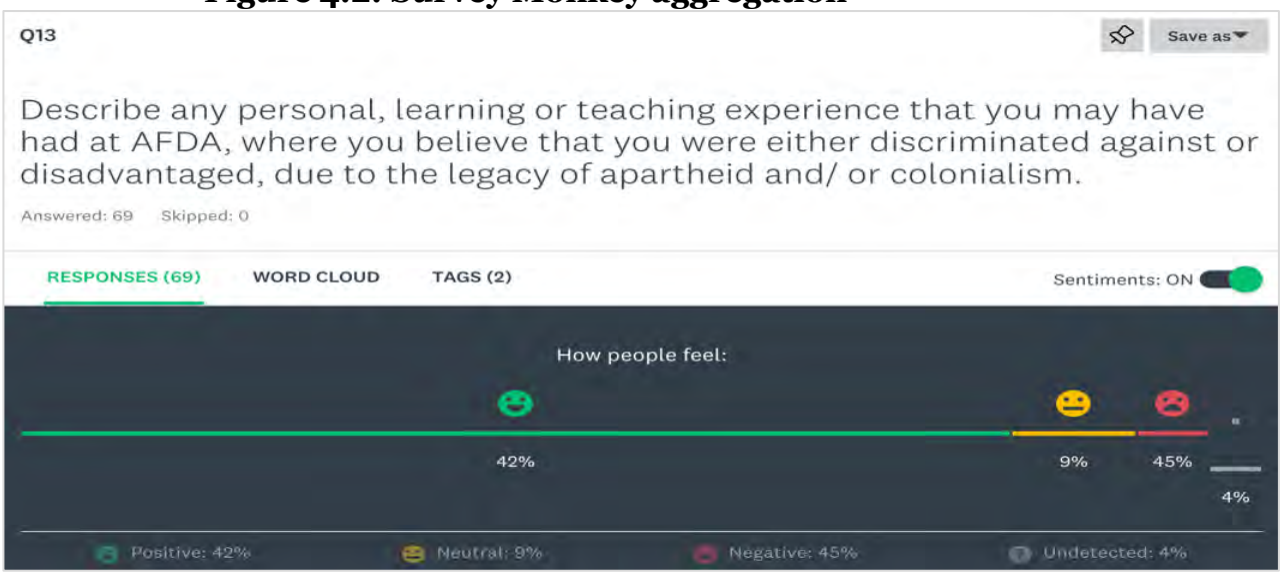
The qualitative, online questionnaire or survey format can be criticised for its superficiality and for allowing participants to opt out for a middle-of-the-road perspective, or what Young (2016, p. 16) refers to as “measures of central tendency”. These tendencies are mitigated using the more direct responses of participants in the two focus groups, which facilitate, complement, and triangulate all the three sources of data and their interpretation.

Similarly, contestations exist around the inability of automated linguistic analysis to deal with ambiguity, compound responses, and other interpretative issues which the language and syntax of the responses may pose (Liu, 2020). Where participant response anomalies, ambiguities, or misunderstandings exist due to specific computational word analytics limitations (Cambria et al., 2007; Liu, 2020), the Survey Monkey edit function was used in a subjective-objective way to adjust the percentages. The required adjustments did not impact participants' sentiments in any material fashion.

The questionnaire's automated data collection and analysis format is probably the most useful aspect of using the Survey Monkey format, as it provided a day-by-day collection of data, with percentile updates of how the participants felt. The SM provided both a questionnaire summary and individual response summary for each participant, allowing for tentative judgments and interpretations of both the qualitative responses and quantitative inferences, which occurred through the back-and-forth process used in the study (Tashakori & Teddlie, 2009),would develop the emergent categorisations and tentative themes of the study (Ercikan & Roth, 2011).

The automatic aggregation of participant responses to Questions 13-20 reflected whether participants had a positive, neutral, harmful, or unknown sentiment toward a particular issue related to their lived experiences of AFDA (see Figure 4.2 and Table 4.2) SM Overall aggregation of Quantitative Inferential analysis of questionnaire below).

Figure 4.2: Survey Monkey aggregation



Source: Survey Monkey

Table 4.2: Survey Monkey Aggregation

Question	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Undetected
13. On-campus discrimination	42%	9%	45%	4%
14. On-campus transformative experiences	70%	7%	22%	1%
15. A unique institution with decolonial properties	86%	6%	7%	1%
16. AFDA is a decolonised institution	52%	14 %	29%	4%
17. Recommendations for curriculum change	77%	9%	12%	3%
18. Recommendations for organisational culture change	80%	10%	6%	4%
19. ADAPT curriculum	70%	12%	13%	6%
20. Impact of BLM, HE protests, and COVID-19	71%	7%	19%	3%
Aggregate	68.5%	9.25%	19.1%	3.25%

Source: Researcher (Drawn from Survey Monkey aggregates)

The significant statistical data provided in the aggregation is useful for early consideration and analysis by the researcher. It does, however, not provide reliable quantitative statistics in a standardised and unquestionable fashion. The compounded nature of certain questions and the inability of the software analysis to separate or differentiate issues addressed in a response, and any ambiguities or multiple responses that range from positive, to neutral and to negative, all contribute to the unreliability of the analysis. Cambria et al. (2007) and Liu (2020) previously alluded to the limitations described above. However, SM's ability to collect the participants' responses and provide the necessary ethical documentation was useful

as it offered the study a secure and easy way of navigating the audit trail of participants' responses for purposes of analysis, interpretation and reflection.

4.2.3 Qualitative thematic content analysis

In a qualitative study, the thematic analysis (TA) method is a key aspect of the post-positivist, pluralist and mixed-methods approach adopted by the study. TA is widely used in qualitative research as part of the research methods, tools, and processes (Nowell et al., 2017), as cited in Braun and Clarke (2006) and is well suited to the back-and-forth process required to identify, analyse, organise, and describe the various categories, themes, and units of the study. With its more flexible and adaptive capacities, TA has the capacity to facilitate an emergent, rich, detailed, and complex data account (Green & Thorogood, 2004; Vaismoradi et al., 2013); in so doing, TA facilitates access to data and insights highlighting the lived experiences of the AFDA teaching faculty, students, and alumni, including unanticipated or outlier responses (Nowell et al., 2017).

The thematic analysis approach proved suitable for managing the large textual data gathered from the study's 89 participants as well as facilitating the manifest and latent themes emanating from the trends, patterns, and relationships in the datum (Vaismoradi et al., 2013) produced by the questionnaire and two focus groups (see Appendix 2,3 and 4). In engaging simultaneously with the automated quantitative analysis and early judgments and interpretations of the qualitative data, the study could use both generalised low-inference and, more specifically, high- inference-making in their respective contexts (Serlin, 2011, p.143), in so doing, contributing to the building of categories and themes for the thematic analysis of the study through

initiating ideas through a reflective or introspective "analytical thoughtfulness" (Selzer & Rose, 2011, p. 245).

While various theorists acknowledge the difficulties associated with categorising theme analysis and distinguishing it from content analysis, a precedent for going beyond the boundaries of research categorisations was set and existed in the automated inferential analysis provided by the SM sentiment indicator. Similarly, the pluralistic and roaming nature of thematic analysis (TA) allowed for the analysis to intrude on narrative analysis and phenomenology (Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012; Vaismoradi et al., 2013), especially where the need for the researcher to provide a broader understanding of the context and how it influences the analysis of the data (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The use of deductive (generalised and accepted facts) and inductive (based on inferences made from observation) approaches, are characteristic of the blurring of the analysis boundaries of the study. These analytic approaches are further consistent with the study's pluralistic qualities and are concomitant to a non-linear description that interprets and highlights the participants' real-life stories and viewpoints (Struebert et al., 1997; Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Struebert et al., 1997).

4.2.3.1 The thematic analysis of the questionnaire and focus groups (Qualitative).

To produce a new way of knowing, in terms of finding remedies for existing challenges and new opportunities to foster the acceleration of the transformation of AFDA through curriculum design, it was critical that the theme analysis approach be used to objectively and subjectively accommodate the identification, description, and

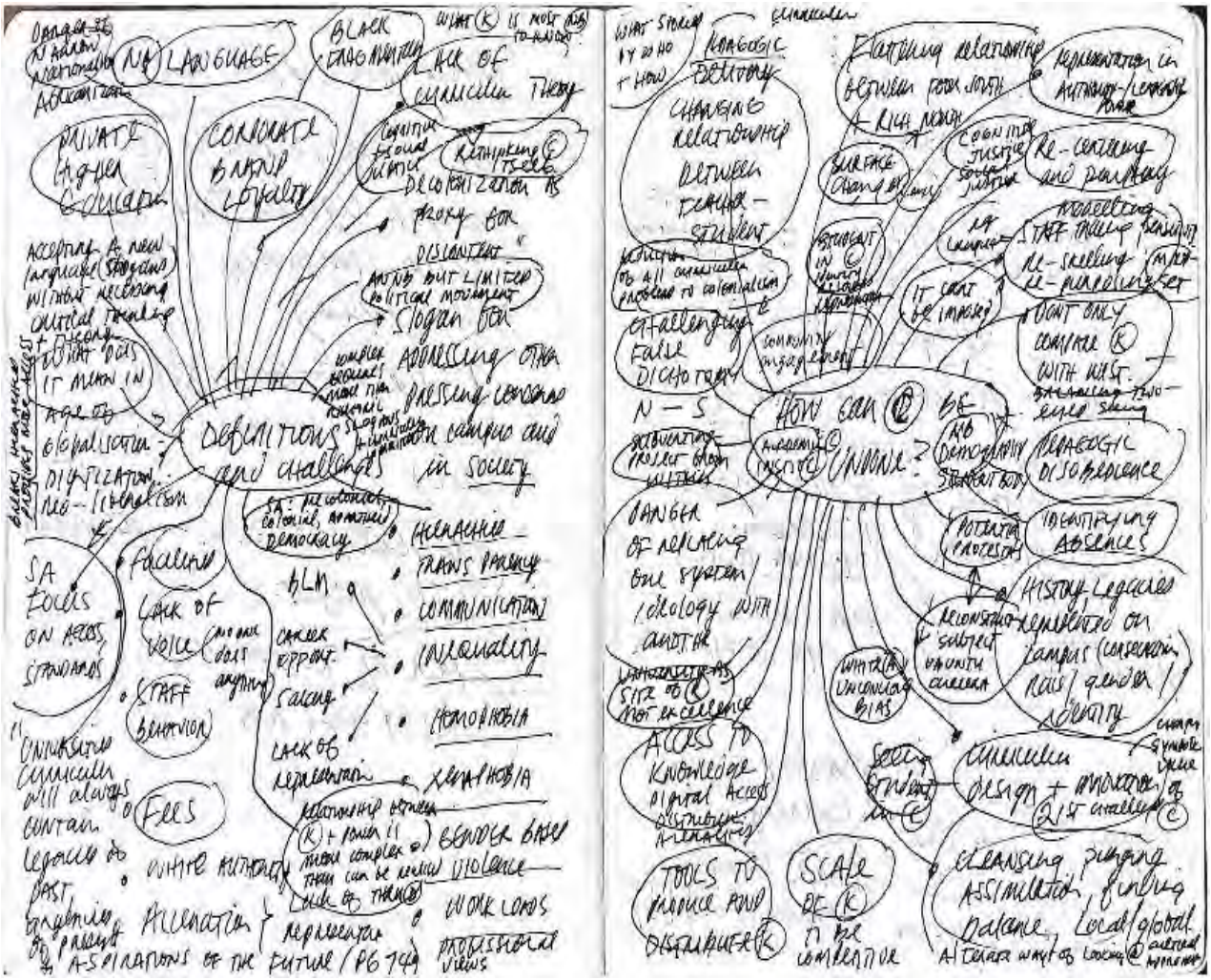
interpretation of the data (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Each respondent's data was taken into consideration to manage and preserve the credibility of the study and to ensure the egalitarian intentions of the research. In so doing, this enabled the capturing of the visceral critique and perspectives of the participants in an authentic and democratic fashion (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Toma, 2011).

Sixty-nine (69) completed participant responses were achieved and provided wide ranging responses from singular phrases like *yes* or *no*, as well as short sentences and paragraphs of varying sizes. Respondents #48, #49 and #50 offered extensive (in excess of 300 words) and robust responses compared to most participants. Their responses serve an outlier function useful for providing alternative or new insights, thus contributing to the research's objectivity (Cohen et al., 2007; Krippendorff, 2004). Whilst certain responses were articulate, others were often characterised by clumsy syntax, ambiguity, and contradiction, which can be expected when utilising open-ended questions posed to a broad group of participants (Cohen et al., 2007).

The first phase of the analysis began with the daily collection, early reading and note-making of the automated questionnaire transcripts. As part of the early analysis manifested tentative and latent categories and themes. Most categories and themes were regarded in a context which was initially more bound to reflection and musing, as possible contexts for responses. As the new automated transcripts trickled in, a closer and further reading and identification of tentative themes emerged in the iterative back-and-forth process that would characterise the study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009).

Various analogue mind maps evolved and were drawn up by hand (see Figure 4.3)These initiated a number of broad summaries, tentative categories, themes and sub-themes that began to crystallise from the early interpretations and inference-making, some of which were based on the “loose aggregations" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 392) produced by the SM automated sentiment analysis for each question (see Table 4.2). As mentioned previously, these *aggregations* were used loosely in tandem with the TA process to either support or negate or produce new ideas through both intuitive and informed judgements (Ercikan & Roth, 2011). This uncovered the various patterns and relationships drawn from the data and the further development of various mind-maps and trees.

Figure 4.3: Example: Early analysis of questionnaire hand-drawn map

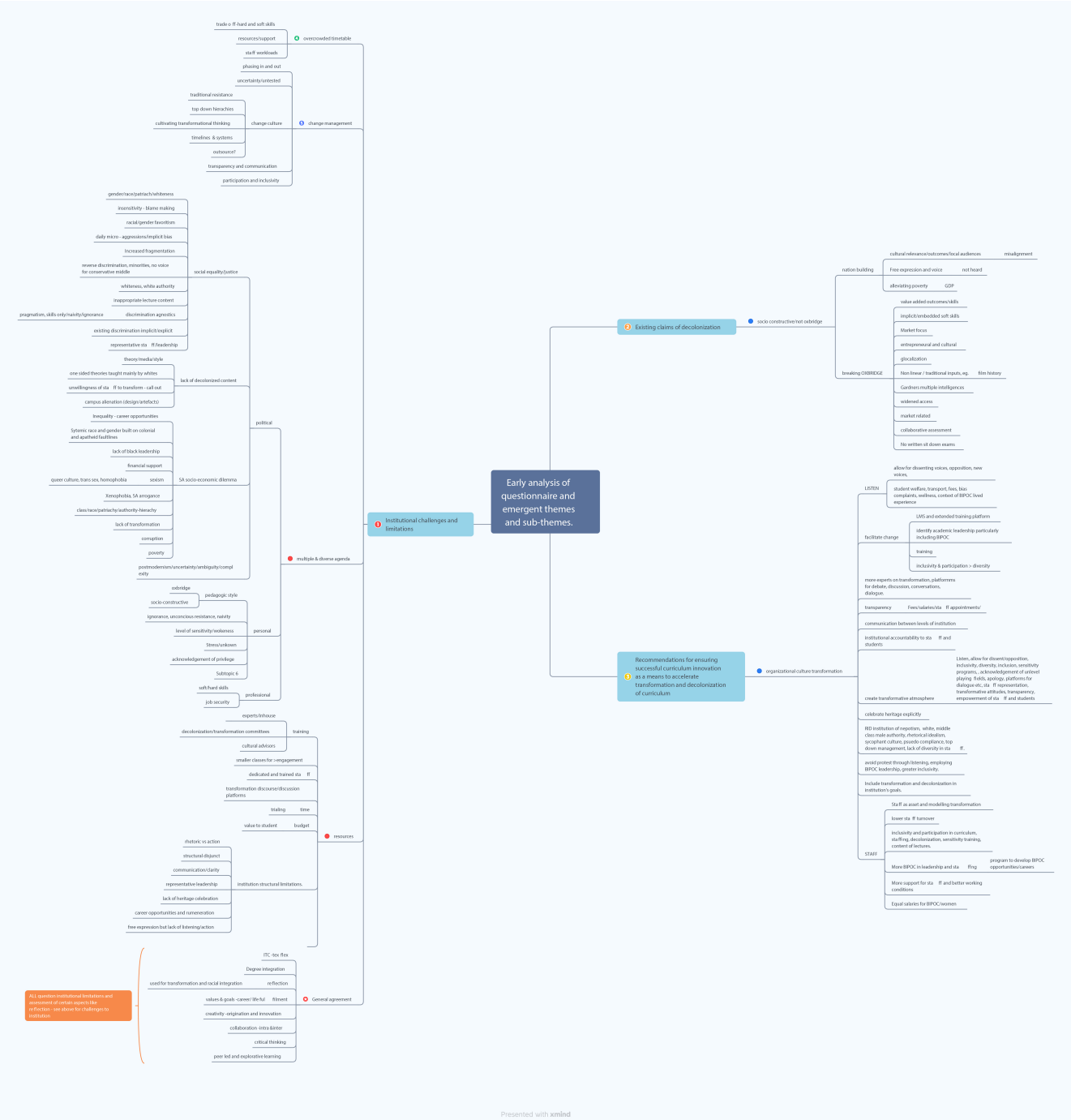


Source: Researcher

From these analogue mind maps, the MindX mapping software produced a consolidated divergence and convergence of the various themes and summaries emerging from the data clusters (see Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: Early analysis of questionnaire responses and emergent sub-themes using mindX

Zoom to magnify image.



Source: Researcher

The second phase of the sequential analysis of the data elicited from the teaching faculty and student focus group (respondents #70 – #90) followed. Unfortunately, the researcher's expectations of the possible impact of the sequential process on the first FG were compromised by allowing each participant the opportunity to answer each question. The time allowance of two hours did not sufficiently allow for direct triangulation opportunities beyond the questions that had been prepared for the FG – which in itself had been a challenge to complete and conduct in an interpersonal and conversational fashion.

A similar process unfolded, except that this time, existing and new data precedents and their interpretation were achieved in the immediate and early reflections (Boud, 2001) of the teaching faculty FG, where various screenings and the listening and transcription of the recorded audio and audio-visual of the two-hour session provided a more complex analysis process, especially in terms of various contextual interpretations and triangulation opportunities, with some validating existing themes, while others opposing and creating new themes and sub-categories.

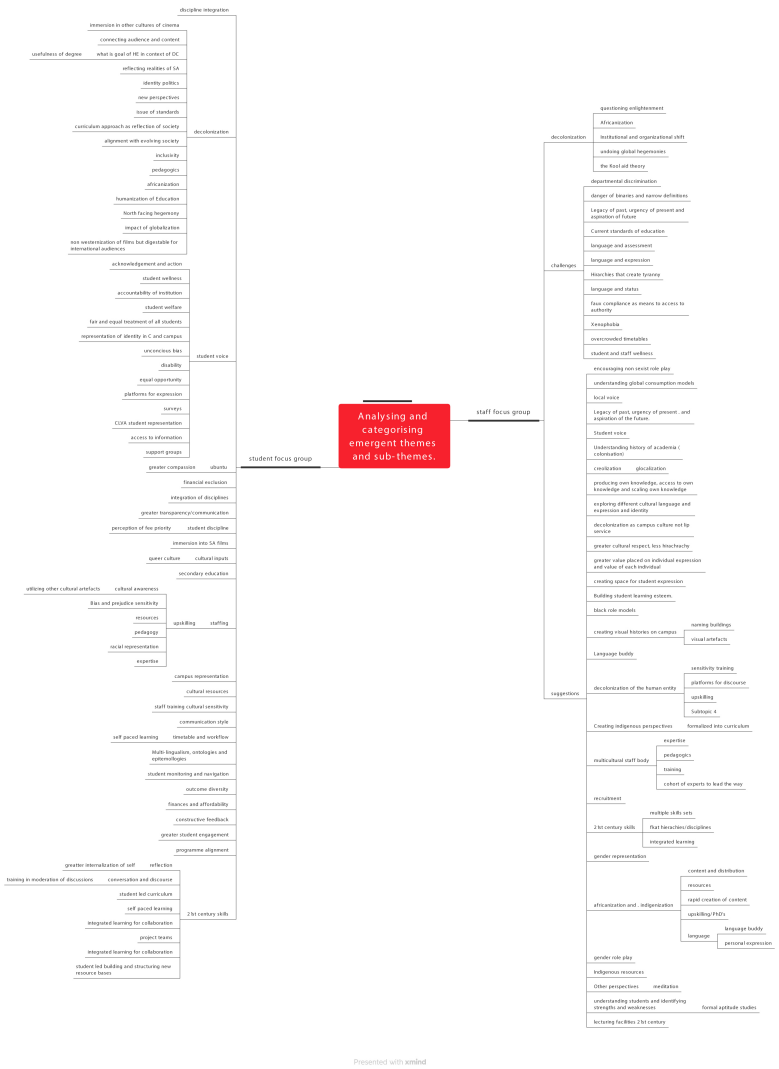
The process would be repeated a week later. A similar distinction for the collection and early interpretation of the data unfolded, leading to a vast array of themes and categories presented in analogue and digital mind-maps that began to define the research. A more complex interpretation and classification of the data followed from the focus group transcriptions, where the researcher's behavioural observations of various FG participants, their interpersonal relations, and the exchanges drawn from the automated chat-box recordings, were integrated into the

questionnaire data clusters and tentative themes emerging from the analysis of all the three data sources.

The observations and experiences of the focus groups, the viewing and notating of the recordings, the transcription process, and the close reading and re-reading of the transcriptions, were fully conscious of the existing research (context) set by the earlier questionnaire analysis and the initial mind-mapping. The review and close reading of the FGs produced several other specific themes, some of which were related to the questionnaire, while others facilitated new stand-alone themes that deepened, opposed, aligned, or contextualised (triangulated) certain existing themes, as well as increased certain established frequency patterns found in the general questionnaire (Creswell, 2009).

Figure 4.5a: Analysing and categorising emergent themes and sub-themes from focus groups

Zoom to magnify image.



Source: Researcher

Given the researcher's historical status and earlier acknowledgement of my authority-power differential (American Education Research Association, 2011; Bukamal, 2022; Massoud, 2022), it was not surprising to note that certain faculty and students used the opportunity to have access to the founder and Chairman of AFDA, to elevate their personal dissatisfactions with AFDA. In many cases, the researcher let the shift in focus take its course, as these personal dissatisfactions and

injustices felt by certain participants were, in one way or another, linked to the absences and failures of the institution and this contributed to the authenticity of the study and its egalitarian spirit. The focus on personal pertinences is characteristic of Tuck and Yang's (2010) caveat that *decolonisation as a metaphor*, which has a tendency to address multiple dissatisfactions and injustices. The researcher is not impervious to these criticisms which, at times, can be hurtful or disappointing. Nevertheless, the goal to produce a visceral, personal, and at times, conversational approach, provides the study with a detailed and emotional account of the respondent's perspectives of decolonisation and their lived experience of the AFDA curriculum and its delivery.

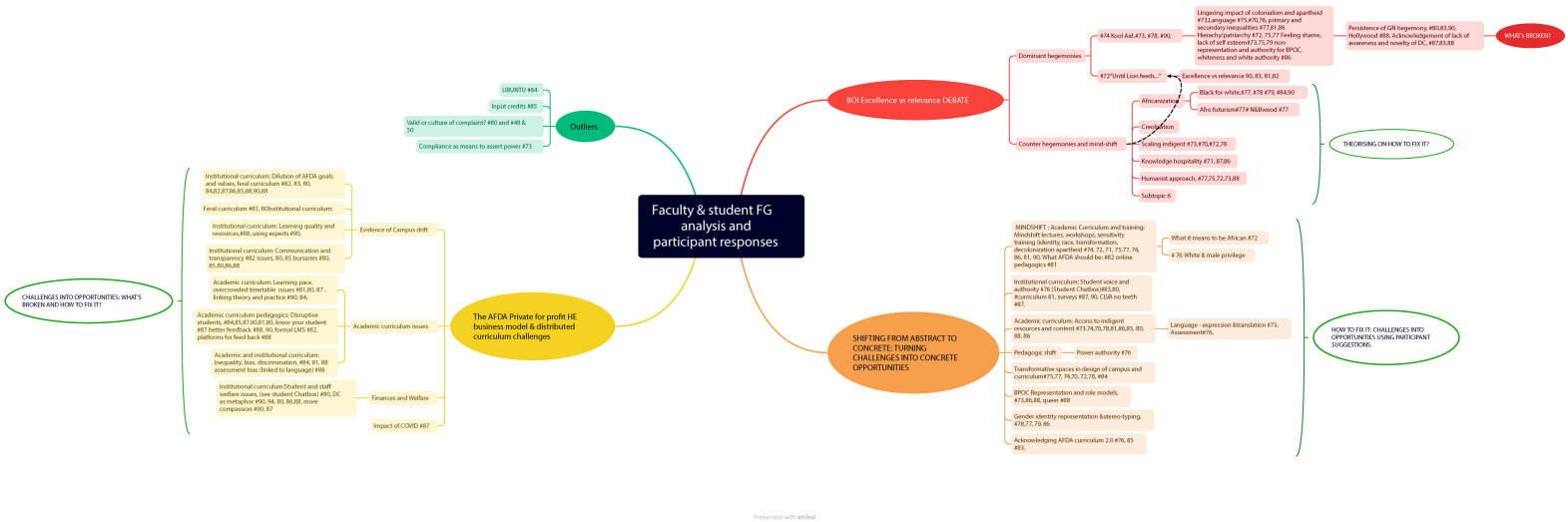
Overall, the tone and gesturing of the participants' voice, and the responses given to one another's ideas and statements, created a more personal account than the anonymous online questionnaire. For the researcher, responses from the focus groups ranged from clearly and directly articulated, whilst in other instances, certain assumptions and inferences needed to be made from the participants' tone or illogical speech patterns– inferences that are difficult to appreciate in a questionnaire, where erratic grammar, minimal responses like or unfocussed responses made it difficult to understand what the participant was intending to convey.

Similarly, the third phase of the analysis of the study was initiated through the challenge-opportunity framework (Table 4.3) emerging from the themes and sub-themes derived from the data emerging from the integration of the focus groups and questionnaire. The emergent domains for locating and paralleling the data's patterns, themes and categories facilitated the listing of either direct or inferred challenges the respondents identified as opportunities. These were either located in the respondents' suggestions or as knowledge inferred from themes and patterns in the data, some of which were validated through existing theories or new assumptions made by the research.

The third phase of the analysis was also characterised by the process of scouring the transcripts and the cross-sorting of participants' responses (see Figure 4.5b), which identifies the challenges (failings and absences), the institution's transformation achievements and the recommendations from the respondents as a triumvirate of data expedited in order for *real* individuals to solve a *real* problem in a specific context (Yin, 2003). The ongoing back-and-forth and the re-visiting of the verbatim descriptions, matching them to the challenge-opportunity framework, produced multiple interpretations and inferences. All of these contributed to the emergent themes and sub-themes that began to dictate the structure of the study's findings.

Figure 4.5b: Example of cross sorting of FG mind-maps of themes based on participant responses

Zoom to magnify image.



Source: The Researcher

Table 4.3 Thematic analysis - Key themes and sub-themes

	Key themes	Sub – categories
4.3.1.	The impact of force - coercive change (#BLM and #FeesMustFall #RhodesMustFall)	4.3.1.1 A call to action 4.3.1.2 Highlighting existing inequalities and discrimination Impact on decolonising the curriculum AFDA's lack of a formal position on decolonisation The negative impact of force – coercive change The reframing of AFDA's nation-building agenda as decolonisation

4.3.2	The impact of COVID-19 on accelerating decolonisation of higher education	Impact on teaching and learning Highlighting the digital divide Reframing and assessing AFDA's nation-building agenda
4.3.3	The battle of ideas	Defining a relevant HE in the 21st Century Africanisation Creolisation (re) Centring the curriculum Maintaining the colonial hegemony
4.3.4	Failure to reverse the ongoing perpetuation of campus inequalities and discriminatory practices	The perpetuation of inequality and discrimination Discrimination and bias in the classroom The lack of BPoC representation in positions of decision-making and authority Cultural vulnerability Daily micro-aggressions, sexism, toxic masculinity, gender and discrimination of foreign nationals White authority and Whiteness Race agnostics, denialism
4.3.5	Building on what works	Widened access A socio–constructive approach Culturally relevant inputs and outputs Integrated degrees and disciplines

		Popular disciplines or programmes Alternative individual and collaborative assessment Project teams Individual agents of transformation 4.3.5.1 The ADAPT hybrid curriculum.
4.3.6	Reforming the institutional curriculum	Re-imagining AFDA's goals and leadership Greater staff welfare and support Creating transformational events and activities Greater student voice and support Improved communication structures
4.3.7	Achieving cognitive justice through Academic curriculum transformation and reform	Scaling indigent knowledge Developing competitive global skills Staff and student participation in curriculum design Transformation content and sensitivity training Academic content delivery (pedagogics) Utilising industry experts Ongoing staff training

Source: Researcher

As part of solving a *real* problem by *real* individuals in a specific context (Yin, 2003), the matching of appropriate participant responses with themes and sub-themes began a reciprocal process of shifting and self-organising the challenge-opportunity framework. The ongoing identification and mapping of tentative and

emergent categorisations, domains, concepts, themes and units in a loose- alignment to the research questions and objectives, digital flow charts, mind-maps visualised and structures, all formed part of the many iterations of the study's back-and-forth analysis and introspection processes (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009; Roslyn, 2011). This is an always shifting process that demands an ongoing and dynamic revisiting of and reflection on my subjective-objectivity interpretations of participant response. As mentioned previously, many of these responses were rigorous, hyper-critical and sometimes painful to contemplate (Jansen, 2019), particularly where the researcher felt complicit or blameworthy for AFDA's failures and absences in its institutional and academic curriculum. Whilst my personal reflection on the challenges and opportunities stoked the hopeful optimism of the research, the researcher was often faced with the contemplation of the greater challenges that South Africans face in terms of transforming the society – a sense often expressed by participants. These personal differences, pertinences and dissatisfactions could cloud the achievements of the institution. The researcher was, nevertheless, encouraged by the authenticity of certain responses and the prospect of turning a challenge into an opportunity to accelerate the decolonisation of the institution as a significant and doable endeavour.

Through further funnelling and synthesising of the data (Marshall & Rosman, 2016), in this back-and-forth personal reflection, the challenge-opportunity framework findings were written up as part of the crossover from the analysis phase to the findings. A panoramic view of the challenge-opportunity findings produced a substantial, manually produced document (a panorama-type of rough draft capturing the findings), which was able to give an overall view of the themes and attendant responses. The painstaking process of developing a manually produced

panoramic view allowed the study to consider all the participants' responses which were appropriate to the study and create an analogue audit trail of the responses (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lAulYhpKc8OUTMR4ECq_lqPBESIQOgRfeNKDVxUoQF8/edit?usp=sharing).

Phase four of the analysis process was characterised by an ongoing sifting and funnelling process in the writing up of various drafts of the research paper, as well as its findings and discussion. This ongoing process included revisiting participants' responses and using further scholarly inputs in rewriting new chapter drafts. This was done on the basis of the appropriation of a matter-of-fact framework that asked: *What is broken? What works? How can we fix it?* These questions were used to analyse and structure the findings (see Figure 5.1.Overview of the findings).

The final analysis phase allowed for the development of further insights into the diverse and multiple contexts of the study and their impact on refining interpretations and the significance of the study for a multi-regional private for-profit higher education provider in post-1994 democratic South Africa.

4.3 Ethical considerations

The proposed study received an ethical clearance from the AFDA Ethical Research Committee, written permissions from the Chief Executive Officer, as well as from LOREC, the University of Liverpool's highest ethics clearance committee. Initially, LOREC had a number of concerns regarding the sensitivity of and risks associated with the research topic, particularly considering the investigator's insider-researcher authority and power-differential status to AFDA staff, students and

alumni. Many of the participants were in one way or another, familiar with the professional status of the researcher, whose reduced role as a consultant (after the August 2017 sale and public listing of AFDA) was limited to leading the training of faculty staff members on behalf of EVA, AFDA's Educational Value Assessment Committee, and providing the required oversight to ensure the successful BEEE transformation of AFDA's teaching faculty.

These interactions are confined to online workshops and include participatory workshops that deal with topics bordering on the decolonisation of higher education and curricula. It is here, where the investigator became critically aware of the burdens of the existing authority and power differential (American Education Research Association, 2011; Bukamal, 2022; Massoud, 2022). Similarly, Freire (1993, 1994), Lorde (2018) and Fanon (1963), alerted the researcher to the ironies and indignation towards the coloniser as a part of the decolonisation process. Further to this fact, Van Bever Donker et al., (2017) alerted me to unconscious bias and the danger of cathetising White guilt to Black suffering. Similarly, Tuck and Yang's theories on the impact of Whiteness and White authority prompted various discussions and personal reflections, raising the investigator's consciousness and understanding of the sensitivities and complexities of the study. As mentioned previously in the study's analysis chapter, when working through the responses of the participants, it was evident as Jansen (2017) describes, that these responses impacted on the researcher, and at times it was difficult to become detached, and not to become emotionally and intellectually entangled in the issues being addressed in the participants' responses.

The acknowledgement of the researcher's entanglement and the impact of the sensitising of the researcher's positionality encouraged the researcher to further embrace the study's hopeful and optimistic spirit, a spirit which motivated the front-lining of the participants' responses in terms of creating an authentic voice that wished to make a contribution to the shifting of the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to concrete action. Whilst it is prudent to observe that these responses tend to be more voluminous than generally found in a mixed-methods research approach, the reader is encouraged to pay attention to the participants' responses as stated in the findings (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lAulYhpKc8OUTMR4ECq_lqPBESIQOgRfeNKDVxUoQF8/edit?usp=sharing).

The following steps were applied to mitigate against the above caveats regarding the power-authority differential (American Education Research Association, 2011; Bukamal, 2022; Massoud, 2021) and the subjective-objective nature of the mixed-methods approach (Mckenzie & Knipe, 2006; Yin, 2003) adopted by the study to procure participants and to manage, analyse and interpret the data as required:

- Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Liverpool's highest ethics clearance committee (LOREC), which safeguarded the standard legal and moral rights of all participants to a randomly chosen sample of voluntary, online and non-coercive participation with full withdrawal rights, anonymity (100% for questionnaire and optional for FG), privacy and confidentiality guarantees, the creation of a safe environment and assurances for vulnerable

participants - all of which were ensured through the appropriate participant information and consent forms.

- Pre- reading material, including Julie Nxadi's (2019) Covenants of Presence, which encourages participants to be "fully present, extend and presume welcome, set aside the usual distractions of things undone from yesterday, things to do tomorrow, welcome others into this space and presume you are welcomed as well", was sent to all FG participants, to prepare them for a safe and inclusive process.

- Although not fully achieved, the study went to extensive lengths to ensure that a representative sample of the AFDA race and status demographics was chosen (63 percent BPoC). Various strategies were used, though to minimal level of success, through the sending of e-mail reminders and new invitations to BPoC faculty, students and alumni to participate in the research.

- The anonymous nature of the questionnaire gave participants the freedom to express themselves without fear of being censured, as is the case with many of the robust responses received regarding the AFDA hierarchy.

- The focus groups, on the other hand, were less rigorous in terms of anonymity (although choice offered to participants). Participants were, nevertheless, able to express personal examples of prejudice and inequality, and to use the exercise as a platform for complaint and a call to action from someone like the researcher who sits at a point where an appropriate response is more likely to

prevail. Students, for example, felt that their personal pertinences as students were not addressed but "swept under the carpet" (Participant #). This is in many ways consistent with certain findings of Le Grange et al. (2021) regarding their study on the decolonisation efforts of the University of Stellenbosch, Potchefstroom Universitythe, University of KwaZulu-Natal, and the Nelson Mandela university, where it was apparent that a lack of in-depth knowledge about the decolonisation of universities and their curriculum were outweighed by personal pertinences and issues.

- A round robin question-and-answer technique was used to ensure that all participants responded to each question. While this may have ensured the achievement of the egalitarian aims of the FGs, they more often than not, challenged the two-hour window allocated for the event.

4.3.1 Trustworthiness of this research

In order to establish the necessary *trustworthiness* of the mixed-methods study, and to mitigate any subjectivities that may emerge from the researcher's positionality in the context of the complexity and sensitivities associated with the lived experiences of apartheid and colonisation, the following was implemented: A non-coercive, voluntary and anonymous research process for the questionnaire, with a sample randomly from AFDA's teaching faculty, student and alumni lists received from the central AFDA National Registry, and giving the option for FG participants to choose whether to reveal their personal identities and status or not. Prior to the FG, they too received the objectives, proposed questions (see Appendix 3) and a stated opportunity to question or query any aspect of the FG before it took place.

As a way of optimising the authenticity of the study, the research focused on headlining the findings and the fixed and transitive realities of the context of the lived experiences of the diverse sample of the participants (Shenton, 2004). The research study applied the following UoL credibility protocols, which have not been listed above:

The completion of participation information sheets (PIS) and informed consent forms signed by all the participants (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IOq33dK2eb-S87yvJ4CuxmHWRXOuyHKs/view?usp=share_link).

- All the respondent data were considered and included in the data audit trail (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lAulYhpKc8OUTMR4ECq_lqPBESIQOgRfeNKDVxUoQF8/edit?usp=sharing).
- All the information regarding the establishment of the two focus groups has either been deleted or password-secured on the researcher's personal computer.
- All the names of students and teaching faculty were number-coded as indicated in the research study.
- Where appropriate, any references or contexts that could contribute to the potential identification of any individual or group have been anonymised through generalised identification.
- All participation was conducted voluntarily, that is, without coercion.
- All the participants were treated equally and as equals.
- No teaching faculty members, other than those holding key leadership positions, were excluded from participation. The latter were excluded to ensure that expressions of the teaching faculty, students and alumni were not

compromised and that they expressed their views without fear of being censured.

- All AFDA senior students were invited to participate in the study.
  In the event of the general questionnaire, all the participants and their responses were made anonymous.
- The student Zoom focus group was allowed to use a nom de plume and camera *on* or *off* setting. All the students chose the camera *off-setting,* and only one participant used a nom de plume.
- The teaching faculty Zoom focus group was given the camera *on* or *off* setting option, all of whom chose the camera *off* option.

All FG responses were enthusiastically acknowledged or affirmed as a means of enhancing active inclusion for all the participants (see https://docs.google.com/document/d/1x0Jk_v__0EeKv40u7zSjtdKk3VH0y82ukk1Hxghs79k/edit?usp=sharing)

and (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vGOss9Nlqa3AFRzOVLk8HtB2-04AqRR2UIswl2PB1ys/edit?usp=sharing).

- Both focus groups were strictly scheduled and ran for the two hours as scheduled.
- There was acknowledgement that an ideal of a 70 percent representation of BPoC in the sample fell short in the case of the general questionnaire participants, but was rationalised (as described earlier) and deemed acceptable in the two focus groups.

- The credibility of the three sets of data (general questionnaire, student focus group and teaching faculty focus group) and the AFDA status stratifications

(student, teaching faculty, alumni, alumni or faculty) serve as instruments of the cross-triangulation of the data to affirm or oppose the assumptions made by the research.

The *transferability* of the study relates to understanding the extent to which the study's findings can be applied elsewhere. Although case studies are generally considered to have limited generalisability (Yin, 2003), it is possible to assert the often generic but transferable nature of the challenges affecting higher education, as useful for adaptation and experimentation by one faculty or administration in the context of another institution. This is especially the case for AFDA as a South African, multi-regional private higher education provider in *extreme* contextual conditions, using a socio-constructive liberationist, collaborative and project-led curriculum (Bell, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978), offering a unique insight into each of the niche categories of a higher education institution (as listed above), its limitations and implementation of its various curricular design (see Appendix 1), as an effective way of shifting the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to the concrete phase (see Significance of study, 1.8).

Similarly, the above demonstrates the challenges and failings of its organisational culture, with participants providing contextual but often universal recommendations for higher education as an important aspect of the study's transformative ideals. As part of its contribution to the growing pool of data (Cohen et al., 2011; Robson, 2002), certain findings can be found to be useful if replicated or adapted by similar or different institutions seeking out solutions within their particular contexts.

The *study's dependability* is interrogated through employing a holistic and singular case study and acceptable mixed data collection and methodological approaches. The back-and-forth iterations of the identification and reflection of categories and interpretation of data and its themes, are backed up by the contextualisation of the study offered in the Literature Review section, the statement on positionality and motivation for the study, institutional documentation, and the theorists and scholars cited to validate these interpretations. While the back-and-forth dynamics and structure of the research approach may not resonate with the ideals of traditional research, it has allowed for multiple modes of creative, practical and analytical interpretation (Khanna, 2014), especially in terms of the study's multiple contexts and mutating frameworks (Barnett, 2000).

The *confirmability* of the study is consistent with the issue of credibility and dependability, which require a clear acknowledgement of the investigator's subjective-objective bias or tendencies (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xw5cg6Ab00MFpj9rxPFEcklb7ZPA-5rE/view?usp=sharing) and high-level LOREC clearance (https://drive.google.com/file/d/11HuMjJjX5c2pnIc-zUX20mB4iyFd17WQ/view?usp=share_link). Furthermore, all the quotations were tagged with the participants' race and status descriptive statistics to offer transparency and further insights into the participants' responses.

A step-by-step audit of the data collection procedure and the provision of the data sourced from the participants was recorded, digitally arranged and manually

transcribed in the panoramic view (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lAulYhpKc8OUTMR4ECq_lqPBESIQOgRfeNKDVxUoQF8/edit?usp=sharing). Further to this point, institutional documentation has been cited to back up various claims made by the study and or, is available as appendices. The overall trustworthiness, credibility and transferability of the research study have, to the insider-researcher's best intentions and integrity, been exercised to a degree that *a warts and all*, reliable and subjective -objective account and interpretation of AFDA's lived experiences has been documented and is available in the constructed participants' panoramic responses, the Survey Monkey audit trail and the interpretation thereof as addressed in the next chapter that presents the findings.

CHAPTER 5: THE FINDINGS

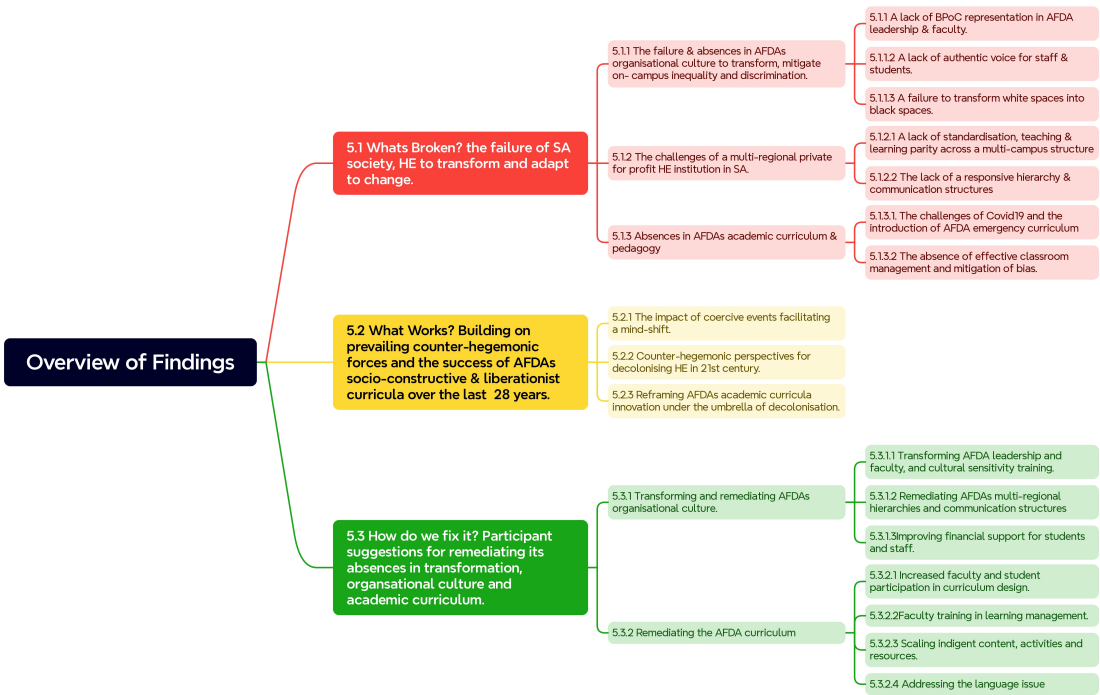
5.1 Introduction

The findings chapter is used to demonstrate the morphing and funelling (Marshall & Rosman, 2016) of the thematic arrangement of participants' responses from the tentative challenge-opportunity framework to a *What's broken, What works, and How do we fix it?* framework (see figure 5.1). Although both are consistent with the idealist-pragmatic spirit of the study, the latter is used to construct a subjective-objective and interpretative view, which not only demonstrates the perspectives of Africa Film Drama Art (AFDA) participants, but also uses the insider-researcher benefits of the researcher's 30 years' expeience at AFDA from its inception to present day. Further, participants' responses are aligned to the appropriate theoretical validations to reflect the various contextual forces, both at the global and local level, which higher education institutions in South Africa face in their quest for decolonisation. In so doing, the researcher provides the reader with a broad overview that can be used as a pre-emptive reflection to the discussion and conclusions drawn from the study. In so doing, and in the spirit of hope and optimism, allowing the reader to begin a personal mediation whether a private higher education institution (PHEI) such as AFDA, can make a significant contribution to shifting the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to concrete actions, which are driven by the epistemically disobedient characteristics of its innovative socio-constructivist, and liberationist academic curriculum.

Initially, the study identified *what is broken,* as part of a more cynical observation (Bengtsen, 2017) of AFDA's organisational culture and academic curriculum, where the former has significantly compromised the latter. In *What works*, the findings present a more optimistic and hopeful analysis (Barnett, 2010; Bengtsen, 2017) of both as opportunities on which the institution can build its decolonisation ambitions. In the third instance, the findings continue in the same optimistic and hopeful vein, using the directly stated and inferred recommendations by the participants as part of finding ways of *How to fix it*. The *Whats broken?, What works?,* and *How do we fix it?*, form the pragmatic-idealist triumverate and spirit of the study to understand the challenges and opportunities to shift the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa from rhetoric to concrete.

Figure 5.1: Overview of the findings

Zoom to magnify image.



Source: Researcher

5.2 The failure of South African society, Higher Education and AFDA to Transform and Adapt to Change

The failure of South African society to transform and adapt to change is a key contextual phenomenon mirrored in the country's higher education institutions (HEIs), and it remains one of the key challenges for higher education (HE) in the future (Davids & Waghid, 2016; Jansen, 2018, 2019). These *extreme* contexts are built on the fragmented pillars of colonialist apartheid and have produced *traumatised* contexts (Presti & Sabatano, 2018) for HE in South Africa and its constituents.

As what is reflective of South African society and what is prevalent in the country's HE sector, the findings show that inequality and discrimination on AFDA's four campuses are pervasive, often inducing a sense of frustration, anger and hopelessness. These were expressed in the following response,

> "People of colour/Black people of my generation are tired of colouring in the lines that our forefathers coloured. We are just as human as the next person, but we are treated like inhumane objects. Animals are treated better than we are" (#51 Black alumni).

Participant #51's response affirms the impact of colonial apartheid on participants' lives. This is consistent with Halagao's (2020) view of decolonisation as the process of *humanising the dehumanised* (2020). In the case of AFDA, students and faculty feel that there is not safe space to voice the daily racist and sexist microaggressions

as part of the implicitly prejudicial and aggressive motives (Lilienfeld, 2017) emanating from the colonial apartheid segregation and patriarchal legacies.

> "Yes. I feel I have been discriminated against and disadvantaged due to the legacy of apartheid and colonialism. For one, the endless racist and sexist microaggressions, coupled with no space to voice these concerns safely is a major problem" (#50 PNTS faculty).

Central to South Africa's failure to transform and the ongoing perpetuation of inequality in the country's HE sector is the inability of the Department of Education (DoE) to provide South African society with a quality and equal primary and secondary education (Habib, 2019; Webbstock, 2016). This has a serious impact on developmental levels of learning (McLeod, 2007), especially in terms of learning esteem and self-confidence of those entering HE (Berry, 2008; Leondari, 2007).

> "I was one of the first students at AFDA [Cape Town] back in 2003. I am a product of the apartheid public education system, and we all know what that does to one's self esteem" (#73 Black alumni faculty).

With the above responses in mind, South Africa's fragmented race politics are illustrated by 42 percent of the participants who felt that they were not discriminated against, of which 39 percent chose to adopt responses, which could be inferred to be either agnostic, denialist, ignorant or simply a naïve perspective of their lived experience of on-campus discrimination.

"I do not recall any such experience [of discrimination and inequality]" (#44 PNTS, faculty).

Certain students and members of staff believed that they were discriminated against for being White and that they are unfairly stereotyped as *racist* by fellow students. White Afrikaans-speaking students form the majority of students who feel this way due to their direct association with apartheid, but this does not exclude White English-speaking students and members of AFDA's staff compliment.

"I did not experience any from staff or teachers, but from students on campus, it was difficult being a White, Afrikaans male – it did automatically get you stereotyped as a racist/apartheid supporter, when it could not be further from the truth" (#69, Alumni/staff).

5.2.1 The failure and absences of AFDAs organisational culture to transform and mitigate on-campus inequality and discrimination

One of the study's key findings shows that AFDA's organisational culture has failed to transform. Most of the participants claimed that despite the vibrancy of this PHEI, the failure to transform is was a matter of concern.

"Education is fun at AFDA, but racism and class divide take the fun out of it" (#45 Black student).

Many participants expressed their frustration with the lack of corrective action from AFDA's leadership and various hierarchies to mitigate the on-campus inequalities and discriminatory behaviour.

> “(I am) tired of talking about it and being asked about it. Ready to see you who has the power and privilege to hire/fire/increase income/support studies, (thus do something about it), do something about it” (#59, Black faculty).

Participant #50 expresses frustration towards the institution's failure to mitigate racism and sexism on campus and ongoing concerns around issues of White authority (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

> "I feel constantly angered by the blatant racism and sexism on campus. I've tried communicating with people and have had repeated occasions where middle-aged White people belittled me, invalidated me and gas-lit me (including HR)" (#50 PNTS, faculty).

5.2.2 The lack of Black and People of Colour representation in AFDA leadership and faculty

A key feature of the failure and absences of AFDA’s organisational culture is the lack of Black and People of Colour (BPoC) representation in the AFDA leadership and management structures.

> "All the Deans, the Registrar, the HR manager and the entire EVA and the CEO and 80 percent of finance personnel are White people. Many people of colour have tried to apply for these jobs and have been declined" (#50 PNTS, faculty).

The findings demonstrate that the consequences of a lack of BPoC representation reverberate through all aspects of the institution, especially in terms of a lack of sensitivity and ability to understand and navigate the cultural nuances of the lived Black experience, as expressed by participant #46:

> “I watched the then [senior administrator], ridicule a student who had the calling to be a healer and joked about being "struck down by her "witch ancestors" and NOBODY [sic] sanctioned him” (#46, Other faculty).

Added to the above are the divide and the complexities of race and class in post-1994 South Africa, where a White faculty member expresses their day-to-day vulnerability and inability to deal with the cultural and identity nuances described above:

> “During daily teachings, it often became paralysing to reflect back on examples given during class or material that may be considered as discriminatory towards people of colour, although it was not” (#2, White faculty).

Contrary to AFDA’s human resource (HR) practices and in opposition to any form of discrimination or bias, the findings show that BPoC staff experience discriminatory HR practices, and perception exists that they do not receive the same benefits or career opportunities as their White counterparts.

> "As a Black person, I am always considered as someone who can afford to earn less, and will thus always have less. Always offered less and always working to prove my worth" (#59, Black staff).

5.2.3 The lack of an authentic voice for students and staff

Participants further voiced their concerns regarding the lack of an authentic voice for students and staff, especially regarding not being heard or having their concerns attended to meaningfully.

> "Give more Black people a voice" (#64, PNTS, alumni/faculty).

A short extract from the student FG chat box conversation (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vGOss9Nlqa3AFRzOVLk8HtB2-04AqRR2UIswl2PB1ys/edit?usp=sharing) between students concurs with the general view that the institution's lack of transparency, poor communication structures and the absence of students' voice are key concerns:

> "I have submitted a few issues and felt totally dismissed" (# 85, Indian student).

Further, Participant #82 corroborates the chat-box extract, particularly regarding the lack of authority that Continued Leaning Value Assessment (CLVA) (The AFDA Student Representative Council [SRC] equivalent), has to represent the voice of the students.

> "The truth be told, CLVA does not have any clout – we have a representative student council that gets heard, but nothing gets done after that" (#82, Black student).

5.2.4 Failure to Transform formally White Spaces into Black Spaces

Although not pervasive in the findings, but key to fostering a sense of belonging for all students (Leibowitz, 2017; Price, 2023), it is evident in the findings that AFDA has not dealt adequately with Black presence in historically White spaces (Lange, 2019). This particular transformation is largely a result of the success of widening access to all South African learners (Le Grange et al., 2020; Wangenge-Ouma, 2012), without considering the consequences of alienation for students who are alienated in a foreign social and HE campus environment whose design accommodations and artefacts do not recognise or represent their culture, history and identity (Lange, 2019; Leibowitz, 2017; Price, 2023).

> "On the Cape Town campus, in the Bachelor of Commerce building, there are portraits of tech giants, successful people, and those too, are majority White" (#86, White student).

It is evident that the learning and teaching capacities of many BPoC students are inhibited by a lack of adequate independent and personal facilities, resources and equipment. This particular challenge was highlighted and exacerbated by the impact of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) (du Plessis et al., 2022).

"There is need to ensure that resources (more accessible computer labs and better resourced libraries) are available for the students that AFDA serves. Currently, students who do not have laptops are struggling to continue learning at AFDA" (#59, Black faculty).

5.3 The challenges of a multi-regional, private, for-profit HE institution in South Africa

While the success and achievements of the AFDA academic curriculum to transform, decolonise and develop work-ready and culturally empowered graduates are noted (AFDA book, 2022, p.76-175; https://afda.co/news/), it is clear that certain organisational failures and absences exist in the AFDA socio-constructive curriculum content and delivery. These inadequacies are contrary to AFDA's goals and transformation ambitions. Many of these issues are related to the multi-regional campus and centralised autonomy of the institution (Davison & Ou, 2018; Groenwald, 2018; Harrison et al., 2010; Nel, 2007). The standardisation of learning, teaching and resource parity across AFDA's four campuses are identified as one of the key issues emanating from the research.

5.3.1 The Lack of Learning and Teaching Parity across AFDA's Multi-campus structure

One of the key findings of the study shows that numerous instances of campus drift and feral curriculum exist as part of the many challenges identified in delivering a standardised curriculum and resource parity to all campuses (Harrison et al., 2010).

> "As someone who studied at AFDA (Durban and Cape Town campuses), it didn't seem like there was a specific curriculum being shared between the two campuses. We were simply taught whatever the lecturer felt like teaching" (#42, White alumni).

Contrarian expectations, interpretations, a lack of compliance, dilutions of curriculum and departures from precedent and practice characterise curriculum drift (Davison & Ou, 2018). These are often the source of student frustration and their disappointment expressed towards AFDA. One participant said,

> "Firstly, I want to start with the disjointed programmes, which everyone seems to bring up - like each discipline is totally disconnected from each other, and they have no idea what is going on" (#90, White student).

Participant #55's statement is further evidence of curriculum drift and feral curriculum. Their view demonstrates contrarian practices to the AFDA socio-constructivist principles of the AFDA curriculum, which incorrectly favours the individual over the collective,

> "One goal I would add would be more of a focus towards collaboration. It can often feel that AFDA's focus is on individual students developing their own skills and talents to the best of their abilities - and the ability to work effectively in a group can sometimes be lost in this" (#55, White student).

Similarly, learning and teaching parity, the resources to ensure the former and latter, form part of an important AFDA policy based on proportionate ratios per student. Nevertheless, it would seem that resource parity does not exist as it should and has contributed to the challenges of campus drift.

> "I *feel* like AFDA's smaller campuses are treated unfairly" (#47, PNTS, faculty).

While real or imagined, this particular sense of inferiority is an acknowledged *feeling* that smaller regional campuses may feel in a multi-campus institution (Groenwald, 2018; Nel, 2007).

While AFDA has regional and centralised systems to monitor the quality of learning, the strain on resources and the poor communication structures in the institution's centralised multi-campus setup have impacted effective teaching and learning oversight.

> "There is no quality check when it comes to student learning" (#50, Black faculty).

The above is further exacerbated by the ongoing consecration of the Hollywood entertainment hegemonies, which have a significant hold over worldwide viewership (Holmes, 2019b). Whilst a significant aspect of Global North cultural hegemony and its durability (Jansen & Walters, 2022), it is clear that students would like to identify themselves in the curriculum and its content.

"Focus more on African filmmaking. There is a leaning toward Hollywood as a paradigm" (#5, PNTS, Alumni).

5.3.2 The Lack of a Responsive Hierarchy and Effective Communication Structures

The failure of AFDA's steep hierarchies to create an effective communication structure to respond to the staff and student experience is directly aligned to the typical challenges found in multi-regional campus structures. These include issues of standardisation, feral curriculum and academic drift (Groenwald, 2018; Harrison et al., 2010; Nel, 2007), the lack of staff and student voice, and feelings of alienation and issues of discrimination and bias as discussed earlier.

"AFDA's communication is the most disappointing factor that has failed them time and time again" (#40, Black student).

Similarly, the disconnect between AFDA faculty and the founders impacts the relationship between faculty and students.

"The disconnect between AFDA lecturers and founders further creates more of a disconnect between lecturer and student, depending on the lecturer and cause for the disconnect" (#13, Black student).

A perception exists amongst faculty that the centralised Education Value Assurance (EVA) or Education Value Committee (responsible for oversight of existing curriculum, the development of new qualifications, new curriculum design,

training and implementation), does not communicate effectively and is out of touch with the realities of the daily learning and teaching experience of both members of staff and students:

> "There is no communication between EVA and AFDA staff. EVA doesn't understand how things work at AFDA. EVA is living in a bubble" (#51, Black faculty).

Apart from the hierarchical communication issues, it is clear that the need for a more compassionate leadership style has been highlighted by the impact of COVID-19 (Borchards, 2022). However, the challenges that AFDA faces as an *untransformed multi-regional campus* are highlighted and exacerbated by the lack of Black representation in leadership and in the faculty, poor communication structures and the lack of voice. Consequently, a view exists that the institution is an embodiment of a *cruelly* structured organisation that lacks compassion for students:

> "People fall through the cracks far too easily and then are blamed when it tends to lie on the cruelty of the structure of the institution" (#90, White student).

Other than rewards for compliance, AFDA faculty do not feel appreciated, citing the high staff turnover as an indication of the lack of recognition for their teaching efforts.

> "Staff are not valued for their talents and specialties, rather for how they comply. Learning does not function like this and long-term staff are few in the organisation." (#67, White faculty).

The limited financial support for historically disadvantaged students is exacerbated by the insensitivity of AFDA's finance department and its hard-line approach to collecting student fees. Besides, the stigma and embarrassment to the student and the fee payer, preventing access to the campus often results in students not being allowed to attend class or participate in their team projects.

> "It is very embarrassing how they (finance department) address people….( )… 'Your fees are not up to date, you cannot come to campus, you are going to have to leave, and sort your finances out,' and so for a week or two, people were literally not allowed to access campus, could not even attend their classes" (#80, Black student).

While the seemingly ruthless fee collection is not intended, fee collection and mitigating bad debt is important for a PHEI such as AFDA to sustain its business. The growth of student bad debt in South African universities from ZAR 3.32 billion (US$174.45 billion) in 2011 to ZAR16.25 billion (US$ 853.85 billion) in 2020, is acknowledged as unsustainable (Wangenge-Ouma, 2021). Contestations around student debt often serve as a spark for annual student protests that disrupt the academic calendar and can lead to violent confrontations between the students and authorities. While well intended, the limited number of AFDA bursaries offered to

senior students at the institution has caused objections regarding the perceived lack of transparency around these bursaries to develop AFDA BPoC faculty.

> "The bursaries are treated like a secret" (#80, Black student).

About 80 percent of the 20 annual postgraduate bursaries offered by AFDA are awarded to BPoC postgraduate candidates who qualify and commit themselves to a one year tutoring or teaching contract at a reduced salary. While the award process is may not be considered transparent, it must be acknowledged that by their nature, bursaries are given to a selected few and can not be given to student.

In addition to financial support for academic fees, a tacit expectation amongst faculty and students exists for transport, housing, wellness and feeding schemes – welfare expectations which can be expected from subsidised state universities (Jansen, 2017; Wangenge-Ouma, 2012; 2020), but beyond the budget feasibilities of a PHEI such as AFDA.

> "I think AFDA needs to make a greater allowance for poorer students (who were usually disadvantaged by past injustice) by providing financial support" (#39, Black student).

It, too, would seem that it can be inferred that certain staff believe that AFDA's private fees (which are generally higher than those of public universities), are not good value for money and that all AFDA is interested is in making a profit:

> "There's no concern for resources - venues are too small to accommodate students, inadequate equipment, and a horrible resource centre" (#50, Black staff).

The issue of resources, especially in the newer and smaller campuses, are part of the multi-regional campus challenges described earlier. The smaller and newer campuses tend to believe that they are marginalised (Groenwald, 2018). In the case of AFDA Johannesburg campus, many students can create perceptions of overcrowding, insufficient resources and high workload issues for faculty. In some instances, these phenomena can be interpreted as discriminatory:

> "Cape Town as a predominantly White campus has their needs prioritised despite the largest student body and thus faculty burden residing in Johannesburg" (#48, Black faculty).

5.3.3 Absences in AFDAs Academic Curriculum and Pedagogics

Whilst the curriculum at AFDA and, to a lesser extent, its pedagogics have demonstrated counter-colonial strategies and events in its learning and teaching, it is clear from the participants' responses that many absences exist in both. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, these absences were exacerbated (du Plessis et al., 2022).

5.3.4 The Challenges of COVID-19 and Introduction of the AFDA Emergency Curriculum

The premature implementation of key elements of the 2.0 future-proofing AFDA for the 21st-century curriculum (Appendix 1) exacerbated existing challenges

identified across the findings. Beyond the existing socioeconomic inequality, ineffective communication structures and the coercive and disruptive nature of COVID-19 (du Plessis et al., 2022), the introduction of the four new elements of curriculum 2.0 (as part of the emergency hybrid curriculum) were generally found to be acceptable but conditional. Many of these conditions were related to a need for a more effective organisational culture. These included administrative issues such as hierarchies, communication, resource parity, change culture and training for staff.

> “I do believe that it (AFDA 2.0 elements in hybrid curriculum) can actually assist in accelerated learning and broaden the ways in which decolonisation and transformation is viewed. However, an important factor will be executed and how it is presented” (#69, White alumni).

Others opposed the view that the 2.0 elements incorporated into the emergency hybrid curriculum could accelerate decolonisation.

> "In and of themselves [the 2.0 elements], they do not constitute tools for decolonisation/ transformation" (#21, White faculty).

The above view was echoed by participant #64, whose point of view on developing reflection skills for students indicates that there is no direct correlation between meta-cognition skill development and decolonisation:

> "Nope. Reflecting on a project that has nothing to do with decolonised material is pointless" (#64, Alumni/faculty).

Several existing resource and support issues highlighted the digital divide and existing inequalities in HE (Wangenge-Ouma, 2012), especially AFDA students and staff who lacked work-home spaces, data connectivity, hardware capacity and familial support (du Plessis et al., 2022; Wangenge-Ouma, 2021).

> "COVID-19 has widened the digital divide. This has exacerbated economic, class and race inequity" (#54, White staff).

Given South Africa's historically neglected public health sector and that many in the study hailed from the vulnerable populations in South Africa, leaves the responsibility and the expectation of support being placed on the education sector.

> "Many universities have not considered some students' mental health during the lockdown period, which has impacted the delivery of work" (#46, PNTS student).

5.3.5 The Absence of Effective Classroom Management and Mitigation of Bias

The findings show much praise for AFDA's socioconstructive liberationist team project-led learning approach:

> "The work integrated learning, where we were paired together in groups, taught me how to work with people from different cultural backgrounds" (#22, Coloured faculty).

The most significant objection to collaborative learning and assessment stems from non-compliant students who do not pull their weight in team projects (Johnson et al., 1994) but unfairly appear to receive the same academic credits as conscientious students (Le et al., 2018, 1994).

> "The curriculum is also set up in such a way that students can pass by doing the bare minimum if they have a strong crew. Thus, several students get their degrees based on someone else's hard work" (#65, White alumni).

Given the need for students to cover both the theoretical (academic) and individual and team outcomes practice aspects of the learning (in order for qualification to have degree status), plus the challenges presented by the uneven standard and conditions of primary and secondary learning in South Africa, students express opinions that the learning is *rushed* and that its fast-pace impacts student wellness:

> "It's (the curriculum) so tightly packed and it is such a blur…( ). I have seen people experiencing insane breakdowns, working themselves to the bone because of this being out of control and having to get work done" (#87, Coloured student).

Similarly, the indivisible character of language and culture, the dominance of English as the preferred language of learning in HE has a significant impact on learning (wa Thoing'o, 1986), especially if one considers the multi-lingual complexities associated with South Africa's 14 official languages.

> “Most of the students at AFDA have three to four languages. I know about eight languages” (#70, Black alumni/faculty).

Added to this are the class and race stereotypes and stigma of language, which tend to favour those that are able to enunciate and write in a grammatically correct fashion (Johnson, 2020). Issues of bias and subjectivity in the classroom were further raised by several students, particularly in terms of the complexities attendant on the power-authority differential between student and lecturer (Bukamal 2022; Morrison, 2014).

> "It seems that if the lecturer likes what you are saying and who you are, you will be given a higher mark. To excel, you must work extremely hard and give the lecturer what they would like to see and not what you want to explore" (#36, PNTS student).

In some instances, the inequalities and lack of representation of the BPoC faculty and external examiners directly impacted students who felt discriminated against in the delivery of their academic work.

> “When I defended my thesis, I was surrounded by White people even though my thesis spoke of the legacy of apartheid and how it, in turn, monopolised the industry, I felt misunderstood and was subtly attacked” (#45, Black student).

Further, the findings demonstrated that students are dissatisfied with the lack of capacity certain teaching faculty have to deal with disruptive students, whose behaviour have a detrimental effect on the more compliant students' learning:

> "Not all lecturers know how to manage their classes. This results in students causing an uprising during lectures and making it impossible for other students to study what they paid for" (#65, White alumni).

The lack of order and accountability due to poor classroom management is an important consideration. It negatively impacts the student's learning experience, breaking down efforts to build social cohesion and causing further student fragmentation.

> "There are so many problematic students, who get away with no repercussions" (#80, PNTS, student).

Accountability and consequence for problematic and non-compliant students are key to fostering the appropriate equity values and a learning environment characterised by mutual respect and acceptance of the other (Harland & Pickering, 2010; McNay, 2007), both of which are critical in the conversation on decolonising higher education conversation.

5.4 *What works?*: Building on Prevailing Counter-hegemonic Forces and the Success of AFDA's transformative goals, socio-constructive and liberationist curricula over the last 28 years

The second category of the findings, *What works?* forms part of the primary framework to accommodate the analysis and its themes as part of the optimistic and hopeful of dealing with the challenges that HE faces (Bengsten, 2018; Nixon et al., 1999). These include understanding the impact of prevailing counter-hegemonic forces such as #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall, COVID-19 and #BLM. These forces contributed to a significant mind-shift by society, its institutions and their constituents. In so doing, it contributed to AFDA's reframing of its transformative goals and curricula that was developed over the last 28 years under the banner of decolonisation.

5.4.1 The Impact of Coercive Events to Facilitate Mind-shift

What works? identifies the positive impact of coercive events such as the *Fallist* movement (2015-2018), #Fees Must Fall, #Rhodes Must Fall, #BLM and the COVID-19 pandemic on critical aspects of the mind shift required for decolonising HE in a meaningful way. These aspects focus on the changing mindset and shifts identified in the diverse and more hospitable views of theorists and participants of the study towards finding and adopting new ways to decolonise HE.

> "These events tend to expose the inequalities that previously existed in the background and force institutions to evolve quicker and make changes that they previously would have ignored" (#29, White alumni).

In contrast, Participant #33, alludes to these events as exacerbating the existing divide.

> "I think it can create a divide to be honest, because I think a lot of people tag on their own grievances and political beliefs to the various causes which they support (#33, Black alumni).

These contrasting views are characteristic of the participants' responses, and they contribute to the interpretation of *What works* as part of the mind-shift to reframe the achievements of the AFDA institutional and academic curriculum, its nation-building, empowerment, and socioeconomic goals under the umbrella of decolonisation.

While the commercial and moral consequences of on-campus disruption is the least desired outcome for a PHEI such as AFDA, the findings show that protest and the potential threat of indefinite closures due to coercive events such the *Fallist* movement and COVID-19 can highlight and accelerate change. The inferential analysis provided by SM on "how people feel" (see Table 4.2) regarding the impact of coercive events, indicates a 71 percent sentiment that supports the phenomenon. Further analysis of the participants' responses indicates that most participants conditionally endorsed the impact of the various movements to accelerate the decolonisation of the curriculum.

> "Yes it can. However, there is an institutional culture that is often reactive, as opposed to pro-active in dealing with sensitive issues (#63, White faculty).

5.4.1.1 The Contribution #FeesMustFall to the mind-shift.

The findings show that the *Fallist* movement galvanised a call to action by South African youth, who, for the first time since the Soweto protests of 1976 (Kgosiemang, 2019; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni, 2019), found a new voice for South Africa's youth that highlighted the institutional inequalities of HE and other numerous socioeconomic inequalities.

"It serves as a revolution rising" (#51, Black alumni).

The *Fallist* movement would create greater awareness and give students a voice to advance the demands to decolonise HE both locally and globally.

> "Yes, this event signals that the world as we know it today is slowly changing, and where social change took time and was whispered in hallways, it is now being embraced as mainstream and institutions of higher learning not just in South Africa, but across the world must be places where protest or calls for social equity are not just accepted but are heavily promoted" (#15, Black alumni).

Aligned to the call for social justice, it is clear from the responses of participants that they endorse calls for the decolonisation and reform of existing Global North curricula:

> "#FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall was the call for decolonisation/ transformation, so the pressure from the movements ignited a debate and, consequently necessitated curriculum reform" (#53, White staff).

Whether a perception of AFDA's "wilful blindness" (Heleta, 2016;Macedo, 1993, p. 189), some members of staff and students agreed that these events have the power to initiate change, but they questioned AFDA's "traditionally" quiet attitude to events of this nature. They, too, point out that AFDA does not have a formal statement or hold an explicit position on the decolonisation of HE.

> "AFDA as an institution is 'traditionally' quiet regarding such events. I have heard it expressed that as a private institution, AFDA does not share these problems, but the staff and students are South African and live with these issues in every aspect of their lives, and thus the silence does not sit well" (#21, White staff).

5.4.1.2 The Positive Consequences of COVID-19 on Accelerating Technology.

In the case of COVID-19, the findings show that the pandemic had a significant impact on accelerating the role of digital technology in HE (du Plessis et al., 2022).

> "Fact that we are forced to go online opens up what we offer to a lot more students, which in turn helps transformation" (#26, White faculty).

While most of the issues of inequality related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the digital divide were dealt with through prioritising budgets for the appropriate resources, the identification of four critical elements of AFDA's new 2.0 curriculum (mentioned earlier and under trial at the time) was used to endorse the government

vow that *No student be left behind* (Mshayisa & Ivala, 2022). The four 2.0 curriculum elements had been designed as part of future-proofing AFDA graduates for the 21st-century. Decolonisation forms a key aspect of this future proofing, which promotes student-led and self-paced learning (Hains & Smith, 2012; Mshayisa & Ivala, 2022; Sandovol-Lucero, 2014), and is designed to reduce the lecturer student power-authority differential (Bukamal 2022; Morrison, 2014), increase student engagement and encourage students to take responsibility (self empowerment) for their learning (Freire, 1993, 1994).

The smaller learning circles were comprised a maximum of 15 students and were found to be favourable amongst faculty and students. Participant #67 concurs but calls for less online learning - a predominant view that will most likely lead the way forward for HE in the post-COVID-19 era (de Plessis et al., 2022; Mshayisa & Ivala, 2022).

> "More face-to-face small group learning, more peer learning and less online delivery" (#67, Indian student).

The introduction of a broader choice of project outcomes was also primarily accepted as a benefit to students, especially in terms of meeting the exponentially changing skills requirements for originating, financing, developing, producing and distributing entertainment content in the 21st-century (Jenkins, 2006). Participant #61 concurs:

> “A broader number of project outcomes to meet the demands of 21st-century media and entertainment content for local markets” (#61, Coloured faculty).

The introduction of Contextual Studies, in which students had explicit learning and assessment on 21st-century skills that included collaboration, values and goals, creativity, digital technology and critical thinking (Bell, 2010; Dede, 2010; Schwab, 2016; Singularity, 2017) was favourable:

> “21st century Contextual Studies, provide a refreshing way of thinking, which is ideologically better - provides insight into a 21st-century problem" (#52, PNTS, Black).

The explicit training and implementation of collaboration skills, setting team goals, identifying team values and working together are once again key in developing social cohesion between the diverse members of each learning circle and beyond (Johnson et al., 2000).

> “Group work is so interactive, it truly teaches the students that to create a product that we are proud of, we all need each other; we must give our best” (#67, Indian student).

Similarly, explicit lectures and assessments on reflection were introduced, allowing students to improve their meta-cognition skills to assess their contribution to learning and to monitor their personal learning progress (Brockbank etal., 2002;

Mälkki, 2010), as well as provide quarterly feedback on the performance of the institution.

> "Reflective studies because this way, you get to understand how students perceive information, and how they consume it" (#19, Indian alumni/faculty).

The findings show that students and staff did not believe that 21st century skills contributed to decolonisation but that they were necessary and required relevant indigent inputs and content to counter the existing White knowledge hegemonies (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

> "No. Whilst 21st century skills are necessary, the skills listed above sit in generalised and generic Western paradigm that gives tacit primacy to White middle class values" (#54, White faculty).

The gravity of this particular sentiment is illustrated by participant #48 who claims that "metacognitive processes mean nothing when you are a student" and that the example provided affects 75 percent of [their] students – mirroring the failure of the government to transform South African society and perpetuate the inequalities and discrimination found in HEIs today:

> "A Black, bursary student from Thokoza (Gauteng province), whose grandmother raised across the road from the IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party) hostel doesn't care that you think he is emotionally intelligent, and will most

likely not learn enough of the skills to apply it in the 3 years at AFDA because he is just trying to survive in the moment" (#48, Black faculty).

Besides accentuating the paucity of indigent content and resources identified by the findings, #48's response reminds us of the diverse contextual nature of the study, as well as the issues that arise from an untransformed or unequipped faculty to comprehend the Black lived experience or ability to navigate sensitive and courageous conversations (Vorster & Quinn, 2011).

5.4.2 Counter-hegemonic Perspectives for Decolonising HE in the 21st century

The question of what decolonisation means to academics and students is an integral part of the mind shift required and, as advocated by the scholars such as Senge (2006), as a positive and hopeful approach (Barnett, 2000; Bengtsen, 2018) to address changes like decolonisation in HE.

5.4.2.1 A More Optimistic Mind-set Regarding Decolonisation.

The need for a more dynamic, rather than fixed mind-set (Dweck , 2016) is critical to initiating and optimising decolonisation strategies and processes. Participant #49 echoes the more hopeful and optimistic approach required to transform and decolonise South African society and its institutions:

> "We must engender a feeling that we belong, even if we make mistakes, even if we question authority as staff or as students, and as we grow and learn that we do not feel as if there is a cudgel hanging over our heads if we transgress"" (#49, White faculty).

Much like Manathunga (2018) and others, several participants warned against the consequences of black-for-white knowledge exchange or replacement, preferring to advocate a more hospital approach to achieve social and cognitive justice (Leibowitz, 2017). Participant #78 concurs:

> "I think it gets confusing with replacing your reference from European with African, for me, decolonisation is much deeper than replacing one theory, one scholar with another"(#78, Black FG faculty).

5.4.2.2 Provisioning Social and Cognitive Justice Through Balancing Excellence with Relevance.

Participant #48's example of the view of their Black township bursary students regarding the lack of relevance that AFDA's contextual and reflection studies, not only provides a more realistic view, but alerts us to the task of ensuring both social and cognitive justice for faculty and students (Leibowitz, 2017; Manthangu, 2018). These include finding meaningful approaches to ensure faculty and student participation in curriculum design to balance national and global imperatives as part of the decolonisation process.

> "[The] Decolonisation of education is a quest for relevance, which incorporates an inclusivity of the demographic that reflects the population, but it also brings us to the conversation about the standards of education" (# 82, Black student).

Overall, the participants' responses tended to be more in favour of purging existing global North-West university knowledge hegemonies and replacing them with African equivalents (Botha, 2007). This particular view is considered a narrower view of decolonisation, but is nevertheless understandable, given it was popularised as part of the (2015-2018) *Fallist* movement narrative (Shahjahan et al., 2021).

> "For me, decolonisation is about removing the imprint of the *coloniser*, the *coloniser's* ideas and the hegemonic power structures that have been established and maintain a certain standard of education" (# 86, White student).

Some participants warned against adopting decolonisation concepts that seek to purge existing knowledge systems but simultaneously recognised the need for relevance and standards of excellence to be maintained in knowledge production.

> "Decolonisation should not be about negating or discarding existing Western knowledge systems, but about acknowledging the third space that we occupy, taking the past, who we are in the present, and what that means for the future"(#71, Coloured faculty).

While the above seems to be in step with most decolonial scholars such as Mbembe (2015) and Manathunga (2018), a small minority of participants opposed the decolonisation of curriculum and wished to maintain existing colonial structures and knowledge hegemonies.

> “I wish to evade decolonising, as this would potentially result in the need to remove a vast array of foreign information, practices, styles, knowledge, and theories” (#32, White, PNTS).

While this view is a fairly common anti-decolonisation view in South Africa (especially for those who wish to maintain the existing privilege and gate-keeping of knowledge production afforded by colonial apartheid), it is considered to be insensitive towards the brutality of apartheid colonialism.

> “In an ever-changing society, we need to make it a lot more diverse and include everybody in that system so that there is sort of no student left behind, and that we as students must follow this pathway of the curriculum”(# 81, Coloured student).

5.4.2.3 Epistemic Disobedience and Recentring Knowledge.

Certain student and faculty perspectives are consistent with Mignolo's (2009) and Mbembe’s (2015) epistemic disobedience views on knowledge, which include re-centring the curriculum through radical acceptance of all knowledge bases whilst engaging and using global North hegemonies on the periphery (and other) to compare and use where and when appropriate (Fataar, 2018; Said, 1978).

> "For me, decolonising the curriculum would mean that the curriculum is all-encompassing to reflect the realities of the country that we are living in " (#84, Black student).

5.4.3 Reframing AFDAs Socio-constructive and Libertarian Academic Curriculum under the Umbrella of Decolonisation

The early contestation and relegation of the transformation conversation for the decolonisation conversation (Kgosiemang, 2018), prompted a view that asked whether AFDA's transformative goals and transformative learning approach qualified for reframing under the umbrella of decolonisation.

5.4.3.1 Transforming the Student Body Demographic Through Wider Acceptance Practices and Alternate Learning Approaches.

Like most universities, AFDA has achieved a student body that reflects the country's racial demographics. This specific demographic has been achieved over 28 years through widening access to students that would traditionally not be eligible for university entrance:

> "At AFDA, my marks were generally 30 to 40 percent higher than my marks at school. This was not because it was easier, but because the material is designed for a broader spectrum of humans to understand" (#44, White alumni).

5.4.3.2 Alternate Learning and Assessment Practices.

Historical hindsight provides evidence of AFDA's unwittingly and independently achieved decolonisation through its curriculum innovations. The Survey Monkey inferential statistic of *How people feel* regarding AFDA's epistemic disobediences (an 86 percent positive sentiment) is not necessarily as dominant as presented, given that AFDA, by its very nature, is expected to be unique and different in comparison to the state universities in South Africa.

The findings show that praxis and project-based learning stand out as the key features of AFDA's unique learning offer compared to the traditional university experience, especially in acting as a bonding agent for social cohesion:

> "This is one particular aspect of AFDA that I love! The practical creative learning, through conceptualising in our crews (teams), to learning interesting theories about our disciplines and making a film with creative freedom; still with a sense of social responsibility in knowing how to make films that will build a society, and not break it" (#36, Student, Other).

Further to the achievements ascribed to the practical nature of AFDA's socio–constructive learning approach, teamwork and collaboration emerged as a clear theme in creating a learning environment that facilitates the integration of different cultures and races. Several challenges exist with collaborative learning (Le et al., 2017; Sansivero, 2016). However, it fosters interpersonal skills and socialisation, with psychological and academic benefits (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012).

> "The outcome-based nature of the curriculum allows people from all spectra of society to engage at their own level" (#56, White staff).

As part of AFDA's counter-hegemonic strategies or indigenisation, faculty and students are encouraged to provide culturally relevant inputs and teaching aids and create culturally relevant films for local audiences, respectively, as a means to promote nation-building (AFDA Staff Onboarding, Section A, 2020, p.12).

It is a well-accepted fact that Hollywood's ongoing consecration and valorisation make it difficult to meaningfully compete as required to scale comparable global South content (Holmes, 2019). It, too, echoes Biko's (2004) theory that the mind of the colonised is the most potent weapon for the coloniser.

> "Asking students to create products that appeal to a specific local market does encourage them to engage in context. Nevertheless, most students' minds and imaginations are so colonised that it is difficult for them to take on this challenge" (#54, White faculty).

Breaking discipline and qualification constructs that control the epistemological orientation (Keet, 2019) is a key challenge in decolonising curricula. AFDA is unique in its formal discipline and degree integration, allowing students to traverse multiple disciplines as part of their formal learning experience and preparing them for the collaborative rigours of their future careers.

> "Yes, combining film with a Bachelor of Commerce degree, is definitely breaking down the conventional way of the industry and making it more efficient" (#22, Coloured faculty/alumni).

AFDA does not employ traditional sit-down individualist learning assessment examinations of any sort. Their assessment approach breaks down a fundamental principle of assessment in an epistemically disobedient fashion. When introduced by AFDA in 1994, it was considered invalid by most and radical by others.

> "The fact that we do not write examinations is revolutionary, as for ages, society has believed that for one to progress in life, they need to write exams" (#51, Black alumni).

AFDA offers students multiple opportunities to acquire and demonstrate the required cognitive, technical, attitudinal and aesthetic competencies of their qualification through *redo* or *retry* of formative and summative assessments to achieve the necessary skill requirements. In so doing, students are empowered and have the opportunity to build a new learning self-esteem (Leonardi, 2007).

> "AFDA encourages you to fail but to fail forward, to learn from your failures, to try again, but this time exceed at your failures and grow from them; where in normal institutions, you are often mocked and ridiculed for being wrong" (#69, White staff).

While AFDA's collaborative learning approach and multiple assessments have certain challenges (Le et al., 2017; Sansivero, 2016), its "try again" (non-punitive repeat assessment) approach has certain failings. Certain students and staff perceive AFDA's try again approach as part of its profit over people stereotype, especially non-compliant students who choose to benefit unfairly or "hitch-hike" on the work produced by their fellow team-members (Johnson et al., 1994, p.6; Le et al., 2018).

> "Students are passed because they pay a lot and they therefore get a thousand attempts to resubmit things. There's no quality in the output of graduates

from AFDA. All AFDA is concerned about is numbers and profit" (#50, PNTS faculty).

AFDA acknowledges these perceptions held by certain staff and students. It nevertheless demonstrates the institution's willingness to surrender key aspects of the institutional power that assessment holds (Parham, 2018) as part of AFDAs commitment to finding more equitable ways to accommodate and support the scholarly differences that exist on AFDA's campuses without compromising the required standards of the qualification.

Although it is abundantly evident that AFDA has inequality and discriminatory practices that impact staff, students and faculty, the findings show a distinct sense of diversity in the student body as well as an atmosphere that promotes freedom for expression that exists across all campuses.

"AFDA is one of those few places that allow one to express themselves freely, with no judgment. Whether it is how one dresses, their sexual preferences, the way that both the lecturers and students see everyone as equal, regardless of gender and race, that is what I really enjoy about being at AFDA" (#27, Black student).

5.4.3.3 Questioning AFDA's Lack of a stated Decolonisation Structure.

Although the findings of the study are favourable across the board in terms of the institution's decolonial qualities and achievements, it is also clear that others

believe the contrary, especially in that AFDA does not have the means or structures to address the decolonisation of the institution:

> "AFDA is yet to identify what colonial influences are, and how to identify and examine them within the context of film" (#34, White faculty).

5.5 *How can we fix it?* Participants' Suggestions for Remediating its Absences in Transformation, Organisational Culture and Academic Curriculum

The third aspect of the findings (*How can we fix it?)* is designed to accommodate the various themes and sub-themes based on various interpretations of criticism and recommendations made by the participants of the study as part of the challenge -opportunity and optimistic outlook (mind-set) of the study. It is clear from the findings that to transform or decolonise in a meaningful fashion, AFDA's organisational culture and its academic curriculum must be transformed by remediating the failures and absences across its multi-regional campus structures.

5.5.1 Transforming and Remediating AFDA's Organisational Culture.

The findings clearly show that AFDA's organisational culture, like most HE institutions in South Africa, has systemic inequality and discriminatory practices that require urgent remediation to realise their decolonisation ambitions.

> "In order to effectively decolonise, there is need for a more specific and coherent identification of endemic racism and sexism and attendant structural inequity" (#63, White faculty).

While the initial intentions of AFDA's historical goals are bound to nation-building and socioeconomic empowerment, it is clear from participant #63's response that AFDA re-addresses their historical goals to break the ongoing perpetuation of inequality and meet the needs of decolonisation.

> "The goals and values are inherently biased in favour of market-related forces and therefore reinforces historical financial and power dynamics" (#63, White faculty).

By extension, the above implies that AFDA must re-think its overall goals to ensure that decolonisation is explicitly stated in the appropriate institutional documents and public statements.

5.5.1.1.Transforming AFDA's Leadership, Faculty and Cultural Sensitivity Training.

Central to the decolonisation and remediation of its multi-regional organisational culture is a commitment to transform AFDA's existing White leadership and faculty in the existing power and authority of the AFDA administration, management and academic hierarchies of the institution. In the case of AFDA, effective, representative leadership across its regional campuses is required

to understand each region's cultural, geographical, socioeconomic and political nuances (Groenwald, 2018).

> "I believe that when the Black students can see Black staff at higher levels of leadership at AFDA, that will be inspirational and relatable. Not to mention that it would decolonise the institution" (#59, Black faculty).

Most participants expressed the need for greater BPoC involmement using what can essentially be viewed as Black for White replacement approach for AFDA staff. However, in terms of a more nuanced and optimistic view, participant #50 recommends that the institution should hire staff who have the appropriate transformative and identity knowledge:

> "The only thing that can help is employing lecturers and staff who are transformed and who represent South Africa's diversity and who have broken away from colonised beliefs, and are woke about things like feminism and micro racism and tolerance" (#50, PNTS faculty).

The above approach, together with participant #49's insight regarding the development of a staff body that is diverse and representative of the country's demographics as an imperative for the decolonisation of the institution is key to note. However, at the same time, it is essential to ensure that the employment of BPoC as part of a diverse staff body is not set up for failure. AFDA as an institution has a responsibility to ensure that all the members of staff have the required competencies,

qualifications, training, and institutional support for transformative appointments to succeed. The following was said,

> "We must place more emphasis on recruiting staff of colour, but even more crucially on developing the staff of colour that we currently have, and creating pathways for their progress, both on the academic level and within the structure of the institution" (#49, White staff).

Beyond a no-tolerance rule and assurances of accountability to address issues of inequality and discrimination, it is evident from the suggestions made by participants that AFDA use make various includes timetabled and extracurricular lectures and events dealing with apartheid, colonialism, transformation, decolonisation, race, gender and other cultural inputs, run by external experts be used to lead the transformation agenda:

> "Where there is a lag in transformation in the campus staff, guests who can lead a transformation agenda should be invited to contribute regularly" (#21, White faculty).

5.5.1.2 Remediating AFDAs multi-regional hierarchies and communication structures.

Together with the leadership's recommendations described above is the issue of addressing the poor communication structures in and across AFDA's regional campus structures (Groenwald, 2028). Poor communication structures and the lack of transparency between AFDA's hierarchy, members of staff and the students is a

primary concern for AFDA, particularly in terms of the challenges identified in the findings, which reveal the dilution of AFDA's goals, campus and academic drift and feral work-around practices of personal convenience 'to get the job done,' by certain individuals in the leadership structure, staff and students (Harrison et al., 2010).

> "AFDA's communication is the most disappointing factor that has failed them time and time again" (#40, Black student).

One of the critical issues noted in the findings is the steep transactional communication hierarchies and their inability to actively listen to the concerns and input by the staff.

> "If you want to truly transform, You must listen. Truly listen to the concerns raised by staff members, especially BPoC staff" (#48, Black faculty).

Similarly, AFDA students feel alienated from the institution's hierarchy. They suggest that a closer bond be created between themselves and the institution to deal with the learning and teaching challenges that they encounter on a daily basis:

> "People higher-up the institution's ranks would take the time to come down and ask the students first hand (in- private), about what needs to be changed" (#68, Indian student).

These communication and hierarchy issues are key to AFDA establishing more effective communication structures and an on-campus presence of its hierarchy

through occasional campus visits to alleviate the feelings of alienation sometimes felt by smaller campuses. The findings further highlight that students feared being victimised for their views, that important issues were ignored and that the student representative council (SRC), known as CLVA, held no sway.

> "They do not speak to the student body about what is going on, not even to the SRC and in turn, we are left in the dark and unsatisfied with every choice they make" (#40, Black student).

Clear, formal reporting with concise feedback, accountability and action must be demonstrated to the CLVA to allow them to feel that their concerns have been addressed.

Closely aligned to the lack of BPoC representation is the call for the (re)education of existing White AFDA leadership, staff, students and all the others that may not have the necessary knowledge or lack sensitivity towards the realities of the lived experiences of BPoC and the other:

> "Generally, I would see the necessity that White staff and more so the White students must be sensitised. Their knowledge about the past, their approach to previously disadvantaged students/ staff is shocking" (#41, PNTS faculty).

A number of other suggestions were made in terms of staff training as a means to mitigate the lack of sensitivity and the daily micro-aggressions or discriminatory practices experienced by people of colour and the *other* (Tuck & Yang, 2012). These

include tailor-made trainings and the crafting of relevant policy to support staff in identifying and calling out discriminatory behaviour:

> “Organise staff workshops on diversity…Hold an annual festival addressing this. All these will normalise the dialogue" (#45, Black student).

The findings also show that a uniform and zero-tolerance approach has become part of the institutional culture of staff and others in positions of authority to identify and police racism and discrimination when it occurs in the learning or teaching environment.

> “I would want lecturers to raise a red flag when someone is being racist, sexist, homophobic etc. It really sucks when the person who should have the power to make students stop, does not do anything” (#47, Other student).

In many instances, staff and students indicated their appreciation for sensitivity, cultural and other training around broadening their language and understanding of how they engage with BPoC and the other:

> “Her [Julie Nxadi, 2019] explanation on how words can be weaponised, really provided much-needed insight into how we need to be more aware of how we engage” (#10, White faculty).

While it is evident that AFDA needs a more formal approach to sensitivity training, the findings demonstrate that although isolated, research into the lived

experience of people of colour and the *other* is valuable in terms of greater awareness and mitigation of on-campus discriminatory practices:

> "Research into Black students and students of colour's experiences of racism in the institution is valuable" (#54, White faculty).

As one of the advantages of a multi-regional campus institution, AFDA has created a greater diversity in the overall student and staff body (Scott et al., 2007).It is clear from the findings that the geographical, cultural, socioeconomic and political differences of each must be carefully considered and where possible, researched to produce the necessary data to inform the institution's response and new ways to accommodate these differences.

5.5.1.3 Improving Financial Support for Staff and Students.

The current circumstances and lack of transformation in South Africa society and thehigher education sector are expressed by a participant who alludes to the lack of empathy and insight shown by AFDA towards the financial circumstances of previously disadvantaged faculty and students.

> "AFDA does not understand that when Black people start working, they will be already battling with the responsibility of supporting their families (because of colonisation/apartheid) and thus need more income than their White counterparts" (#59, Black faculty).

This above phenomenon is referred to as the Black Tax (Mhlongo, 2019). It is important to note that *Black Tax* underpins several financial issues and challenges faced by AFDA students who are ineligible for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFS). Similarly, AFDA does not offer tenure to academic staff as a private and non-subsidised institution. The findings show that an expectation exists amongst staff and students for the institution to provide welfare subsidies and structures. Students believe that their higher fees, when compared to what their counterparts in state-owned higher education institutions pay entitle them to academic fee reductions, bursaries, resources (e.g., laptops and data), transport, meals, accommodation, health support and financial assistance.

> "In my opinion, AFDA must make a greater allowance for poorer students (mostly disadvantaged by past injustice) by providing financial support" (#39, Black student).

The inequalities emanating from apartheid's spatial geography, the long distances of travel and the poor public transport system (Magi et al., 2002) continue to impact on students who further suggest that this be resolved by the institution, as it impacts on attendance and learning.

> "Further, a bus transport system for students that live far from AFDA, but don't have the means to travel to campus when public transport fails, which is a very common problem" (#42, White alumni).

While AFDA cannot be held responsible for the failure of the government to provide respectable and convenient public transport, regarding health services and other welfare for its staff and students, the institution must provide transparency on how and where student fees are spent. AFDA would also need to revise and communicate its *No fees-No access to campus* policy on fees collection to avoid embarrassing students and barring them from the campus as it disrupts the teamwork learning imperative.

Similarly, an imperative exists to make AFDA's bursary and other scholarship programmes more accessible and transparent to staff and students in order to instill a sense of confidence and credibility in the selection process. There is need to ensure that award process is grounded on the principles of fairness and equal opportunity.

5.5.2 Remediating the Curriculum

AFDA's socio-constructive and liberationist academic curriculum achievements are significant. The institution remains the central driver for its own future transformation (social and cognitive justice) and success as a PHEI. AFDA is limited by its frugal financial approach and the institution's goals, values, educational promise and curriculum. While the capitalisation for transforming AFDA's organisational culture is a more likely priority, there are lower-cost interventions to highlight the suggestions from participants regarding its academic curriculum.

5.5.2.1. Increased Faculty and Student Participation in Academic Curriculum Design.

Much like the need for AFDA to develop a representative faculty and leadership that reflects the student demographic, the inclusion and participation of both in the design of curriculum have also gained cachet in the 21st century.

"There is to employ Black scholars in EVA to develop relevant curriculum" (#41, PNTS faculty).

The need for a representative staff that reflects the overall racial demographic of each campus, is endorsed by participant #59, who elaborates on why this remains a critical aspect of AFDA's transformation to meet the needs of its students.

> "Honestly, all these are brilliant concepts, but they are created by "majority White" people for "majority Black" people and thus missing the mark when it comes to solving real issues that Black students are currently facing" (#59, Black faculty).

Research has shown that PHEIs do not necessarily have the in-house experts to develop curricula or the resources to employ outside experts, which comes at a high cost (Movchan, 2020). However, when using existing faculty, it becomes imperative that staff or students who participate in curriculum design are chosen on merit (de Matos – Ala, 2019).

5.5.2.2 Faculty Training in Learning Management and Resources.

Classroom administration and management training are crucial aspects of ensuring that the management of students is a prerequisite for effective teaching and learning in a collaborative learning environment (Johnson, 1994; Johnson et al., 2007). The call for AFDA to reconsider the pace of learning (Mshayisa & Ivala, 2022) could indicate the lack of student and staff input to the curriculum. It could also be attributed to staff and students believing that EVA is out of touch with the student learning and staff teaching experience:

> "I wish AFDA could teach content at a slower pace" (#40, Black student).

Similarly, students were dismissive of the institution's capacity to deal with non-compliant and disruptive students. Staff training is suggested by several participants in terms of ensuring effective student and classroom management.

> "Staff must be properly trained and students should actually face the consequences of stepping out of line" (#65, White alumni).

5.5.2.3 Scaling Indigent Content, Activities and Resources.

It is clear from the questionnaire and focus group responses that scaling indigent knowledge (Liebwitz, 2017; Manathunga, 2018), particularly African knowledge, remains a crucial challenge for HE to decolonise the curriculum.

> "More information about Afro-centric ideals and processes" (#27, Black student).

Similarly, participants suggested a greater focus on research, focusing on local knowledge as a key aspect of scaling global South knowledge (Leibowitz, 2017):

> "Look, I think AFDA should encourage research centred on knowledge. Localised knowledge systems, so that you can't have students that go into university for knowledge only, but for knowledge to be localised " (#72, Black faculty).

Certain participants echoed a broader view of decolonisation, which negated the one for another approach, choosing to be more inclusive and creating a new space for scaling Global South knowledge.

> "I think its prioritising certain learning systems. Hence, decolonisation should not be about negating or discarding existing Western knowledge systems, but about acknowledging the third space that we occupy, taking the past, who we are in the present, and what that means for the future" (#71, Coloured faculty).

The findings further show that the scaling of indigent content requires that staff and students have access to the appropriate indigent content (media and academic text) resources.

"When it comes to the African Renaissance, we need to find materials that resonate with students, something that is closer to their hearts" (#70, Black alumni faculty).

A lack of access to resources from South Africa and the continent thwarts AFDA's ambition to encourage indigeneity in student project outcomes. Participant #38 proposes a unique idea to counter the perceived lack of content ad its integration with western and African cultural resources:

"The AFDA Alumni are doing exceptional work in the industry, and I think studying on them [about them] will bring AFDA and its prestigious brand closer to home" (#38, Black alumi/faculty).

Access to digital hardware and software resources is key to ensuring greater learning and teaching equity and equality:

"AFDA must ensure that resources (more accessible computer labs and better resourced libraries) are available for the students that it serves" (#59, Black faculty).

Directly aligned to the need for greater equality in the learning environment is the need for AFDA to increase the necessary digital tools to support hybrid teaching and learning (du Plessis et al., 2022; Mshayisa & Ivala, 2022).

> "More integrated access to hybrid and online teaching tools for students and staff must be proritised" (#25, Black staff).

Manathunga's (2018) contested but convivial conversations and debate approach, is consistent with participant #10's recommendation for timetabled curricula activities in *safe spaces*. These conversations deal with race, identity, culture and heritage, allowing students and staff to contribute to the institution's decolonisation and transformation agenda.

> "Students should have the space where facilitated discussions can occur on difficult topics relevant to our history and constructively talk about how students can contribute positively to this transformation through their project" (#10, White faculty).

Participants reiterated the need for sensitive cultural issues to be explicitly embedded into the term project outcomes as a means to deal with complex and sensitive matters in a productive and meaningful way. For example,

> "I also think that it would be beneficial for students to be able to create films that explore this subject matter" (#46, PNTS student).

The above line of thought is consistent with #55's view that the institution should use each *crewing* opportunity [when the institution dictates the composition of project team members] to formally engineer greater crew diversity as a means to accelerate transformation:

> “I would add more 'challenge crew' assignments to the AFDA curriculum. This involves being assigned to a specific crew. This allows for the institution to create room for further transformation and integration…” (#55, White student).

Beyond the formal inclusion of timetabled curriculum content, students and faculty proposed activities focused on transformation, decolonisation, and facilitation of transformative platforms.

> "I also think that having student clubs and societies, where they can express their thoughts and experiences with colonialism, apartheid in feminist societies, Black Lives Matter societies etc" (#46, PNTS student).

5.5.2.4 Addressing the Language Issue.

Ensuring that faculty remains vigilant and critically sympathetic to the dangers of explicit and implicit bias, stereotyping and discrimination in their assessment practices is a critical factor in decolonising the curriculum:

> “Translation must happen to promote social cohesion and create a harmonious learning environment – respecting our cultures, our traditions, our languages, and allowing students to express themselves in their language” (#75, Black alumni/faculty).

Further, participant #70 shares some pragmatic advice based on their personal learning experience and teaching practice, where students were encouraged to translate for one another (in the moment) actively- an interactive, participative process, which not only improves comprehension and understanding for students and faculty but also promotes participation and interactivity between students, reflecting a spirit of belonging and support that is reminiscent of Ubuntu principles.

> "So, if I were to have a member in my group, who is a Tsonga speaker, or Setswana speaking, I would help to translate that to English…(.), so I could help my team mate translate, to get what I am saying across to him, helping him or her" (#70, Black alumni/faculty).

The participants offered numerous remedies in response to the question on how *we can fix it*. The emphasis on how "we" will, is key to the participative and inclusive processes required to ensure both cognitive and social justice for the institution and its participants.

CHAPTER 6 : DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

As illustrated in the analysis and findings above, the reading of the responses of the participants form an integral part of understanding the complexities, ambiguities and other challenges facing private higher education institutions (PHEIs) such as AFDA. By extension, many of these challenges faced by AFDA reflect the challenges faced by the higher education sector in South Africa today. Central to this dilemma, is the complicated task of balancing global skill demands (Altbach, 2007; Altbach & Forest, 2013; Albrechts, 2016; Scwhab, 2016; Trilling & Fadel, 2009), with South Africa's social and cognitive justice imperatives (Le Grange, 2009; Parker, 2019; Schwab, 2016). As it stands, South Africa's higher education (HE) realities can leave one "broken-hearted by the various challenges, but just as thrilled by the evidence of hope" (Cook, 2020, p.71).

6.2 The Failure of South African Society to Consolidate its Post 1994 Democracy

At the heart of the challenge for South Africa to decolonise HE through social and cognitive justice lies the failure of its society and institutions to consolidate its post-1994 democracy. The socioeconomic and political failures of the country continiue to significantly compromise the transformation/decolonisation efforts of its higher education (HE) sector. Central to this particular context is the failure of South Africa's primary, secondary, and tertiary public education sector to provide an equal and quality education for all the citizens (Kruss, 2007; Le Grange et al., 2020; Somerville, 2021). All of which, together with the the intricacies and complexities of

decolonising universities and academic curricular (de Matos– Ala, 2019; Keet, 2019; Le Grange, 2019), has contributed to the failed transformation of HE in South Africa.

6.3 The Durability of Colonialism

While the conundrum posed above remains a clear challenge due to the "durability of imperialism" (Stoler, 2016, as cited by Jansen & Walters, 2022, p.9), the *Fallist* (#FeesMustFall #RhodesMustFall) student protests of 2015-2018, succeeded in advancing the departure point of the decolonisation conversation, albeit at the expense of the *Rainbow Nation* narrative and its failed transformation (Kgosiemang, 2019; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni, 2019). The *Fallist* movement highlighted the perpetuation of the inequalities, discriminatory practices, and political fragmentation in South African society. These unfortunately remain mirrored in South African universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) (Auerbach & Dlamini, 2019; HESA, 2019; Habib, 2019; Le Grange, 2009; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni, 2018). These factors and others have all contributed to the contentious issue of the success and failures of South African universities to respond to the greatest crisis in HE since 1994 (Webbstock & Fisher, 2016).

6.4 The Impact of Force Coercive Events

The impact of movements such as #Black Lives Matter (#BLM) and the #MeToo campaign (Brünker et al., 2020), reflected the numerous issues around inequality and discrimination. They highlighted a growing need for HEIs to play a key role in re-imagining, humanising (Chasi, 2020; Halagao, 2010) and countering the inequalities of colonial apartheid and dominant knowledge hegemonies of the 19

th and 20th centuries (Leibowitz, 2017; Manathunga, 2018). The findings of the study further show that corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) had both a positive and negative impact on HE in South Africa (du Plessis et al., 2022; Wangenge-Ouma, 2021). On the one hand, it accelerated the many new technologies required for online learning that the traditional HE sector would have customarily resisted. The previously unimaginable conveniences and advantages of hybrid remote learning are today, normalised as part of HE learning (du Plessis et al., 2022). However, while COVID-19 may have created a perception of democratising HE through greater access to learning, it ironically exacerbated the inequalities and discriminatory practices highlighted by the *Fallist* movement and #BLM. Inadervetently, the pandemic increased the digital divide, strengthening the global North hegemony of knowledge production through technological hegemonies (du Plessis et al., 2022 ; Wangenge-Ouma, 2021).

6.5 Evidence of Hope to Counter the Extreme Contexts faced by HE in South Africa

The "*evidence of hope*" is consistent with the transformative, change-culture approach that is optimistic and hopeful, and fosters inclusivity (Leibowitz, 2017), and builds trust and respect through listening (Presti & Sabatano, 2018). This mindset (shift), is consistent with Barnett's (2000) hopeful and optimistic approach to HE and the contextual dynamics of an age of super-complexity (Bengtsen, 2017). Nevertheless, South Africa's extreme contexts, which can "*leave one broken hearted,"* should not be overlooked. They both consciously and sub-conciously place unrealistic expectations on the local HE sector, particularly if viewed through the quantitative and rational metrics used by Global North theories and practice (Le

Grange et al., 2020). As such, necessitating a mind-shift (Senge, 2006), or counter-colonial mind-set focussed on the re-centrering of indigenous knowledge from a contextually relevant epistemological perspective that is rooted in its associated ontologies (Mbembe, 2015; 2016).

6.6 Avoiding Direct Comparison Between Various HE Sectors and Allowing each HE Sector and The Unique Character of Institution to Find Ways to Decolonise

In contending that South African universities have failed in their post 2015-2018 efforts to decolonise, the study acknowledges the incompatibility of comparing PHEIs with South African universities. Each of these has its unique character and traditions as historically English, Afrikaans and Black universities (Jansen & Walters, 2022). AFDA as a PHEI established in 1994, like South Africa, has had a unique opportunity to *start all over again,* without the colonial apartheid burden universities have had to deal with in their decolonisation efforts. AFDA acknowledges its limited scale compared to public universities and the unfettered structures of its hierarchy to be nimble and agile in the manner in which they experimented, innovated and developed alternative learning and teaching strategies as part of their epistemic disobedient stance to the way in which universities chose to teach film making in the 21st century. AFDA's niche focus and specialisation in limited disciplines, released it from the incarceration of knowledge production as expected from the long-standing existence of its faculties, disciplines, experts and industry alignments (Keet, 2016).

6.7 Acknowledging Challenges and Hegemonies faced by South African PHEIs

While considering some of the above listed advantages that PHEIs enjoy over their public sector counterparts, the reader is reminded of the distinct challenges and hegemonies faced by PHEIs to be part of a decolonisation conversation dominated by state universities. In terms of the internal contextual forces at play, AFDA's rapid expansion of its multi-regional, private for profit HEI and centralised autonomy (Groenwald, 2018; Harrison et al.,2010), has exacerbated existing challenges that the institution faces. In many ways mirroring, South Africa and its HE sector's failure to transform.

As evident in the findings, AFDA's organisational culture has not transformed. A *White, middle- aged* hierachy prevails and a lack of BPoC representative leadership and faculty is unable to accommodate the institution's fast-changing and growing BPoC student population. Whilst there are exceptions, the general consensus and alienation felt by BPoC staff and students can be attributed to numerous issues. These include the institution's untransformed hierarchies, ineffective communication structures and feral institutional practices. These have resulted in students and faculty feeling that issues of discrimination are either not dealt with, or are dealt with a lack of sensitivity and understanding of BPoC's lived experience at AFDA. In the case of campus and academic drift, it is clear that discreet and *in plain sight* work-around practices by regional faculty, staff and leadership to get the job done, opposition to the AFDA's curriculum and the breakdown of parity across campuses, is largely a result of of certain failings in AFDA's multi-regional campus structures, which include a lack of effective standardisation, blurred autonomy boundaries, poor communication hierarchies and the ineffective

monitoring of learning and teaching quality, all of which are common to multi-campus structures (Groenwald, 2018; Harrison et al., 2010; Nel, 2007). While familiar as challenges found in multi-regional and centrally controlled HEIs they are inextricably entangled with AFDA's failure to transform its organisational culture (particularly in terms of its leadership and faculty), the mitigation of the daily inequalities, implicit and explicit microaggressions, racism, bias and other discrimination, both inside and outside of the classroom.

6.8 The Current Decolonisation Status of State Universities in South Africa

AFDA contends that South African universities have not decolonised to the extent of their rhetoric and unfulfilled declarations. Besides widening access, increasing student funding and welfare, HEIs have failed to decolonise beyond the cosmetic and existing transformations instigated in 1993 (Jansen et al., 2017; 2019). These include the purging and replacement of offensive text, various add-on African studies and insufficient deployment of BPoC across faculty and in decision-making positions of authority (Jansen, 2019; Parker, 2019; Soudien, 2019). Jansen and Walters (2022) and Le Grange et al. (2020), further contend that the transformation workshops, adhoc committees and research teams that responded to the call for the (2015-2018) decolonisation of curricular, were prone to treating it as a *crises*. In essence, it resulted in short-term and stop-gap responses from universities, which together with "institutional posturing" and declarations, created a false sense that the call for decolonisation was under control (Jansen & Walters, 2022, p.21). A failed response, which did not take cognescence of the need for meaningful research by educationalists and sociologists to understand the true impact of a "radical idea" like

decolonisation on the averse to change structures and traditional hierarchies of universities (Jansen & Walters, 2022, p.4). Beyond the perceived achievements of institutions to decolonise, the knowledge systems of South African universities still regard global North knowledge as the "centre of the universe" (Asante, 1998, p.4; Moyo, 2020, p.3).

6.9 AFDA's Significant Act of Curriculum Innovation As a Tool for Socio-economic Empowerment Transformation

If married to assertions regarding the paucity and intricacies of curriculum design, these above observations, demonstrate that the innovation of new or revised curricular in HE, is "not only a task, but a significant act" (Barnett & Coate, 2022, p.3; de Matos-ala, 2019). If this be the case, the "*What works*" aspect of the findings, if seen through the reframing of AFDA's purposeful socioeconomic and transformative nation building goals and epistemic disobediences, bears testimony to the development of various iterations of socio-constructivist liberationist academic curricular and institutional policies, which align with the motivation and objectives of the the study. These include the search to achieve a better understanding of how to respond to the call for the decolonising of universities and curricular, and whether the reframing of AFDA's transformational and epistemically disobedient characteristics of its institution, fulfil the objective of shifting the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to concrete in a particular fashion. In so doing, demonstrating that innovative private PHEIs such as AFDA, should not be marginalised or tarnished as being more interested in *money than people*. These and other negative stereo-types that include offering diluted academic standards, prevent PHEIs from receiving recognition for the the important role that they play in South

Africa's HE sector, as well as the contribution they can make to the decolonisation conversation.

6.10 Recommendations

Given the centralised hierarchies and control of AFDA's various regional campuses, and the need to purposefully re-instate AFDAs existing goal and value -driven curricular and its its educational promise (AFDA Annual Year Book, 2022), the following is recommended based on ineterpretations of the findings in *"Whats broken, What works, and how should we fix?"* Given the urgency of the mitigation of inequality and discriminations of the lived experience of the AFDA's institutional curricular and its part responsibility for marginalising its academic curricular, it is important to develop a decolonisation goal and strategy with a focus on an inclusive and participatory process that is representative of its staff, faculty, students and alumni from across all the four campuses. A useful framework to understand the extent of participation is found in Arnstein's (1969) eight rungs on a ladder of participation (Bovill & Bulley, 2011). The framework allows the institution and the participants to understand their purpose and participation boundaries. If this is the case, AFDA must ensure that these staff hail from a transformed leadership and faculty, as expressed by many of the participants. The participation level could be classified under three of Arnstein's rungs: informing, consultation or placating, all of which demonstrate interactivity between the leadership and the faculty.

The ambitions of the process, should therefore aim for consensus to build on AFDA's existing goals, values and educational promise as a prioritised, dynamic and ongoing process that does not view decolonisation as a metaphor for the social and

political ills of societies' failures, but rather as an act of humanising HE from inside AFDA and out to society.

6.10.1 The Development of a Formal Position on Decolonisation and Counter-colonial Apartheid Strategies

The AFDA Institutional Senate and various regional leadership are encouraged to co-ordinate a transparent-participative process to prioritise recommendations and mitigations under the umbrella of AFDA's existing and future decolonisation. In so doing, developing a clearly stated position on its commitment to decolonising the institution as an amendment to its existing goals and values where appropriate. Key to the success of this particular recommendation is the purposeful identification of the decolonisation priorities based on:

- an understanding of the strengths and limitations of AFDA's status, identity and context as a for-profit, multi-regional campus PHEI established in post-1994 South Africa, offering purposeful (niche) undergraduate and post-graduate degrees that are project-led, collaborative and utilise progressive and alternate pedagogies and assessment approaches.
- All participants in the process must be alert to the political, social and economic impact that these often invisible and limiting factors will have on their decolonisation conversation and strategies.
- These include the high costs or extensive turn-around periods to realise accreditation and registration of new campus sites or qualifications and any significant changes to existing qualifications (Ellis & Steyn, 2014;

Stander & Herman, 2017); the reliance on student fees as the primary source of revenue due to ineligibility to state subsidies, research funding or the National Student Financial Scheme (NSFS) (Singh & Tullis, 2022); the prevailing stereotype for-profit PHEIs as institutions that offer diluted academic qualifications at an inflated cost and put profit before people (Guzmán Valenzuela, 2020; Le Grange, 2019).

- A clear and transparent understanding of all the participants of AFDA's overall goal, shared values and educational promise.
- The moral and legal requirements for the standardisation of curriculum and learning quality across all the campuses.

An understanding of these key identity and status markers of the institution is intended to contribute to staff and students gaining new insight into the strengths and limitations of the institution and its purpose. In so doing, making transparent the expectations that staff, students, parents and feepayers may have of AFDA, especially in terms of its approach to the decolonisation of HE outside and within the dominant narrative of public university activists (Benatar, 2021; Habib, 2019).

6.10.2 Finding a Framework to Accelerate the Decolonisation of AFDA

The utilisation or adapting of a framework such as Mbembe's (2015) four-point proposal (see below) for decolonising universities as a means to provide insight into the commercial challenges, limitations and priorities that dictate the capitalisation of the planning, financing, budgeting, and implementation demands of the decolonisation of HE which includes,

- Changing the student, staff and administrative race and gender demographics of the institution.
- Changing curriculum content through text inclusion and exclusion.
- Recalibrating learning and teaching activities and the student teacher power-authority differential.
- Changing names of buildings and facilities of the institution and providing staff and students with appropriate support structures.

In terms of a broader recommendation that may be ascribed to Mbembe's (2015) framework for the (re) capitalisation of the decolonisation of HE in Africa is the need for a prevailing mind-shift and mindset for transformation. In terms of the necessary insight into the status and identity challenges of AFDA as described above, the following key elements are fundamental to AFDA realising its decolonisation ambitions:

- Effective, central and regional leadership that is transformed and has clearly stated autonomy boundaries attuned to the lived experience of the staff and student body.
- Effective, transparent communication and reporting hierarchies responsive to staff and students.
- Monitored compliance and standardisation of the academic curriculum and organisational culture driven by newly stated goals that identify AFDA's decolonisation objectives and their capitalisation over an indefinite period.

The above key elements form part of the underlying fundamentals that must be in place to prioritise, (re)capitalise and respond to the array of emphatically stated recommendations and indirect inferences from participant responses in the study. These essentially address the question, *How we will fix it?* as part of the ongoing mind-shift and (re) capitalisation of the various processes required over an infinite period and include:

- Transforming AFDA leadership and faculty.
- Cultural and sensitivity training.
- Re-mediating AFDA's multi-regional hierarchies and communication structures.
- Improving financial support for staff and students.
- Finding new strategies to upscale *on merit* student and staff participation in curriculum design.
- Faculty training in learning management.
- Scaling indigent content, activities and resources.
- Addressing the language issue.

It would be fair to note that several of these challenges have been addressed over the last two years at AFDA (2021-2022), some of which have been part of AFDA's ongoing and historical challenges processes. Others have either been highlighted or re-prioritised as part of the various iterations and completion of the research study.

Chapter 7: Projecting Doctorate and Research Study Experience into Personal Practice

7.1 Introduction

Considering the contribution made by the research to my professional practice, an extensive list of activities, proposals, concepts, and knowledge have been optimised in the six years of my doctoral studies. During the six years of coursework, the thesis proposal, ethical clearance process, the field research and its writing up, I was able to significantly deepen my local and global knowledge of higher education (HE) and personal practice. As intended by the doctoral coursework, much of the knowledge and insight gained contributed to the theoretical contextualising, defining, categorising, validating and understanding of AFDA's identity as a private higher education institution (PHEI), its development since its establishment in 1994 and the contextual forces that have and continue to impact on its strategies to remain relevant in the HE sector. Importantly, whether AFDA could be acknowledged as a PHEI that has shifted the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric to concrete action and processes – and if so, to what extent and where and how it could accelerate or remediate its failings, absences and achievements.

The structures of the UoL online coursework and collaborative studies with doctoral students from across the globe allowed me to gain insight into the diverse contexts of HE. By comparing AFDA's achievements and failures with other doctoral students and their institutions, I gained insight into HE concepts and practices that have validated or interrogated AFDA's approach to HE. Given the impact of the globalisation, massification, commodification and homogenisation of HE today

(Altbach, 2007; Albrechts, 2016; Barnett, 2000; Jansen, 2017), the insights gained from the coursework and research study have ultimately allowed me to appreciate the gravity of context and the situatedness in learning and teaching in a pluralist society (Khanna, 2014); especially in a country like South Africa, whose HE is built on the fragmented pillars of colonial apartheid and the ongoing subjugation of the knowledge hegemonies of the global North under the guise of neo-liberalism (Manathunga, 2018; Mbembe, 2015; Wangenge-Ouma, 2021).

The three-year process of preparing the proposal (see:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YE_-UM8L-lLOvnCj8HXDIZHBw6TAf4bt/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109906544013226976889&rtpof=true&sd=true) and ethical clearance (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IOq33dK2eb-S87yvJ4CuxmHWRXOuyHKs/view?usp=share_link), and the development of theory to support my thesis and its methodology, methods, analysis and findings, have added to my role and contributions as the ex-founder and ex-Chairman serving on AFDA's Education Value Assurance (EVA) committee. A broadened HE vocabulary and newly acquired insights into the achievements and failings of AFDA, particularly in terms of transformation and decolonisation, have formed part of the following practices:

The doctoral studies and thesis would augment my role as a researcher and trainer on the AFDA team that were tasked to train the leadership and faculty of AFDA's piloting of Passchier's 2.0 academic curriculum , the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) emergency hybrid-curriculum, and the full-implementation,

including pedagogic approaches, of Passchier's 2.0 curriculum post the COVID-19 hiatus.

Most importantly, the doctorate programme gave me significant insight into AFDA's 2.0 curriculum's focus on future-proofing AFDA for the 21st century and its predecessor, Paschier's 1.0 curriculum - which contained several curricula and pedagogic strategies consistent with transformation and decolonisation (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 5, as well as link https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f9anUrfZX8sfAmnpvXXlTdDv_q9MNA_n/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=104840866944126065186&rtpof=true&sd=true)- The AFDA term booklet.

These are timetabled, assessed and explicit 21st skill and knowledge studies (Bell, 2010; Dede, 2012; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Each, in one way or another, contributes to transforming the institution through the socio-constructivist (Vygotsky, 1987) and liberationist approach (Freire, 1993; 1994) of its project-led curriculum and attendant pedagogics. As a means to providing the reader with a short synopsis of the five key studies and their transformative /decolonial properties, I have listed the five integrated and entangled studies of the 2.0 curriculum which include,

- Ideation studies: designed to meet the knowledge required to originate indigenous, culturally relevant events and emotional narrative text and project outcomes that resonate with local audiences; and by extension global markets (Passchier, 2006, 2017). This particular perspective is a key aspect of AFDA's

scaling of indigent knowledge that is comparable and critical as ascribed by Leibowitz (2017).

- Contextual studies: made up of 21st century studies that are designed to foster critical thinking (Bowell & Kemp, 2009; Brookfield, 1987), that is contested but convivial (Leibowitz, 2017); the development of personal learning values and goals that are aligned to team goals (Branson, 2008; Burnes & Jackson, 2011; Simpson, 1985); collaborative practice between disciplines and qualifications, breaking the incarceration of curriculm to subject disciplines (Keet, 2019), and fostering inclusion, diversity and tolerance (Johnson et al., 1994; Johnson et al., 2007); creativity studies that foster novelty and relevance of outcomes (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and DTC (digital technology and craft studies) that facilitate the student remaining abreast with the exponentially changing nature of technology.

- Reflection studies form a critical aspect of transformation through meta-cognition of self, the other, personal learning progress and the challenges that inform socio-constructivist learning relationships and interaction (Argyris, 2002; Argyris & Schön, 1989).

- Production studies is a formally timetabled series of student-led (Bovill & Bulley, 2011; Brooman et al., 2015) meetings and presentations by students in their particular area of responsibility on the project. These are monitored and student team meetings, overseen at arms-length by a learning-circle co-ordinator. The meetings facilitate student collaboration guided by team values

and goals and are designed to ensure that inclusion, participation and contributions are forthcoming and peer assessed (Berry, 2008; Liu & Lee, 2013) as part of realising the termly production outcomes.

- Discipline studies are the technical, attitudinal, aesthetic and cognitive skills developed through a discovery learning approach through various challenges and problems posed to the student in the term workbook (Castronova, 2002). They rely on student and other activity-led learning approaches (Bovill & Bulley, 2011; Brooman et al., 2015). Over a stated period, students can determine and negotiate their strengths and weaknesses across various disciplines (electives). These personal insights and discipline performance assessments inform their further specialisation (electives) from a wide range of disciplines (https//:afda.co.za) and project outcomes as stated in their quarterly-term learning narrative.

Further to the institutional practices that benefitted from my research study is the response by AFDA to the hiatus in on-campus learning created by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the implementation and training of faculty and leadership to adopt the four elements of the 2.0 curriculum, as part of the emergency hybrid curriculum. The existing inequalities in HE and AFDA were highlighted in the institution's *No student left behind* strategy. In so doing, contributing to AFDA finding new ways to mitigate the inequalities arising out of COVID-19. The training of faculty and management to adopt new online learning and administrative principles further highlighted the need for online learning and teaching engagement strategies, which included:

- Student-led learning (SLL), discovery or deficit learning approaches (Castronova, 2002), and alternate assessment approaches, including peer-to-peer assessment.
- The challenges of teaching and assessing a diverse student body (Berry, 2008).
- Developing strategies to encourage indigent cultural relevance (Underhill, 2020) and using indigent content in teaching and student outcomes.

Using Senge's (2006) five pillars of a learning organisation, a series of lectures to the regional campus Deans were carried out as a means to: adopt the necessary context/mindset to operate effectively in the status and identity of AFDA as a PHEI with a central autonomy over its multi-regional campuses; mitigate the dilution of the AFDA goals, values and educational promise through conscious delivery of AFDA's nation-building and socioeconomic empowerment goals (and their reframing under the umbrella of decolonisation); ensure the standardisation of AFDA curriculum and policies through compliance to AFDA's existing systems; encouraging the development of self-mastery of faculty and staff through further academic and professional development to model AFDA's collaborative and teamwork structures for students.

Following the initial identification of the lack of transformation of faculty and staff, I was appointed as the person responsible for ensuring that all the necessary steps and efforts have been taken to ensure greater urgency in ensuring the appropriate proportions of BPoC both through negotiations with the regional Deans and AFDA's Human Resources (HR) department.

All of the above practices have, in one way or another, been part of my interpretation and response to the participants' lived experience of AFDA. Many of these practices have both conscious and sub-conscious decolonisation imperatives. They are an expression of AFDA's goals towards nation building, ensuring a relevant and stimulating curriculum, which develops the necessary professional, creative skills and attitudes to empower graduates to make a contribution to the gross domestic product value of South Africa.

7.2 Limitations of the study and areas of future research

While the validity of insight and understanding garnered by my involvement as the co-founder of AFDA and subsequent roles over the last three decades is key to note, many may still question the extent of my insider-researcher status. In anticipation of the limitations of the subjective objectivity (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) of the insider researcher in the workplace (Costley et al., 2010), these have been addressed through traditional academic conventions, acknowledgement and declaration of power-authority differential over participants, my White, patriarchal status, reflective practices and the triangulation of data, in the research.

In terms of the research design, a mix of closed and open-ended questions would probably have been preferable (Gasman, 2011), particularly in terms of providing qualitative and quantitative questions that could illuminate or underwrite each other in a more direct fashion (Harwell, 2011). The decision not to identify individual campuses was primarily made to provide greater anonymity to participants (AERA, 2011), averting a real or imagined perception of any form of

recrimination occurring for participants. In hindsight, this could have provided comparative specific campus data for interpretation and triangulation purposes (Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2003).

The sheer scope of the research topic may have been the primary cause for the broad and generalised approach adopted to deal with the many challenges that emanated from the participants' responses. However, I believe that the hopeful and optimistic view of the study to deal with these challenges will encourage greater participation from AFDA faculty to increase future institutional research. Now that these particular challenges and opportunities have to one extent or another, been addressed in the study, it raises numerous issues that could be potential stand-alone research topics relevant to both private and state HEIs.

These include teaching and learning challenges in the 21st century, online learning strategies for participation and engagement, student wellness in a time of uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity, new pedagogic approaches and other curriculum issues, which include dealing with the limitations and opportunities of increased student and staff participation in academic curriculum and organisational culture (Bovill & Bulley, 2011). Further to this, research into standardisation of academic and institutional curriculum, leadership autonomy and communication challenges that face multi-regional campus structures (Gallifa & Batallé, 2010; Groenwald, 2018; Nel, 2007), and how these can be utilised to accelerate the transformation. Similarly, a study to investigate strategies to persuade South Africa's government to subsidise multi-regional PHEIs and the consequences of state intervention on PHEIs will be worthwhile.

Further, research investigating the stand-alone elements of the organisational culture or academic curriculum that contributes to the stalling of decolonisation is useful for accelerating transformation in South Africa's HE sector. Future research around the challenge of language in learning and teaching and its role in decolonisation deserves more significant focus in the future. Finally, the role and impact of artificial intelligence (AI) will on HE in the 21st century and its ongoing decolonisation.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

The thesis asks: Is it possible for a PHEI like AFDA, to go beyond the existing rhetoric of the decolonisation of HE and curriculum and failed declarations, to propose an alternate, generative (concrete) case study of an institution that has practised transformative curriculum innovation and epistemically disobedient strategies that are counter-colonial and designed to transform the society and empower its graduates? To a large extent, AFDA has, through its generative epistemic disobediences and implementation and adaptation of its socio-economic and liberationist curriculum, shifted certain aspects of the decolonisation of higher education concersation (particularly around nation building and socio-economic transformation) from rhetoric to concrete. However, the thesis demonstrates the identified failures and absences of its institutional and academic curriculum persist, and present AFDA with a number of challenges as opportunities in a particular context of local and global forces that impact on its decolonisation ambitions.

The study importantly demonstrates that several key events and forces beyond the massification, commodification and homogenisation of higher education (HE) (Altbach, 2007, 2013; Altbrects; Barnett, 2000) have shaped HE in South Africa and by extension, AFDA's development and transformation efforts over the last 28 years. Together with the exponential digital advancements that shape the way we live, learn and work (Goldin & Kutarna, 2016), we, as a society and the HE sector, are coming to terms with the prevailing disruptions and exponential change-conditions of a post-colonial (Hoppers, 2009; Lingard, 2009) and pluralist society (Presti & Sabatano, 2028), that no longer seeks out absolute truth, but rather multiple truths (Mackenzie

& Knipe, 2006), each in its particular context (Berthoff, 1999) and in the case of AFDA, the consequences of these limitations and opportunities created in the *extreme* local HE context.

The global neo-liberal principles of the massification, commodification and globalisation of HE continue to perpetuate social and cognitive injustices and practices through several established and durable colonial hegemonies (Altbach, 2007; Altbrechts, 2016; Hopper, 2009; Jansen & Walters, 2022; Lingard, 2009). The well intended promise of access to technology as a tool for democratising HE, and its capacity to accelerate the growing impact of a postcolonial and postpositivist presence of the imagination of the masses (Matus & McCarthy, 2008), has contributed significantly to the demise of the golden era of universities (Barnett, 2000). However, it has ironically, through the global North proprietorship of technology and innovation, increased the digital divide between the global North and South (Lanier, 2011; Schwab, 2017).

The South African student protests (2015-2018) to decolonise HE , the growing zeitgeist of social media protests like #BLM,
#MeToo have advanced the decolonisation conversation, but it is evident that these efforts have not had the necessary capacity or political will to counter the global North knowledge hegemonies beyond rhetoric and the cosmetic changes made post 1994 (Jansen, 2017, 2019; Le Grange et al., 2020; Somerville, 2021). Central to the dilemma, and in the limited and exacerbating socioeconomic and politically fragmented context, is the failure of South African society to transform. A reality which is reflected in the best-intended but often unrealised decolonisation

achievements, failures and absences of South Africa's universities and HEIs (Jansen & Walters, 2022; Le Grange et al., 2020; Shaik, 2021). Given these extreme socioeconomic and fragmented political conditions, Jansen and Walter's (2022) assert that the decolonisation of knowledge is an unreasonable and radical concept, which universities are currently unable to realise, as they have not measured the impact that this has, and will continue to have on HEIs. Wane et al. (2004) allude to the lack of concretising of abstract ideas as part of an academic and student condition, particularly in terms of countering the existing global North knowledge hegemonies.

The seemingly insurmountable size of the task to counter existing global North knowledge hegemonies (Hopper, 2009; Lingard, 2009; Wane et al., 2004), to paraphrase Cook (2020), can also create a sense of hopelessness, but similarly, there is evidence of hope. A view that is consistent with the optimistic and hopeful spirit of the study as advocated by Barnett (2000; 2021) in his thoughts on becoming and being, and one which entertains the costs of not engaging in efforts to counter the impact of the global North knowledge hegemonies at the expense of local and indigent culture (Wane et al., 2004). While the study may fail in its efforts to provide an elegant response to the many demands made by society on the decolonising of HE, it arguably defends the assertion that AFDA has through the reframing of its transformative nation building and socioeconomic imperatives, contributed to shifting the decolonisation conversation from rhetoric and unfulfilled declarations, to concrete action and ongoing adaptations designed to future proof the organisation and its past, present and future constituents in the 21st century.

The analysis, subjective-objective interpretation of the often rigorous and contested nature of the participant responses, offers a perspective that is not perfect in any way but rather authentic, fragmented, optimistic, ambiguous, and contradictory. In short, an extended and urgent searching, seeking and practising of a learning and teaching approach that seeks to mitigate its fragmented pillars of colonial apartheid through the significant act of developing and practicing of value laden, socio-constructive liberationist curriculum. In essence, an acknowledgement of decolonisation as a process rather than an event (Le Grange, 2019), and a hopeful opportunity to humanise society through "reconsider[ing] everything we choose to teach and learn" (Charles, 2019, p.3).

The marginalisation of AFDA's epistemic disobediences and transformative curriculum efforts, bears out the premise that an academic curriculum alone, cannot decolonise an institution (Guzman Valenzuela, 2021). While AFDA has attempted to serve social and cognitive justice through its goals and the AFDA curriculum in action, the imperative to understand these through a more optimistic-pragmatic lens in the shadow of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) (Schwab, 2016) remains critical. In essence, its more inclusive, participative and liberationist (Freire, 1984) or humanist approach (Halagao, 2012) that embraces the best of Piaget and Vygotsky's constructive and socio-constructivist ideals to teaching and learning. A learning and teaching approach where the student is placed at the centre of learning and is encouraged to have agency over their learning choices, and where the lecturer is both learner and teacher, and the student both student and teacher, in so doing redistributing the power-authority differential (Bukamal, 2022) and fostering greater participation between and for both (Brooman et al., 2015; Iversen et al., 2015).

An educational process that challenges existing teaching and learning hegemonies in a way that encourages student engagement through participation, inclusivity and equality and which "mirrors the complexity of society as it develops" (Iversen et al., 2015, p.1); and one which allows us a society to reframe or exercise a more neurologically plastic way of posing questions, excavating and shovelling knowledge, not necessarily only focussed on solutions (Keet, 2019), but facilitates dynamic and adaptive thinking for a 21st century characterized by complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty, and underwrites the need for greater contextuality in order to break down the durability and persistence of colonial knowledge hegemonies and their neo-colonial tendency. In so doing, an educational mindset that encourages a flexible, growth-orientated way of thinking (Dweck, 2015), which allows teachers and learners to re-imagine our society, to "think the unthinkable" (Leibowitz, 2017, p.2), and look and look again (Freire, 1993, 1994), as part of our quest to rehumanise the impact of colonialism and apartheid on HE (Heleta, 2016) beyond rhetoric. An education that fosters belonging, knowing, being and becoming (Barnett, 2009) for all the stakeholders in teaching and learning, as well as meeting the demands of the global realities of a fast-changing 21st-century society (Bell, 2010; Singularity, 2017). In essence, a return to Ubuntu's principles and the cardinal values of Ma'at (figure 3.1, Mahaye, 2018) but with the insistence of the enactment of the pragmatics of a capitalised, dynamic and indeterminate and ongoing process. A mind-shift and its stated enactment attended to as a matter of urgency to mitigate colonisation-Apartheid and the the risk of higher education institutions losing their relevance to the 21st-century society.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of AFDA Curricula Development 1994-2022

1994 -1996	A practical, loosely convened and non – accredited ad - hoc curriculum focused on introductory motion picture industry skills and content production for six students.
1996-1999	An industry-based curriculum designed by co-founder Bata Passchier (fully accredited by national regulatory authorities, including the South African Qualifications Authority, SAQA, the Department of Education, DOE and the Council of Higher Education CHE). Based on specialist (discipline) motion picture skills, producing various short films, and an ad–hoc live performance curriculum focused on theatre and screen acting.
2000 - 2021	(AFDA 1.0) A curriculum in both motion picture medium and live - performance, anchored by Passchier's (2006) (EVAM) Entertainment Value Assessment Matrix and its accompanying (VALA) Value-added Learning Audit Initially devised as an unwittingly epistemically independent and disobedient approach in contrast to the highly

	consecrated European and North American liberal arts film and drama school and the colonised local industry structures. The generative nature of the AFDA (1.0) curriculum aligns with AFDAs overall goal and objectives.Together with the business mantra that the "size of an industry is directly proportionate to the size of its intellectual capital" *(*Holmes, 2011b, p.46), and would contribute to the socio-economic transformation and growth of the entertainment (1994-2019), from approximately 4000 practitioners to over 35 000 (National Film and Video, 2019).
2015 - 2021	Bachelor of Commerce degree in business innovation curriculum introduced in 2015. Passchier created the qualification as an early response to the impact of technology on society and the need to develop tech -entrepreneurs who could create novel business concepts that recognised the socio-economic needs of the country, particularly in terms of job creation and alleviating poverty
2020 -2021	AFDA (ADAPT) emergency curriculum in response to the Covid19 emergency online “no student left behind” strategy (AFDA ADAPT briefing, 2020). The ADAPT curriculum adopted key pedagogic and timetable elements of the *under-construction* trialling of the AFDA (2.0 curriculum) to counter the impact of the national Covid 19 lockdown restrictions (Du Plessis et al., 2022).

2022 -	AFDA (2.0) A 21st-century curriculum based on the seismic shifts in higher education due to various focused progressive learning and teaching for 21st-century knowledge and content production strategies. The new curriculum builds on the curriculum traditions of the AFDA (1.0). These traditions include student-led curriculum design and pedagogies (Castranova, 2002), alternate assessment practices (Berry 2008) and explicit learning and assessment of metacognition processes like reflection (Boud, Keogh & Walker 1985)and other 21st-century skill development (Dede, 2010). These include lcreative thinking(Brookfield 1987), critical thinking (Bowell & Kemp, 2009), future technologies (Lanvier, 2011), collaboration (Jenkins, 2006), goal-setting practices and values and ethics (Johnson et al, 2007). Many of these skills contribute both indirectly and directly to accelerating the decolonisation of an institution as well as preparing graduates for the 21st century jobs market.

Appendix 2: FG Questions

Q1:	What does the decolonisation of curriculum mean to you as a student attending AFDA?
Q2:	How do we rid higher education curricula of bias, prejudice and any other harmful aspects of apartheid and colonialism?
Q3:	Do you have a particular view on the Africanisation, Nationalisation, assimilation, adoption, indigenisation, re-centring and/or purging of colonial values, concepts and theories from higher education curricula?
Q4:	What would you change in AFDA's existing organisational culture to accelerate the transformation/decolonisation of its curriculum?
Q5:	What traditional, local or indigent theories, concepts and thinking do you believe should be included in the new AFDA curriculum content in order to develop a transformative approach to: a. IDEATION and CONCEPT making. b. 21st-century skills like critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, values and goal setting. c. REFLECTION STUDIES.

Q6:	What project outcomes or other skills training would you suggest are necessary in order for students to be competitive in the local, continental and/or global creative economies?
Q7:	What pedagogical (teaching and learning) approaches do you believe are necessary to accelerate the decolonisation/transformation of the AFDA learning environment?

Appendix 3: Adjusted Questions for the Staff Focus Group

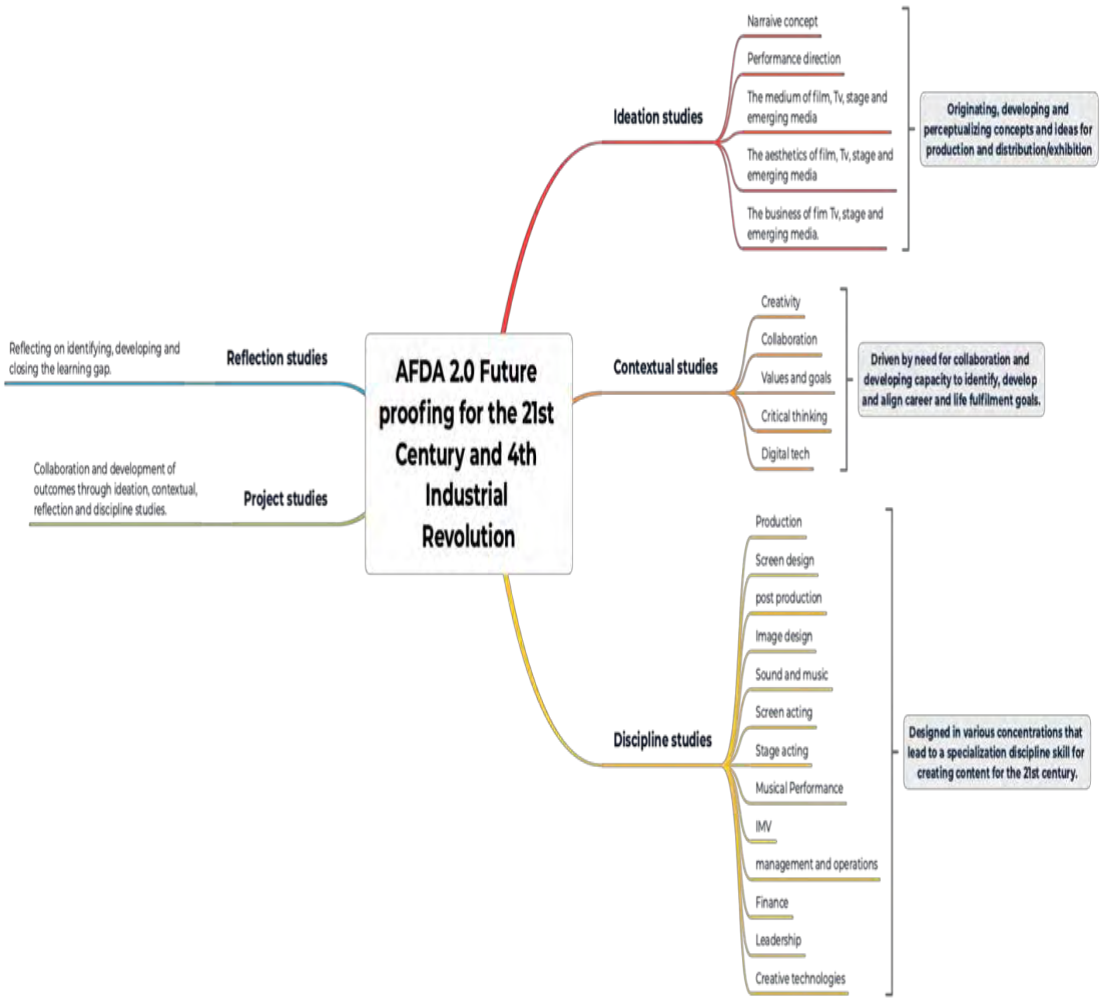
Q1:	What does the decolonisation of curriculum mean to you as an academic staff member at AFDA?
	Questions 2 and 3
Q4:	What would you change in AFDA's existing organisational culture to accelerate the transformation/decolonisation of its curriculum?
	Questions 5, 6 and 7 were not asked but summarised as many of the question responses referred to elements of question 4.

Appendix 4: Adjusted Questions for the Student Focus Group

Q1:	Each student to introduce themselves and their understanding of decolonisation.
Q2:	How do we ensure that AFDA students are appropriately identified and represented in the curriculum, its delivery and the learning environment?
Q3:	What recommendations do you have to accelerate the decolonisation of the AFDA curriculum, its delivery and environment?

Appendix 5: Future-proofing AFDA

Zoom to magnify image.



Links

Link 1: Introduction to Staff and Student Zoom

Click this link to access:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xw5cg6Ab00MFpj9rxPFEcklb7ZPA-5rE/view?usp=sharing

Link 2: Transcription for AFDA Faculty Focus Group

Click this link to access:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1x0Jk_v__0EeKv40u7zSjtdKk3VH0y82ukk1Hxghs79k/edit?usp=sharing

Link 3: Transcription for Student Focus Group

Click this link to access:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vGOss9Nlqa3AFRzOVLk8HtB2-04AqRR2UIswl2PB1ys/edit?usp=sharing

Link 4: Optional Reading

Click this link to access: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IENPEUPG_wxJf-AKR4bv8CAtmuZ1mx9i/view?usp=sharing

Link 5: Invitations to Participate in FG

Click this link to access:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UGmDTYQvVdLL1EukL64xPwVKYN8lk1jp9EoXAHsE2tw/edit?usp=sharing

Link 6: Audit Trail and Structuring of Data Responses from Questionnaire and the two FG

Click this link to access:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lAulYhpKc8OUTMR4ECq_lqPBESIQOgRfeNKDVxUoQF8/edit?usp=sharing

Link 7: Thesis Proposal

Click this link to access: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YE_-UM8L-lLOvnCj8HXDIZHBw6TAf4bt/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109906544013226976889&rtpof=true&sd=true

Link 8: FG Consent forms

Click this link to access:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AsVvxbFxW6rkxCRV2xbBAiS8OhucE8vX/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=109906544013226976889&rtpof=true&sd=true

Link 9: Ethics Approval Letter (LOREC)

Click this link to access: https://drive.google.com/file/d/11HuMjJjX5c2pnIc-zUX20mB4iyFd17WQ/view?usp=share_link

Link 10: AFDA Letter of Permission to Research

Click this link to access:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j9Z1glL6FqP0zdIg9INftXKLUN74njOw/view?usp=share_link

Link 11: Example of PIS

Click this link to access:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1p98-70pd_ZdJ5tJPCv7PtsBEZMF11zLV/view?usp=sharing

Link 12: Consent Forms for Questionairre

Click this link to access:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AsVvxbFxW6rkxCRV2xbBAiS8OhucE8vX/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=109906544013226976889&rtpof=true&sd=true

Please see LOREC and AFDA Ethical Clearance, Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet pp. 258 -

Liverpool Online Research Ethics Committee

DATE: 3rd August 2020

Application Reference Number: 2020/00001

Project title: 'Accelerating transformation through curriculum innovation, a private higher education institution in the creative arts responds to the demands of activists to decolonize South African universities'

Dear Garth Holmes,

I am pleased to inform you that the above application has now been approved by the Committee.

Please ensure that you inform the Committee if any changes are made to your research project and note that this may require you submit a revised application for a further review.

If you have any further queries, please contact liverpoolethics@liverpool-online.com

Good luck with your research project!

Dr Victoria L. O'Donnell

Chair, Liverpool Online Research Ethics Committee

film • television • performance • business innovation & technology
the school for the creative economy

15 APRIL 2020

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Garth Holmes,

AFDA has received your mail requesting permission to carry out online research with staff, senior students and alumni across our four campuses. You are hereby granted permission to conduct the study as approved by the AFDA Institutional Research Ethics Committee.

AFDA wishes you the best in your research and look forward to the report that emanates from the study.

Yours faithfully,

Teresa Passchier
CEO

Participant Information Sheet.
The AFDA STUDENT FOCUS GROUP (online)

Title of Study:
Accelerated transformation through curriculum innovation – a private higher institution in the creative arts, responds to activist demands to decolonize South African universities.

Version 6: 29/07/20

1. Invitation.

Dear senior Student,
You are being invited to voluntarily participate in a **student focus group** research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask us if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your colleagues, peers, friends and relatives if you wish. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

Thank you for reading this.

2. What is the purpose of the study?

The study forms part of my thesis research for the successful completion of my doctorate in Education at the University of Liverpool. The overall purpose of the study is to ascertain how AFDA, The School of Motion Picture and Live Performance can accelerate their existing transformation capacities and needs through curriculum innovation models that foster greater social equality, justice and cohesion for all staff and students.

The objectives include:

- An online focus group of 12 students, an online focus group of 12 faculty staff and an anonymous online survey with a minimum of 100 respondents, to gather data and analyse existing transformation achievements and absences of the AFDA curriculum, as well determine new and sustainable concepts, processes and theories to accelerate transformation of the AFDA campuses.

3. **Why have I been chosen to take part?**

- You have been invited by the Student Investigator Garth Holmes, to take part in the research from a list of 30 randomly selected AFDA senior students (3rd and 4th year) from each of the four AFDA campuses. The random list is provided confidentially to the student investigator by the AFDA National Registry.
- In order to ensure that each of the campuses is fairly represented, three participants from each of the four AFDA campuses, will be chosen to participate in the focus group. The limited selection of these participants is based on the first three respondents from each campus who agree to participate in the research and who reflect the race and gender representation of the AFDA national student body. (Race: 77% historically disadvantaged - Black, Indian and Coloured - and 23% white. Gender: 55% female and 45% male)
- If you are excluded, it is because the limited number of participants of 12 participants has been achieved, or if you are personally known to the Student Investigator.
- The rationale to use senior students is primarily motivated by the greater insight that they tend to have about the AFDA learning system and curriculum.
- Your participation is critical in terms of collecting important information about your perceptions, experiences and suggestions about AFDA and its capacity for transformation and the decolonization and transformation of its curriculum.

4. Do I have to take part?

As mentioned previously, your participation is completely voluntary. You have the right to decline, choose not to answer questions and may abstain or withdraw from the process at any time without any negative consequence.

5. What will happen if I take part?

- You will be participating in the online student focus group activities designed by Garth Holmes, the retired Chairman and co – founder of AFDA. He is the Student Investigator and although he is currently employed as an educational consultant to AFDA, the research project is being conducted as an independent research project under the auspices of the University of Liverpool (UK).
- The online student focus group is a 2- 2.5hour activity that will be done on Zoom, using a nom de plume (assumed name) and audio – only recording.
- You will be required to express your views on AFDA's transformation achievements and absences, its curriculum and its delivery, as well as provide suggestions that you believe could contribute to the acceleration AFDA's transformation through the decolonization of its curriculum.
- In order for all participants to carefully consider the nature of the research process and what will be expected from them, pre-reading activities of material and a consensus form will be sent to them that deals with the agenda of the focus group, aims of the research, definitions for transformation and decolonization, AFDA's goals, values, motto and educational promise, issues of confidentiality and the various processes that exist for students who feel anxious or experience discomfort in dealing with sensitive issues like colonization and transformation. Together with the list of questions that will be used in the focus group activities, the pre-reading should not take much longer than approximately 1 – 1.5 hours and students

may address any questions or queries they have to the student investigator.

- You will have 5 days to respond, bearing in mind that the first 3 from each campus who respond and meet the race, gender and relational exclusion criteria required by the study, will automatically be selected.
- Once you have agreed to take part and have been selected (and been notified), as one of the 12 students who will be taking part in the online focus group, you will receive a time and date to agree to the Zoom Webinar, for which you will receive a link invitation that allows you to participate in the Zoom focus group.
- You will be expected to create a simple nom de plume (assumed name) for use in the student focus group, which will be a recorded non – visual, audio only ZOOM webinar format, using screen sharing for inputs and presentations, Chat, Hand Up and Question /Answer platforms to initiate discussion, as well as to conduct pop – up polls to measure consensus, opinions and perspectives.
- The audio only recording, is determined to not only ensure optimal access and connectivity for all participants, but also widens the physical distance between myself and the focus group, further minimizing any relational or sensitivity of content risks, providing students with the opportunity to express themselves without reserve or fear of any negative consequence, as well as allowing them to modify their visual behaviour as they choose to.
- Your candid responses and disclosures in the focus group remain anonymous and confidential. They can in no way be used to damage your status, reputation or employability. The student investigator reserves the right to report any serious criminal disclosure to an appropriate authority.

6. How will my data be used?

The University of Liverpool processes personal data, as part of its research and teaching activities, in accordance with the lawful basis of 'public task', and in unity with the University's purpose of "advancing education, learning and research for the public benefit".

Under UK data protection legislation, the University acts as the Data Controller for personal data collected as part of the University's research. Any queries relating to the handling of your personal data can be sent to:
garth.holmes@online.liverpool.ac.uk (Student Investigator)
Carolina.guzman@online.liverpool.ac.uk (Supervisor of the student research project)

Further information on how your data will be used can be found in the table below:

How will my data be collected?	Your data will be collected through the recording of the Zoom focus group, hand – written and Chat notes made by the Student

	Investigator, both of which will be transcribed, using the nom de plume 9assumed name) of each participant.
How will my data be stored?	Your data will be stored on the data protected platforms of the University of Liverpool, the Student Investigator's PC and for the duration required by the Supervisor of the student research project.
How long will my data be stored for?	10 years as appropriate to the regulations of the University, or deleted on expiry of usefulness for the study (the latter pertaining to contact details).
What measures are in place to protect the security and confidentiality of my data?	The various institutional platforms are protected in accordance with the protection of private data. The student Investigator and Supervisor of the student research supervisor's PC's are protected by secure passwords and standard security measures of their premises. The pre – reading provided to participants will cover the importance for privacy, confidentiality and security of the data, personal privacy and confidentiality. This will be re-iterated in the introduction of the focus group activities to ascertain individual and or group consensus on the level of confidentiality desired by the focus group participants.
Will my data be anonymised?	Yes. Your personal data will initially be anonymised as your nom de plume (assumed name) by the Student researcher and deleted after the focus group activities and any feedback or reporting is completed. The online focus group survey will be anonymous as discussed above. The data will be further coded for the transcription, offering further anonymity. The recording will be deleted from all existing platforms, other than those of the Student Investigator and the University of Liverpool. Thereafter, your identity will remain anonymous and the research results and reports will ensure that all steps are taken to protect the

	anonymity in respect to the possibility of semiotic connections or inferences.
How will my data be used?	Your data will be used to form the analysis and report for the completion of the Student Investigator's doctoral requirements. It may too, be requested for use by other scholars, in which case, your anonymity remains assured.
Who will have access to my data?	As stated above: The University of Liverpool, the Student Investigator, Supervisor of the student research project and scholars who wish to use data for further studies. Once again, your data from the focus group will remain confidential and anonymised.
Will my data be archived for use in other research projects in the future?	Yes, if required by other scholars for research purposes.
How will my data be destroyed?	All data that is necessary for validating the study remains in the ten - year custody of the university of Liverpool, and as long as it is required by the principal investigator and supervisor parties stated above to complete the requirements of the doctoral study as determined by the University of Liverpool. Thereafter, it will be deleted from the various digital platforms, on which they will exist over this period, according to the emphasis of personal data minimisation by the GDPR. In this instance, all personal data procured during the selection of participants and their responses (containing their e-mail contact details) which will be deleted by the Student Investigator once its usefulness has expired.

Transferring data outside of or into the EU

As a foreign based online student, various data will flow between myself and the University of Liverpool and its stated officers and staff employed to monitor and oversee this study. All data will remain confidential through the various anonymity processes and data management protection requirements of the University of Liverpool.

7. Expenses and / or payments

Given the online nature of the focus group, there are no expenses or extra costs for any participants other than the voluntary use of their data to participate in the two hour online focus group. In the event of participants not having the necessary connectivity or data, they may consider using the AFDA wi-fi, at a pre-organised AFDA venue practicing social – distance safety protocols. No payments will be made for participation.

8. Are there any risks in taking part?

The fact that I as the Student Investigator, has previously held a position of authority at AFDA and continue to be involved as an Education Consultant, do present certain **relational risks** to both the participants and the research. It is therefore important that a mutual understanding that the research being carried out, is done so within the broad principles of Action Research, a research approach that strives for inclusion, participation, empowerment and transformation for its participants in the context of their lived experience of the institution. Although I would like to believe that my research goals and insider researcher advantage provides greater benefit than risk, in mitigation of the perceived relational risk, I would like to believe that the following steps may contribute to minimizing the risk:

- The student research project is fully supervised independently of AFDA, under the auspices of the University of Liverpool, its ethical committee (LOREC) and stated Supervisor.
- Pre -reading materials and an introduction at the beginning of the focus group, acknowledge any relational issues of hierarchical or white authority between the Student Investigator and the focus group.
- An online, audio - only and nom de plume (assumed name) for participants of the focus group, where voice recognition is unlikely, due to the student investigator's lack of contact with senior students across the 4 AFDA campuses and the provision of any student known to the student investigator being excluded. In the event of the student investigator having any personal relationship or knowledge of a student, they will automatically be excluded from the study.
- A voluntary, non – coercive invitation process that is initially made up from a randomly selected list of students from the four campuses.
- The limited selection of participants is based on the first three respondents from each campus who agree to participate in the research and who reflect the race and gender representation of the AFDA national student body.
- Any student personally known to the Student Investigator will not be considered for the focus group.
- A consensual agreement that protects privacy, confidentiality and the right to participate, or withdraw from the focus group, when and where they choose to do so.
- In the case of a student participant suspecting that the relational risk may interfere with the validity of the research, they may notify their concern to the University of Liverpool Research Ethics and Integrity Office at ethics@liv.ac.uk
- The focus groups will take place outside of the AFDA teaching and learning timetable and may not interfere with any commitments or responsibilities that students have towards AFDA.

There are certain risks which exist around the contested, **sensitive and complex** perspective of students, around the issues of transformation and decolonization. If one considers the broad continuum of views that currently exist around these topics, there could be a risk of

participants becoming emotionally heated in the moment. This risk is possibly minimized in the context of the current and ongoing South African conversation, post the 2015 -2018 #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall student protests. AFDA, its students and staff, were not directly involved in these university protests, other than through voiced solidarity or opposition to the protests. Nor did any protests of this nature take place on the AFDA campuses. The following context is stated in mitigation of content risk:

- The fragmented and often divisive nature of the issues at hand, are not new to the AFDA campus, a collaborative, project-led, applied and performing arts learning institution, which is constantly managing complex and sensitive social concepts as part of the stated nation building goal of AFDA. Conversations and debate are generally at the front of mind of most of the participants.
- Contested debates, lectures and discussions (both formal and informal) linked to colonialism, decolonization and transformation, white privilege, Black Lives Matter, inequality and ongoing discrimination, are part of daily discourse in South Africa, where many of these concepts are integrated and discussed in an interchangeable fashion, often acting as pathways to transformation and change.
- These together with the focus group pre – readings, summary of ground rules and the stated understanding for the need for a convivial, but contested focus group at the introduction of the focus group activities (see agenda and schedule of the focus group below), all contribute to minimizing risk.
- The transformative and empowering nature of the focus group study in an Action Research context, generally serves as a unifying tool for all participants.
- Similarly, I would like to believe that the utilization of an anonymous participation principle for students, will lessen this particular risk to a greater extent than a face to face (contact) focus group, allowing students to express themselves freely and without any sense of negative consequences for doing so.
- In the largely unlikely event of trauma occurring during the activities of the focus group, a social councillor, as recommended by the AFDA National Registry, will be appointed and be available to any participants that may experience a negative catharsis or traumatic episode during the two - hour focus group and thereafter (this will be explained in the focus group introduction and contact details will be available in the pre-reading documentation).
- If you as a participant feel uncomfortable with the focus group activities, or are experiencing any form of trauma, please notify the Student Investigator. If compromised in doing so, reach out to another participant in the focus group using Zoom's private chat function to convey your concerns (this will be explained in the introduction of the focus group). The Zoom private chat function can be used to address any issues during the two - hour focus group, whether the student chooses to seek out assistance from one of the other participants or by addressing the Student Investigator directly.
- All attempts will be made to carefully monitor any risk to students during the focus group through observation of voice tone and behaviour, as well as monitoring the chat content of the Zoom recording.
- To this extent, it would still be necessary to create a consistent focus on the purpose of the research, as opposed to using the event to create political or personal discord. The management of the workshop in a safe, inclusive and participative environment is key to

elicit honest opinions and expressions that are helpful towards the overall findings that will stem from the study.

- The student investigator will reflect on the survey question responses to inform any changes to improve any risk issues, as well as reflect on the staff focus group to inform any other risk issues that could be avoided in the student focus group. Similarly, a reflection on the survey and two focus groups will be undertaken between the research study Supervisor and Student researcher to determine and inform any risk issues that need to be considered in the analysis and reporting on the study.

9. Are there any benefits in taking part?

- As an Action Research based study, your voice as a senior AFDA student is vital. It reinforces the important principle of empowerment through inclusivity and participation - particularly in terms of transformation and decolonization at South African Higher Education institutions. Although the benefits for participants taking part in the online survey are largely indirect (other than the experience of participating in a unique event), the lived experience of the AFDA curriculum and its delivery from representatives of the senior student cohort, is key to originating new concepts and processes that are authentic and could in one way or another, contribute to the acceleration of AFDA's transformation.
- Similarly, suggestions on how to concretize the decolonization of the AFDA curriculum is key. As importantly, the data collected from the student focus group, will be used to validate the data collected through the survey and the staff focus group. Research findings could possibly be used by other Higher Education institutions, to consider elements as part of their efforts to understand the decolonization of curriculum and its delivery in the future.

10. What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will form part of the analysis and report for my final thesis hand in document to the University of Liverpool. Once approved, I hope to present my findings at:

- The STADIO* Multiversity academic conference on higher education teaching and learning (a listed Higher Education entity of which AFDA is a member institution).
- The AFDA *annual academic conference.
- The CILECT (global association of film and television schools) annual conference and the annual AFDA regional campus conference.
- The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) annual conference, as I believe that the findings of this study may contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning in South Africa.
- *students and staff participating in the research will be invited to attend via the AFDA portal.
- University of Liverpool EdD Conference.

11. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw your participation in the study at any time, abstain from questions or processes that make you feel vulnerable or uncomfortable, as

well as request for your data to be excluded – all of which require no explanation, and are without negative consequence to your existing status and reputation.

12. **What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?**

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let us know by contacting The Student Investigator (garth.holmes@online.liverpool.ac.uk) or
The Supervisor of the student research project
(Carolina.guzman@online.liverpool.ac.uk) and we will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with then you
should contact the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Office ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Ethics and Integrity Office, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified),
the researcher involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

The University of Liverpool strives to maintain the highest standards of rigour in the processing of your data. However, if you have any concerns about the way in which the University processes your personal data, it is important that you are aware of your right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office by calling (+44) 0303 123 1113.

13. **Who can I contact if I have further questions?**

Student Investigator: Garth Holmes. garth.holmes@online.liverpool.ac.uk or +27 (1)210350359

Supervisor of the student research project: Dr. Carolina Guzman Valenzuela Carolina.guzman@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Participant consent form

Version number: 3 Student Focus Group

Date: 29/07/2020

Title of the research project: **Accelerated transformation through curriculum innovation – a private higher institution in the creative arts, responds to activist demands to decolonize South African universities.**

Name of student investigator: Garth Holmes.

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated 29/07/20 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the pre – reading information provided by the Student Investigator, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

2. I understand that taking part in the study involves an online focus group that will be recorded on Zoom (audio only) and observation notes made by the Student Investigator, which will take approximately 2.5hours, and in which I will use a self – designated nom de plume (assumed name) to mitigate any relational and sensitivity of content risks as identified in the participant information sheet. ☐

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop taking part and can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without my rights being affected. In addition, I understand that I am free to decline to answer any particular question or questions. ☐

4. I understand that I can ask for access to the information I provide and I can request the destruction of that information if I wish at any time prior to the transcription of the recording, which will be completed in 60 days after the recording. I understand that following the 60 day period, I will no longer be able to request access to or withdrawal of the information I provide. ☐

5. I understand that the information I provide will be held securely and in line with data protection requirements at the University of Liverpool until it is available for sharing and use by other authorised researchers to support other research in the future. ☐

6. I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings and observational notes will be retained by the University of Liverpool and the student investigator on a secure digital platform for a period of ten years. ☐

7. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

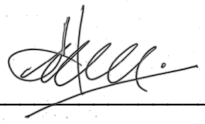
8. I understand that taking part in the study has certain relational risks due to the previous authority held by the Student Investigator and the sensitive nature of the content as a potential risk. ☐

9. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my fully anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research. ☐

10. I understand that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded and won't be released without my consent unless required by law. I understand that if I disclose information which raises considerations over the safety of myself or the public, the researcher may be legally required to disclose my confidential information to the relevant authorities. ☐

11. I understand that I must not take part if I am personally known to the student investigator. ☐

12. The information you have submitted will be published as a thesis report. Please contact the Student Investigator if you would if like to receive a copy. ☐

_____	_____	_____
Participant name	Date	Signature
Garth Holmes		
_____	_____	_____
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

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