CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM
REFORM, DESIGN, AND MANAGEMENT
IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

by

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THESIS
submitted in fulfilment of the
full requirement for the degree

DOCTOR TECHNOLOGIAE
in
EDUCATION
in the
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
at the
UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

SUPERVISOR: Prof A. Muller

NOVEMBER 2007
DECLARATION

I, Themba Jacob Mkhonto, hereby declare that:

CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM
REFORM, DESIGN, AND MANAGEMENT IN THE TWENTY
FIRST CENTURY

is my own original work, that the manuscript has not been submitted previously for an award, and that all the external sources drawn on have been duly acknowledged by means of complete reference.

Signed: ____________________________

THEMBA JACOB MKHONTO

DATE
DEDICATION

I humbly and respectfully dedicate

CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM
REFORM, DESIGN, AND MANAGEMENT IN THE TWENTY
FIRST CENTURY

to the following persons posthumously:

My twin brother; my son, Thulani; and my mother, Ms Thokozile Winnie Witness Mabaso;
My parents-in-law, Mr Kholisile Griffths and Mrs Ntombi Phyllis Dineka.

Their collective memory has immortalized in me the limitless pursuit of “… the life of the
mind” (Cornell West, 1999: xv).
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am infinitely thankful for the Almighty God’s blessings throughout my life. His numinous presence once more replenished my soul during the most challenging moments of this study. I am also immeasurably grateful to the NRF and the former Technikon Witwatersrand for the financial support that sustained this study, especially during the first three years of its execution.

I am eternally indebted to my wife, Mrs Busisiwe Kate Laurette Mkhonto, on whose shoulders I proudly stood for all the years of hardship and toil. I still continue to draw heavily on her fortitude, sacrifice, and patience. Her years of relentless support, resilience, and belief in me have finally yielded the desired outcome.

I also thank my father, Mr John M. Mkhonto – for overcoming the fears of his life and staying the course. I would like to salute my sons, Banda and Njabulo. They have been the quintessence of patience, respect, and perseverance. They have earned for themselves the virtues of tolerance and understanding, given the loss of all the material comforts they have been deprived during the years of my solitary confinement to my studies!

I greatly admire the messages and deeds of support by my younger sister, Refiloe Mabaso. I can only wish her the best for sharing some of her limited resources with me. Thabo Tembe and Phillip Thabede, my unforgettable friends, have been the proverbial pillars of strength, depriving themselves of their valuable time and other resources in order to lighten my worldly burdens.

It is most befitting also, to accord due respect to the following academic luminaries:

- Professor Anton Muller, my supervisor – his vast experience in the field of higher education curriculum has been profusely illustrated in his guidance of the shape and substance of this research project. I benefited immensely from his unbiased, analytic and conceptual understanding of theory and practice in issues facing South African higher education. The inordinate discussion and presentation sessions were indeed ‘hectic’, but fruitful in the long term.

- Dr Maretha Gous – her personable character is the quintessential blending of wisdom and humility. Apart from her professional input during the empirical phase of the study, I have tremendous respect for her continuous support and unwavering desire and interest in the actual
completion of the study. I am eternally inspired by her inculcation of spiritual sustenance in all
the stages of the research. I will cherish her altruism forever!

- Professor Olga N. Makhubela-Nkondo – I extend my most sincere gratitude for the material
morale-uplifting and material support she has selflessly offered. I owe much of my self-esteem
to her insightful knowledge and understanding of the human condition and its innately
indomitable quality. Her trust in my indefatigable strength has continuously served to revitalize
me to proceed from one challenge of the study to the next.

I am truly indebted to the sterling work done by Mrs Malie King – her compassionate and personal
attachment to this project will be painstakingly missed. From 2002 to date, this project owes its
entire existence to her entrepreneurial, technical and editorial efficiency. Her clinical attention to
detail provided the backbone of this study’s ‘coming into being’. I am extremely blessed for her
boundless patience (and tolerance at times) in the arduous process of (re)typing and inordinate
moments of printing draft-after-draft of the edited and corrected chapters, during her weekends and
holidays! Her personal attachment and compassion manifested themselves until the conclusion of the
project up to the binding of the required number of manuscript copies.

The dedicated UJ (Bunting Road Campus) Library Staff, especially:

- Mmes Geraldene Cele, Makgabo Kekana, Nelly Kaunda, Julia Paris, and Ms Tina Zondi – for
doing everything in their professional capacity to ease all of my research-related concerns at
the initial stages of the study. The logistical preparations they persistently addressed in the
research room were definitely outside the ambit of their job description. Despite the initial
episodes of restlessness, these dedicated professionals relentlessly put the research-related
plight of the doctoral students at the forefront of the transformation of the library’s research
capacity – which has been excellently displayed by Mr Zanele Msomi through his Inter-Library
Loan skills and resourcefulness. That not even a single ILL book was lost between us since
2002, speaks volumes of the nature and quality of his professional ability!

- Messrs Lawrence Stona, Jackson Selemela and Mduduzi Madondo all turned the library into
my second home, and not even once complained about my constant requests for literature
assistance. Ms Nomsa Mudau, Ms Fezeka Sithole, Ms Goitsemang Ncongwane, Ms Zevile
Zondo, and MsLouisa Khumalo truly demonstrated their customer relations acumen at the front
lending desk and made me feel very much a part of the library staff family. I will forever
cherish their honest enquiry of always asking: “How are things going [in your studies]”? Their sociability turned the isolatory nature of studying in the library into an enjoyable enterprise.

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### GLOSSARY

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<tr>
<td>AAU</td>
<td>Association of African Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>American Council on Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADEA</td>
<td>Association for the Development of Education in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADEC</td>
<td>Association of Distance Education Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGO</td>
<td>Alternative Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APCS A</td>
<td>Association of Private Colleges of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APEL</td>
<td>Assessment/Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>APHEN</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Higher Education Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>API</td>
<td>Age Participation Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>APL</td>
<td>Accreditation of Prior (Formal) Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>American Telephone &amp; Telegraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUT</td>
<td>Universities and Technikons Advisory Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAeVU</td>
<td>British Aerospace Virtual University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEE</td>
<td>Black Economic Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-HEF</td>
<td>Business-Higher Education Forum (of the USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALP</td>
<td>Computer Assisted/Aided Learning Programme(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Curriculum As Prescription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT(S)</td>
<td>Credit Accumulation and Transfer (Scheme(s))</td>
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<tr>
<td>CATEs</td>
<td>Colleges of Advanced Technical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBE</td>
<td>Competency-Based Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBET</td>
<td>Competency-Based Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHE</td>
<td>Council on Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHET</td>
<td>Centre for Higher Education Transformation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CVU</td>
<td>California Virtual University</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuous Professional Development</td>
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<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training</td>
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<td>ETDP</td>
<td>Education and Training Development Programme</td>
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<td>ECTS</td>
<td>European Credit Transfer Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EWP 3</td>
<td>Education White Paper 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>FET</td>
<td>Further Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNU</td>
<td>Government of National Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>HAI(s)</td>
<td>Historically Advantaged Institution(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HBI(s)</td>
<td>Historically Black Institution(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HBT(s)</td>
<td>Historically Black Technikon(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HBU(s)</td>
<td>Historically Black University (Universities)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HDI(s)</td>
<td>Historically Disadvantaged Institution(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEI(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HESA</td>
<td>Higher Education South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEQC</td>
<td>Higher Education Quality Committee (part of CHE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRD</td>
<td>Human Resources Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HWAU(s)</td>
<td>Historically White Afrikaans University (Universities)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HWAT(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HWEU(s)</td>
<td>Historically White English University (Universities)</td>
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<td>HWET(s)</td>
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<td>HWI(s)</td>
<td>Historically White Institution(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HWT(s)</td>
<td>Historically White technikon(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HWU(s)</td>
<td>Historically White University (Universities)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAU</td>
<td>International Association of Universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>International Business Machines</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>IKS</td>
<td>Indigenous Knowledge Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISP</td>
<td>Industrial Strategy Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>KPMG</td>
<td>Klynveld, Peat, Marwick &amp; Goerdeler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MERSETA</td>
<td>Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Seta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIT</td>
<td>Massachusetts Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAP</td>
<td>New Academic Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCHE</td>
<td>National Commission on Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCVQ</td>
<td>National Council for Vocational Qualifications (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEPI</td>
<td>National Education Policy Investigation</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPO</td>
<td>Non Profit Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIACE</td>
<td>National Institute of Adult Continuing Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMMU</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPHE</td>
<td>National Plan for Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPO</td>
<td>Non Profit Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRF</td>
<td>National Research Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSI</td>
<td>National System of Innovation</td>
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<td>NSFAS</td>
<td>National Student Financial Aid Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTB</td>
<td>National Training Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTSI</td>
<td>National Training Strategy Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>NWG</td>
<td>National Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes-Based Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBET</td>
<td>Outcomes-Based Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLA</td>
<td>Open Learning Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAI(s)</td>
<td>Previously Advantaged Institution(s) / Individual(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDI(s)</td>
<td>Previously Disadvantaged Institution(s) / Individual(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQM</td>
<td>Programme Qualification Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAPL</td>
<td>Recognition and Accreditation of Prior (formal) Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAPEL</td>
<td>Recognition and Accreditation of Prior (experiential) Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAU</td>
<td>Rand Afrikaans University</td>
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<tr>
<td>RPL</td>
<td>Recognition of Prior (formal) Learning</td>
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<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Research and Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>South African College</td>
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<td>SAADA</td>
<td>South African Academic Development Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>S&amp;T</td>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
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<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern Africa Development Community</td>
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<td>SAIDE</td>
<td>South African Institute of Distance Education</td>
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<td>SANTED</td>
<td>South Africa-Netherlands Tertiary Education Development</td>
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<td>SAPSE</td>
<td>South African Post Secondary Education</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>SARIMA</td>
<td>South African Research &amp; Innovation Management Association</td>
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<td>SAUVCA</td>
<td>South African Universities’ Vice Chancellors’ Association</td>
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<td>SAQA</td>
<td>South African Qualifications Authority</td>
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<td>SDA</td>
<td>Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998)</td>
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<td>Skills Development Levies Act (Act 9 of 1999)</td>
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<td>SEDA</td>
<td>Staff and Educational Development Association</td>
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<td>SETA</td>
<td>Sector Education and Training Authority</td>
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<td>SGBs</td>
<td>Standards Generating Bodies (part of SAQA)</td>
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<td>SRHE</td>
<td>Society for Research in Higher Education</td>
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<td>TBVC</td>
<td>Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda, Ciskei</td>
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<td>TNC</td>
<td>Trans (Multi) National Corporation</td>
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<td>TMC</td>
<td>Trans (Multi-national) Media Corporation</td>
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<td>TSA</td>
<td>Technikon South Africa</td>
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<td>TWR</td>
<td>Technikon Witwatersrand</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCGH</td>
<td>University of Cape of Good Hope (forerunner to UNISA)</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education, Scientific &amp; Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNISA</td>
<td>University of South Africa</td>
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<td>Work Integrated Learning</td>
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<td>WPET</td>
<td>White Paper on Higher Education and Training</td>
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SUMMARY

Higher education, as both a “place” and a “paradigm”, has throughout its history confronted challenges in the internal and external environments of its functioning (Brennan et al., 1999; Hirsch & Weber, 1999). In the twenty-first century, the nature of these challenges has necessitated that both the organizational character and curriculum offerings of higher education institutions be adaptive and responsive to changes occurring in the external environment.

How institutions of higher learning react to these changes, is an issue of divergent viewpoints. “Reform” and “transformation” – in the same mould as “adaptation” and “responsiveness” – are viewed in this study as the fundamental points of departure in articulating a trajectory along which change in the curriculum perspectives has to occur. As a ‘product’ offered to its ‘consumers’ – the paying students – the higher education curriculum has been a fiercely contested epistemological terrain. On the one hand is the concern that it services the interests of industry and commerce, to the detriment of society; while on the other, the curriculum has been viewed as reproducing elitist values. The problem then, is located in the realm of the curriculum’s capacity to respond to the contradictory nature of the multiple stakeholder interests.

The South African higher education system is faced with the problem of firstly, de-contextualizing and disengaging the curriculum from its erstwhile political ramifications (CHE, 2000b). Secondly, affordable and quality higher education is expected to be assimilated into the broader national socio-economic imperatives. From this study’s perspective, the problem statement is situated in the context of the curriculum’s capacity to meet the local reconstruction and developmental needs; while also adhering to international imperatives ushered in mainly by globalisation and the concomitant proliferation of alternative providers who have challenged the claim to epistemological hegemony by traditional universities. In other words, are current curriculum trends in higher education directed at meeting society’s needs; or is the entrepreneurial imperative more sacrosanct? One of the main challenges for South African higher education curriculum reform/transformation policy concerns then, should be to define and determine how the local and global curriculum polemics are to be reined-in in the broader ‘public good’ and social contract in improving the lives of all citizens.
Through its empirical phase, the study has attempted to investigate the extent to which higher education curriculum trends ‘conform’ or ‘deviate’ from worldwide curriculum practices. In that regard, policy rhetoric was able to be differentiated from actual policy implementation. In order that problems of critical generalisability be obviated, data and method triangulation were utilised; also taking into account the institutional reconfiguration that had major consequences for the curriculum, especially at institutions undergoing “comprehensive” organizational and curriculum restructuring. The extent of institutional curriculum ‘deviation’ or ‘conformity’ was therefore determined on the basis of the collective integration of literature-based and empirical data and information/knowledge.

The case study research conducted through questionnaires and interviews at the designated research sites (two higher education institutions with disparate academic cultures) therefore serves as the basis upon which larger investigations and broader perspectives could be incorporated, particularly from the extensive literature review.

While the two case studies could have limitations of generalisability, some practices and trends lend themselves to a greater degree of the transferability of the findings. For instance, the knowledge stratification inherent in the Western university model (Makgoba, 1998; Scott, 1997) has perpetrated an environment of epistemological ‘supremacy’ within local higher education curriculum policy formulation frameworks. In that regard, it has emerged from the case study that Africanisation (in its epistemological, rather than ‘anthropological/cultural’ sense) is not part of a critical and mainstream curriculum organization tenet. While this observation could be argued to be institution-specific, it certainly also reflects a systemic trend.

In the light of the epistemological context cited above, is it to be assumed then that the ‘politics of knowledge’ (Apple, 1990; Lyotard, 1994; Muller, 2000) is an extant curriculum/epistemological nuance even in the twenty-first century? The realizable outcomes of the study materialized in the conceptualisation and development of a trilogy of models on Africanisation; in which the input, mediating/modulating, and output triad factor characterises an environment of possibilities for its integration into the mainstream higher education curriculum.