

Decolonial Flipped Learning Spaces Design in ODeL: albeit hybridity of seismic shifts

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Abstract

Decolonial epistemic priorities in open, distance and e-learning (ODeL) learning spaces have become contested discourses about profound curricula transformational change with the prime focus on African scientific knowledges and perspectives inclusion in African Education syllabi albeit seismic multicultural hybridity of multifaceted shifts of “BEING”. Forging “new” decolonised education curricula with ill-conceived and aggrieved intents, may lead to the production of both socio-political pathologies and education failure. It is critical however to opine that as Africans continue to experience socio-political and economic seismic multifaceted shifts of “BEING” as influenced by a variety of global ideologies, concerted decolonial efforts should be mobilised to manage these matrices of material social constructs seismic shifts such that contamination and decapitation of true African Education curricula, identities, cultures, values, ethos and principles are curtailed. Western induced education paralysis was so profound that its toxic tentacles “caged” African critical thoughts, knowledges, praxis and practices in African education systems hence its rejection. I argue that, African scholars and researchers tend to use “caged colonial mentality (CCM)” critical thought to advocate for curricula reform oblivious of multifaceted seismic shifts that impact on socio-politico-education life of post-colonial African existential Beings. I strongly advocate for decapitation of CCM pathogens and embrace seismic shifts that accommodate inclusion of contemporary decolonial projects when crafting curricula designs constructs that build on the best knowledges, competences, skills, values, beliefs and practices from around the globe to buttress our causal multiplicities of identities but retaining Africa’s interests at the centre.

Keywords

Multifaceted seismic shift matrix, positionality of being, multicultural hybridity, decoloniality of power, open, distance and e-learning (ODeL), flipped facilitation experiences, Being.

Introduction

As a way of introduction, let me begin by acknowledging what Mboya (1963: 17) once proffered,

When I talk of African Socialism I refer to those proven codes of conduct in the African societies, which have over the ages conferred dignity on our people and afforded them security regardless of their station in life. I refer to the universal charity, which characterises our societies, and I refer to the African thought processes and cosmological ideas, which regard men, not as a social means, but as an end and entity in society.

The opening quote denotes my confirmatory ontological and epistemological notions of decolonial emancipation and social reconstructions efforts that continue to impair African political leadership crafts of post-colonial nation states. An African society in my view should be composed of “Beings” that are accorded the rights to freedom, social justice, equality, human dignity, choice of education curricula paradigms etc. African collective communal projects were invariably in their design, conceptualised for the survival and sustenance of their peoples irrespective of status, class and gender. It was possible to discern the social impact of philosophies and **ethos** such as humanism, African socialism, Harambe, Ujamaa (self-reliance) and Ubuntu to name but a few had on an African “Being”. **Ethos** is a Greek word meaning "character" that is used to describe the guiding beliefs or ideals that characterize a community, nation, or ideology. Mboya (1963: 17) describes African Socialism, “... codes of conduct in the African societies, which have over the ages conferred dignity on our people...” Mboya decries the commodification of African human beings at the expense of according them dignity and respect as well as colonial intrusion, slavery and forced labour.

One might surmise that post-colonial African state crafts are persistently framed within colonial caged mentality (CCM) pathogen. A cage is literally: an enclosed structure of bars (or wires or nets) in which birds or other animals are confined or restricted. In this discourse, CCM refers to mental self-confinement by African political elites who restrict their technocratic competences, craft literacy and ideological thought within narrow western prescripts. In the interim restrict their caged mental power to critically operate outside the box in accommodation of African contexts. For example the "**Scramble for Africa**" was the occupation, division, and colonisation of African territory by European powers during the period of [New Imperialism](#), between 1881 and 1914. Embarrassingly, African borders are still controlled in line with colonial most brutal administrative prescripts and enforcement for blacks remain the most prejudiced and their movements strictly controlled and restricted. Murmurs of debordering theories are frowned upon by black political elites who enjoy unfettered political hegemony at the expense of the poor voiceless citizenry. "Postcolonial" (or after-colonial) and decolonial African curricula in education as concepts permeate critical discourses in their current permutations in the late 1970s and early 1980s. My inaugural lecture, within the foregrounded context, is an endeavour that intends to answer the question hereunder:

How does a caged critical African thought impact decolonial flipped learning spaces design (FLSD) in open, distance and e-Learning (ODEL) curricula reform design projects amidst profound hybridities of multifaceted seismic matrix of shifts experienced over time in post-colonial African states?

1.1 Multifaceted seismic matrix of shifts in African mind-set capturing and caging

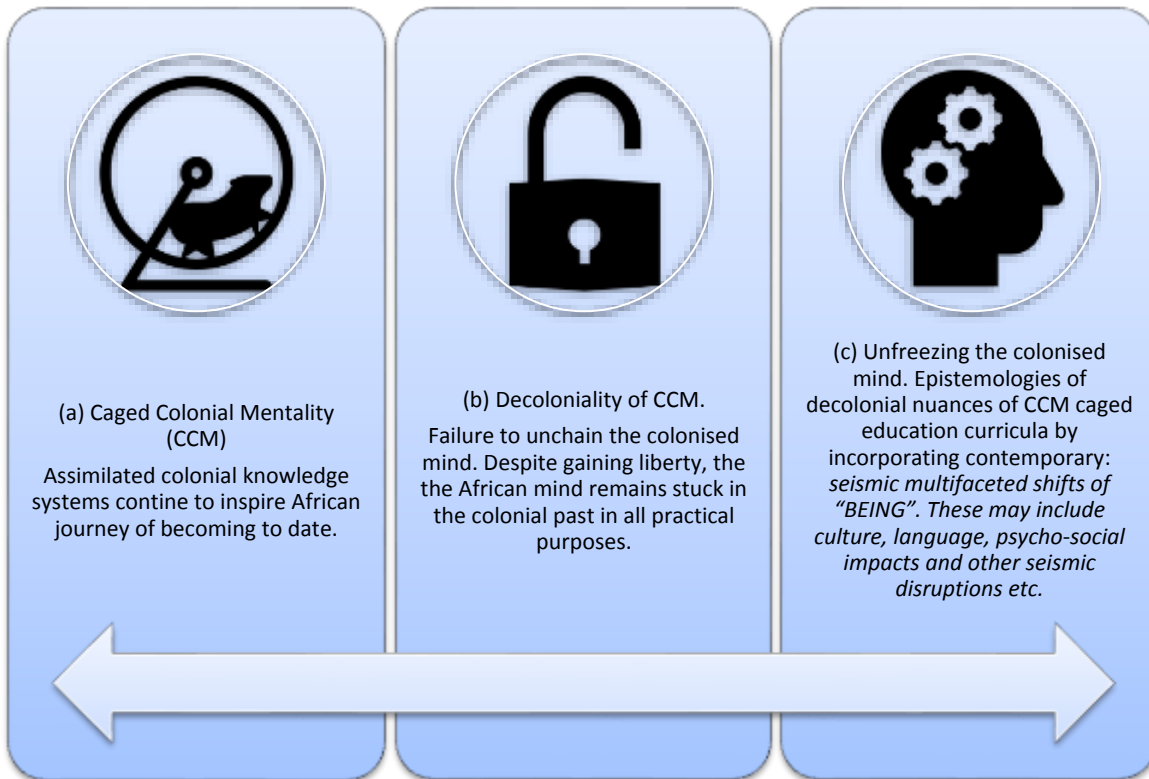
Edem Kodjo, author of 'Africa Tomorrow' describes the condition of African as, "torn away from his past, propelled into a universe fashioned from outside that suppresses his values, and dumbfounded by a cultural invasion that marginalises him. The African... is today the deformed image of others." Kodjo's statement pointedly denotes disruptions that represent a matrix of seismic shifts akin to those that have shaped African socio-politics and geo-politics at key moments over the past 1000 years. It is the narrative of African social disruption of nations, disruption of economic projects, and disruption of

political configurations, disruption of social cohesion projects and of education from cradle to grave. The West's journey of African constructs disruption meant that African Beings had to undergo traumatic matrix of seismic shifts in compliance with new social order of existence. These seismic shifts included cultural ethos dilution and/or disruption due to forced displacements, forced social disintegration at places of work (migrant labour system) and the subsequent creation of new language of communication, partitioning of Africa into new borders that separated families etc. The colonial projects of capturing and caging of African mind began during the period of conquest and dispossession and the West's quest to monopolise the economic resources of the known African continent.

In this lecture multifaceted matrix of seismic shifts therefore refers to a complex web of calculated geo-political, debilitating social impact, psychological, emotional trauma, physiological subjugations and land dispossession that African Beings endured during their odious journey of BEING. These matrixes of seismic shifts had life changing and fatal consequences on overall lives of black peoples in Africa. Colonialism as an ideology meant the stripping black Beings of their political rights and social justice and transformed them into economic production enablers of West's economy.

The practice and the theory of postcolonial resistance hegemony go back much further (indeed to the origins of colonialism itself). Notably writers, who were "postcolonial" *avant la lettre*, include figures like [Frantz Fanon](#) and [Albert Memmi](#), the Caribbean [negritude](#) writers, and some US critics whose work also presages some of the positions now labelled postcolonial. The term means to suggest both resistance to the "colonial" and that the "colonial" and its discourses continue to shape language, cultures, economic and political views whose revolutions have overthrown formal ties to their former colonial rulers. This ambiguity owes a good deal to post-structuralist linguistic theory as it has influenced and been transformed by the three most influential postcolonial critics Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. Figure 1.1 below explains the impact of CCM pathogen on African scholarship, psycho-social and political strata of the African people.

Decolonizing the colonial caged mind



Multifaceted seismic matrix of shifts in African mind-set capturing and caging

Figure 1.1: (a) Caged Colonial Mentality (CCM) refers to mental self-confinement by African political elites and scholars who restrict their technocratic competences, craft literacy and ideological thought within narrow western prescripts. (b) Failure to acknowledge that freedom has dawned in Africa, African elites continue to restrict their caged mental power to critically operate outside the box in accommodation of African contexts. (c) The unfrozen mind (seismic shift) can decolonial curricula designs constructs that build on the best knowledges, competences, skills, values, beliefs and practices from around the globe to buttress their causal multiplicities of identities.

1.2 Post structuralism paradigm and theoretical frames

Post-structuralism is grounded in the concept of [over-determination](#), even when the concept does not appear explicitly in textual presentations.

Over-determination as an epistemology implies the absence of a break between discourse and the objects of discourse. It implies that theory is not separate from reality nor is reality separate from theory. We **SEE** what we are **TAUGHT** to see in the

concepts we LEARN. The concepts we LEARN are complexly shaped by the stream of reality of which we are elements.

Post-structuralism recognizes the power of discourse to shape reality (both perceptions of reality and the concrete reality that is perceived). Discourse (theory) can produce SIGHT of FICTIVE objects, such as race (as in black race), or deny SIGHT of REAL social relationships/objects, such as class (as in [feudal class relationships](#)). In other words, at any given moment and theoretical understanding, we experience only limited aspects of the world and some of what we experience is based on falsehoods embedded in some of the discourses we have learned (falsehoods in the sense of not existing separately from the theoretical constructs, not even satisfying the coherence of defined objects within that discourse, as subject to investigation on the basis of the internal rules of coherence and fact of the discourse (e.g. the genetic notion of race fails upon inspection of the correlation between those physical features ascribed to *races* and the genetic make-up of those so grouped)).

As ontology, over-determination implies that existence is comprised of mutually constitutive processes. This overdetermined existence/BEING is complex and not conducive to the rigidity of the *grand narrative* which seeks to find a singular explicable Truth about reality. In this complexity, all processes are *continuously* in a state of transformation and processes are *continuous* movement/change/happening. One might add, "You cannot experience the same memory twice for doing so is no longer a memory but a repeat".

Post-structuralism means to go beyond the structuralism of theories that imply a rigid inner logic to relationships that describe any aspect of social reality, whether in language (Ferdinand de Saussure or, more recently, Noam Chomsky) or in economics (orthodox Marxism, neo-classicalism, or Keynesianism). Marx and Freud have, alternatively, been described as structuralists (creators of deterministic *grand narratives*) and as post-structuralists (breaking with the enterprise of creating deterministic *grand narratives*) in their theoretical innovations and inventions. The same has been the case with Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser, although both are more

generally regarded as post-structuralist thinkers (albeit having had their structuralist moments). Is the *totality* like a machine with different parts or a river that is forever moving and changing, never the same? Are we living in the universe of Parmenides or the uni(multi)verse of Heraclitus?

Post-structuralism was/is itself overdetermined by social processes, including the student movements of the 1960s for democracy, non-exploitative economic processes, and non-oppressive social relationships, in general, and *against* the economic determinism of orthodox (read Stalinist) versions of Marxism. The theorists who innovated the logic of over-determinism (first introduced into social science by Freud at the turn of the twentieth century) wanted to displace notions of static social structures with notions of social processes that were always in flux and, therefore, capable of being changed in progressive ways (or, alternatively, changed in regressive ways). It was pre-eminently an attack on apathy.

Many genealogists of postcolonial thought, including Bhabha himself, credit Said's *Orientalism* as the founding work for the field. Said's argument that "the Orient" was a fantastical, real material-discursive construct of "the West" that shaped the real and imagined existences of those subjected to the fantasy, set many of the terms for subsequent theoretical development, including the notion that, in turn, this "othering" process used the Orient to create, define, and solidify the "West." This complex, mutually constitutive process, enacted with nuanced difference across the range of the colonized world(s), and through a variety of textual and other practices, is the object of postcolonial analysis.

1.3 Over-determinism of decolonial analysis discourses

Both the term and various theoretical formulations of the "postcolonial" have been controversial. On the flipside, the term **decolonial** to emphasize that we are not past (post) colonial, and that only the active agency of the colonized will complete the process of eradicating the most pernicious legacies of the colonial and neo-colonial eras. Decolonialism proposes that "Coloniality of power" (Quijano, 2000) did not end

with Colonialism the Modern capitalist World-system imposes a racial/ethnic classification of people around the world as a basis of its power structures, and that directly relates to the international division of labour where places like Africa and other third world countries take on the role of exporting primary resources. This process goes on long after direct imperial rule (political rule) is abolished.

Decoloniality is born out of a realisation that ours is an asymmetrical world order that is sustained not only by colonial matrices of power but also by pedagogies, andragogies and epistemological assumptions of equilibrium that continue to churn out alienated Africans who are socialised into hating the Africa that produced them and liking the Europe and America that rejects them. Schools, colleges, churches and universities in Africa are sites for reproduction of coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Nuances of decoloniality of CCM must aim at “unchaining” the African mind of western influenced seismic disruptions that continue impinge on African scholarship, bureaucratic practices in places of work and polity.

Unlike decoloniality, the postcolonial is not attuned to what Mignolo calls “other sources:” the critique and activism (“radical political and epistemological shifts”) of various important figures from Asia, Africa, and Latin America such as Gandhi, Cabral, and Fanon.

What unites these two polemical gestures is a sense of the primacy of the epistemic in undoing coloniality. However, Mignolo also has a rather unusual understanding of the epistemic that gives it a special affinity to the *damnés*. On the one hand, a Marxist political-economic approach to delinking is not conceptual enough since it does not broach the fundamental level of thought. It fails to take over “epistemic power.” On the other hand, however, the intensely epistemic reflections of postcolonial theory remain too abstract and rarefied. “The epistemic locations for delinking,” Mignolo believes, “come from the emergence of the geo- and body-politics of knowledge.” In other words, the epistemic must have a material dimension. But its materiality is not that of the structures of political economy but of the corporeal experiences of those who have been

excluded from the production of knowledge by modernity as defined in Western yardsticks.

1.4 Conceptual articulations and lessons to be learnt

The Being's world-view or 'where the being is coming from' concerns ontological assumptions (the nature of social reality), epistemological assumptions (the nature of knowledge) and assumptions about human nature and agency (Sikes 2004). The genesis of these 'profound influences' stem from values and belief systems such as: political allegiance, religious faith, gender, sexuality, historical and geographical location, race, social class and status, (dis)abilities and so on (Wellington, Bathmaker et al. 2005) and (Sikes 2004). It is profound that we should acknowledge:

- (a) *fatalities of western colonialism projects when embarking on our own decolonial education curricula reform.*
- (b) *Africa is no longer composed of insular monocultural societies but in response to seismic shifts with time has become hybrid in its configurations of being and composition.*
- (c) *Africa still battles with three pillars namely, social homogenisation, ethnic foundation and cultural delimitation – hence breeds of xenophobic tantrums.*
- (d) *Africa's post-colonial states' functions remain steadfastly caged within debilitating political and economic niceties that inhibit genuine reforms – debilitating bureaucratic deborderisation ringfencing, decolonial education curricula and state power debacles etc.*
- (e) *Africa of today is characterised by **Multiculturality, interculturality and intraculturality***

1.5 Philosophy of education and the role of the university

One of the most important functions of philosophy is arguably that of tireless critical interrogation – not only of concepts but also of premises, beliefs, values, assumptions and commitments – and, by inquiring into their meaning and justification, not to mention their truth, to attempt to resolve some of the most fundamental ontological, epistemological, ethical and indeed educational questions (Wimmer 2000:413, 414). How does educational transmission of, say, mathematical and scientific concepts and principles take place, especially in the context of indigenisation, internationalisation and transculturality? What are the influences on curriculum and syllabus selection; what are the relevant differences within the educational systems in the countries on the African continent? What are the implications for facilitator training, for the choice of textbooks; how do indigenisation and internationalisation impact on the classroom experience; and what exactly is the promise of transculturality in this regard? These are just some of the questions a longer, more in-depth and, crucially, empirical study would need to address.

1.6 Seismic Shifts in indigenising African curricula and syllabi in flipped Facilitation

Indigenisation, in contrast, involves what German cultural theorist Wolfgang Welsch has referred to as the ‘return of tribes’ (Welsch 2000:349) and may be interpreted as a reaction against globalisation. Given the historical, political and socio-economic background (often colonial or other expansionist exploitation and oppression) that has given rise to and that motivates and explains indigenisation, the eagerness of people to return to what they perceive to be the sources of their cultural identity, their ‘roots’, is perfectly understandable. Although this desire to (re)turn to and (re)embrace local values and indigenous traditions (educational and other) is not implausible, the move towards indigenisation is replete with collateral damages. Compounded by problems emanating from unhelpful CCM immigration legislation and occasional bouts of xenophobia (or more accurately, violent actions against foreigners), there has been no transfer, exchange and mobility on the African continent comparable to that within, or produced by, European higher education. Instead, the net result has been a

marginalisation not only of the continent but also in terms of increasing isolation of sub-Saharan African countries from each other. Indeed, one would agree these policies of indigenisation may exacerbate existing societal divisions and lead to new forms of intolerance and discrimination (see Andreasson 2008; Chetty 2010, on reverse ‘racist rhetoric’ and ‘growing tribalisation in nation state’).

An additional problem with both internationalisation and indigenisation is that these approaches commit what might be called the fallacy of the collective singular. This is an essentialist fallacy that pervades reference to, say, ‘German culture’, ‘European identity’, ‘the African university’, ‘the essence of Africa’ and the like. The Bologna Declaration also seems to contain what Welsch has defined as ‘the traditional concept of culture’, where cultures are seen as separate and distinct ‘islands’ or closed ‘spheres’ (Welsch 2000:330):

The vitality and efficiency of any civilisation can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries. We need to ensure that the African decolonial education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions. Our quest for decolonised curricula is an authentic attempt to create our knowledge and practices that are unique to African societies but has global appeal that can be replicated by other cultures in the globe without playing second fiddle. Sadly, decolonial projects are doomed to fail if the mind of an initiator fails to undergo seismic shift of CCM pathogen. Failure to unchain the “caged” (unfreeze) mind, decolonial efforts will continuously offer cosmetic changes that remain marooned within western knowledges and practices.

1.7 Frames of Open Distance and e-Learning (ODeL)

Macro-level: ODeL Systems & Theories	Meso-level: Management, Organization & Technology	Micro-level: Teaching & Learning
1. Access, equity, and ethics	6. Management and organization	14. Instructional or learning design

2. Globalization of education and cross-cultural aspects	7. Costs and benefits	15. Interaction and communication in learning communities
3. Open, distance and eLearning systems and institutions	8. Infrastructure	16. Learner characteristics
4. Theories and models	9. Educational technology	
5. Research methods in ODeL and knowledge transfer	10. Innovation and change	
	11. Professional development & faculty support	
	12. Learner support services	
	13. Quality assurance	

In a nutshell open distance and e-learning (ODeL) refers to, “forms of education provision that use contemporary technologies to enable varied combinations of synchronous and asynchronous communication among facilitators and learners (students) who are physically separated from one another for part or all of the educational experience” (Alfonso, 2012, n.p.). ODeL expands the term “open and distance learning” or ODL to include use of e-learning or online learning methodologies to enable multiple forms of interaction and dialogue that can bridge the distance between facilitators and learners (Anderson, 2008c; Calvert, 2005; Garrison, 2009) and provide access to a vast array of interactive and multimedia learning resources that can be used to design learning environments for learners in diverse circumstances (Bates, 2008; Haughey, Evans & Murphy, 2008; Tait, 2010). Using online portals and VLEs further enables DE institutions to support both independent learning and collaborative learning through “increasingly complex pedagogical structures” (Haughey et al., 2008, p. 15).

1.8 Learning Spaces Literature

Post-colonial African critical thoughts are marooned and captured in the colonial belly of Western hegemonies that are profound and dilapidating. Projects of decoloniality are often aborted due to lack of financial resources thus often those that are approved by Western donor organisations, funding is strictly ring fenced. Triumphalism euphoria one might argue often exudes. In other words, given their new existential conditions, Africans were challenged to generate a **decolonial project**. It has been described as consisting of analytic and practical “options confronting and delinking from [...] the colonial matrix of power” (Mignolo 2011). The colonial matrix of power produced social discrimination eventually codified as “racial”, “ethnic”, “anthropological” or “national” according to specific historic, social, and geographic contexts (Quijano 2007: 168). New CCM matrix of seismic shifts provide opportunities for communalities of learning to relook at new approaches to facilitation and mediation given complex hybridities of identities in post-colonial Africa.

1.9 Phase 1: Decolonial Flipped Classrooms Learning Design

Flipped classrooms are a method of instruction and form of blended learning. This model gets its name from the way it “flips” the traditional classroom model. Using this method, students watch videos or listen to lectures at home. When they come to class meetings, instructors facilitate group work and other activities that would typically be considered “homework.”

The design phase indicates a focus upon sound architectural principles and/or contemporary educational philosophies and principles that have taken as best practice from other fields of research e.g. learning theory, identity theory, and environmental sustainability. From this, design principles have been developed as exemplars of the redesign process. Elements of design are linked to desirable student outcomes and teaching pedagogies, leading to claims that some spaces can be more conducive to intellectual, physical and emotional wellbeing and therefore with flow on-effects to student learning.

1.10 Shift in Design principles

Three assumptions underpin the design principles: -

- educational objectives and practices have fundamentally changed from the facilitator-centred 20th century factory model and therefore learning spaces must address the educational needs of learners in the 21st century (Chism, 2006; Fisher, 2002; Temple, 2007). The relationship between space and identity formation is embedded historically in environmental psychology principles (e.g. Good and Adams 2008, Carter 2006, Ferrer-Wreder et al 2008), and more recently around issues and notions of personalisation.
- design principles are open to re-interpretation according to the cultural context as typical school buildings and classroom layouts symbolise culturally specific understandings and philosophies of education as well as to resource distribution (Bateman, 2009), for example, the Reggio Emilia notion of the 'environment as the third facilitator' (New, 2007; Rinaldi, 2006).
- changing learning spaces based on the above principles will have subsequent effects in influencing facilitator pedagogies and therefore student learning (Oblinger, 2006; Sanoff, 1995; DEECD, 2009; Flutter, 2006). That is, good design leads to good facilitation practises and improved learning because the quality of the building design has flow on effects on facilitator and student behaviours, morale and practices and therefore learning outcomes.

The Flipped Classroom

THE TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM

Teacher's role: **Sage on stage**



THE FLIPPED CLASSROOM

Teacher's role: **guide on the side**



- Students watch lectures at home at their own pace, communicating with peers and teachers via online discussions
- Concept engagement takes place in the classroom with the help of the instructor

SOURCE: Knewton

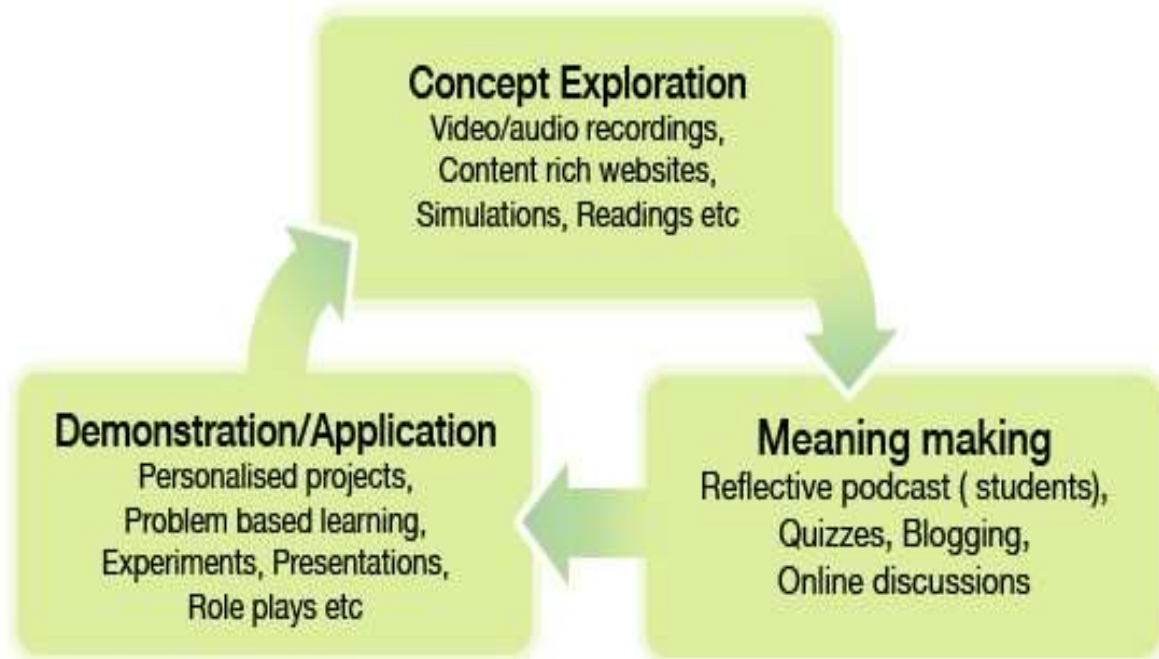
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1.11 What is flipped facilitation?

The flipped classroom is a blended learning strategy with the aim to improve student engagement and outcomes. It is not a new concept and can be equated with pedagogies such as active learning, peer instruction, case-based or problem-based learning, or, any blended learning strategy that requires students to prepare learning before they meet and engage with peers in purposeful activities.

As the Higher Education Academy (HEA) (2017) states, 'there is a huge range of different blended approaches; the balance between online and face-to-face components, and the integration of other methods, depends on the needs of learners and the context within which the learning is implemented.' (2017)

The key purpose of the flipped classroom is to provide a greater focus on students' application of conceptual knowledge rather than factual recall or straight transfer of information (See Diagram 1). Therefore, the design of purposeful activities becomes



The flipped classroom essentially involves the reversal of the traditional classroom and homework elements. The responsibility for the acquisition of knowledge lies with the students (eg, through pre-reading, use of videos, and online resources), whereas the classroom is dedicated to student-centred activities such as the application of knowledge, analysis, and synthesis and evaluation, which are directly supported by both peers and tutors. However, despite the evidence supporting the use of the flipped classroom, the model has yet to be widely adopted.

Technology makes it easy for academics to record full lectures, micro-lectures, instructional videos or tutorials with just a few clicks from any laptop – whether the recordings need to be made in a lecture theatre, an office, at home or in the field. Technology enables the capture of audio, video, a slide deck, screen capture, visualisers and more, meaning that lecturers can create rich and compelling recordings for their students.

The recorded elements are automatically synchronised, made searchable and transcoded for playback on almost any device, meaning that academics with very limited technical knowledge can get up and running quickly. The solution is also very intuitive, so lecturers can focus on recording and sharing their content, rather than having to hone their videography skills. This ease-of-use is particularly important in the flipped learning model, as it offers academics the flexibility to record whatever content they need to support the flip, whenever is most convenient to them. Students also enjoy this flexibility, as they can view the videos on almost any device and review the pre-lecture materials at a time that suits them.

1.12 The role of technology

The growing accessibility and sophistication of educational technologies opens up increasing possibilities for students to explore, share and create content. Technology can support flipped classrooms through the following affordances:

- Capture content for students to access at their own convenience and to suit their pace of learning (e.g. lecture material, readings, interactive multimedia),
- Curate content for students to gather their own resources.
- Present learning materials in a variety of formats to suit different learner styles and multimodal learning (e.g. text, videos, audio, multimedia),
- Provide opportunities for discourse and interaction in and out of class (e.g. polling tools, discussion tools, content creation tools),
- Convey timely information, updates and reminders for students (e.g. micro-blogging, announcement tools),
- Provide immediate and anonymous feedback for facilitators and students (e.g. quizzes, polls) to signal revision points,
- Capture data about students to analyse their progress and identify 'at risk' students (e.g. analytics).

1.13 Technologies to support the flipped classroom

Open Education Resources offer a range free and copyright clear resource to support your project. It is worth conducting an environmental scan of these before creating your own.

1.14 Gathering of evidence from learners in ODeL

The mission of inclusion and access of most ODeL programmes lies in “seeking to achieve something different from the elite universities, and [they] can be proud of that”. But this does generate a set of responsibilities.

1.15 Intervention, assessment and support

The stages of the student experience provide a structure for learner support, and interventions should be both universal at particular times in the learning schedule when all students may need support, and individual when a student is having difficulty or not making progress.

“Intervention has been practised in many ODeL systems for many years, and has been demonstrated to improve student completion,” says the report. The capacity to use data analytics “now makes intervention potentially much more immediate and powerful”.

It is clear from the ICDE survey that information collected is not optimally used to improve the student experience. “There needs to be focused cycles of review of module design in response to feedback.”

Assessment, the report says, plays a crucial role in students’ success. “It is integral to learning design and pedagogy, not as an add-on at a subsequent stage.” ODeL programmes have for years used formative and summative assessment, and continuous and final assessment.

“Online learning systems now have the capacity to provide frequent shorter assessment tasks that support student engagement and diagnose learning at shorter intervals, thus supporting student success.”

Providing personalised support for learners lies at the heart of successful teaching systems that operate at a physical distance from students, the report says.

“The advent of the web has made possible the potential of much easier student-tutor and student-student communication, through email and electronic conferences.

“In some ODeL systems student support is enhanced through social clubs and networks. The development of student peer support through Facebook, wikis and other similar crowd approaches offers much.”

While creating learning resources benefits from the cost-effectiveness of scale, individualised support to students has the opposite cost dynamic – it increases with the number of students.

Serious consideration needs to be given to how much of a teaching budget is given to learning resources versus student support. Too often resources are allocated to learning materials “with individualised support coming into the budget as an afterthought”, the report finds.

1.16 Information, logistical and management systems

The contribution to student success of effective, timely management of learning embedded in learning and teaching materials, assessment and learner support services is central, the report argues. Learning management systems – commercial and open source – have for years provided a framework.

The fast-developing area of learner analytics, using digitally held data to support intervention, is of “considerable significance. Issues of privacy and confidentiality create ethical and legal challenges which will be managed differently in a variety of legal settings.

“It is clear from the ICDE survey that member institutions regard learner analytics as central to future development, but that promise is at this stage greater than achievement. Learner analytics represent a significant priority in strategies for student success.”

This entire means, the report says, that student success is crucial to the purposes of ODeL programmes and institutions – and challenging to achieve, at least as compared with highly selective post-secondary systems. “Attention to this proposition underpins the ways in which ‘putting the learner at the heart of the system’ can be made a reality.”

1.17 Concluding Remarks

My concluding remarks are henceforth underpinned by what the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere said about education which can be said about decolonial education paraphernalia and affordance tools, “Instead, it must:

“... encourage the development in each citizen of three things; an enquiring mind; an ability to learn from what others do and reject or adapt it to his own needs; and a basic confidence in his own position as a free and equal member of the society, who values others and is valued by them for what he does and not for what he obtains.”

Banks (1993) concurs, “a total educational reform effort designed to increase educational equity for a range of cultural, ethnic, and economic groups.” The decolonised African curricular must include critical approaches to sociocultural identity formation, including racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, religious, and neoliberal identity constructions. The goal of multicultural facilitator is ‘to train individuals to perceive and recognize linguistic and sociocultural diversity by increasing sensitivity to socially and ethnically based prejudice, conflict, and misunderstanding; xenophobia; and racism’ (Alleman-Ghionda, 2012, p. 1213).

Freire’s (1970) purpose, as explained by McLaren (2015), was to assist students understand the politics of knowledge construction and the daily operation of ideologies to transform ‘structures of oppression to pathways to emancipation’ (p. 149). I therefore reject western influenced robotic education that cages the African mind and assimilatory body of knowledges that claim superiority over others. I demand respect, equality and acknowledgement of African existentialistic ontologies and epistemologies to be placed on the same pedestal with those of the west as equal partners. For me decolonial education curricula reform is not about replacing Western knowledge system on the

contrary the careful selection of education theories and practices that can be incorporated into our curricula reform endeavours, the advancement of African education, economic, political and social projects.

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