Chapter 1

Theorising the pedagogies of PGDips (HE) in the Global South

Laura Dison

Wits School of Education
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg, South Africa

Jo-Anne Vorster

Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning
Rhodes University
Makhanda, South Africa

Kibashini Naidoo

Centre for Academic Staff Development
University of Johannesburg
Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction

Academic roles in contemporary higher education are complex and multi-dimensional and have shifted over time to align with the purposes of higher education and with how universities are governed in contemporary society. As has traditionally been the case, academics are knowledge producers (researchers), and disseminators of knowledge (teachers); they also serve the university through participation in governance and administrative structures such as departmental, faculty, and institutional committees and take on roles as administrators, managers, and academic leaders. Community engagement was

added to the academic role as part of higher education's remit to contribute to transforming South African society (DoE, 1997). It can be integrated with the teaching role through service-learning and with the research role through what is known as engaged research. Academics also play a role in professional bodies linked to their disciplines or professions in the case of those who are involved in professional programmes like medicine, law, nursing and teaching.

The PGDip in Higher Education is a professional programme aimed at enhancing academics' roles as teachers in higher education. While there have been many advocates for the professionalisation of teaching, it was only in the early 2000s that the first PGDips were offered (Leibowitz et al., 2015). The National Framework for Enhancing Academics as University Teachers, signed by the then minister of higher education in November of 2018, recognises the importance of opportunities to develop academics as scholarly teachers who adopt a professional approach to teaching (DoE, 2018:3). PGDips provide opportunities for academics to engage in formal studies to build knowledge of key aspects of teaching and learning to enable them to devise context-appropriate teaching, learning and assessment strategies that meet the learning needs of diverse students at different stages of their academic studies.

The Diploma is aimed at the knowledge field of educational and higher education studies and the practice of academics as teachers (Shay, 2012; Liebowitz et al., 2017). The design of the Diploma recognises that teaching, like research, is an intellectual endeavour that should be informed by ideas, concepts and theories that enable academics to make sense of what "good" teaching and learning means for their disciplinary and institutional contexts. Therefore, the Diploma offers opportunities for academics to familiarise themselves with the theory and practice of teaching and learning in higher education studies, and with research into teaching and learning.

There have always been good teachers who have intuitively practised in ways that are appropriate for their disciplines and that advance student learning; however, there is ample evidence to suggest that new academics learn to teach through trial and

error. As argued by Rusznyak (2024), it is possible to learn to become a good teacher. This process is assisted by real-time feedback in the form of students' body language and solicited and unsolicited oral and written feedback by students and peers. Some participate in teaching development activities where they are introduced to research-based principles and theories of teaching and learning. Principled knowledge about teaching and learning takes account of the complexity that supports curriculum design and teaching, learning and assessment in higher education that is not often recognised in common-sense notions about teaching.

The higher education context for which the Diploma prepares academics has become progressively more complex over the decades because of globalisation, the effects of neoliberal policies and the shifts in the country's education system following the change from apartheid to democracy. The ever-burgeoning knowledge economy and ongoing technological advancements require high numbers of highly skilled professionals. These developments have been the main drivers of the massification of higher education world-wide. In South Africa, massification was also driven by the need to democratise higher education by providing access to the section of the black population that was previously denied entry, mainly those from working-class families. Between 1993 and 2020, the size of the student population in the country more than doubled from 473,000 to 1,094,808. Good teaching should be responsive to the national and institutional higher education contexts and to the real learning needs of students (Moll, 2004; Scott, 2009). In considering whether and how to respond to an ever-growing list of imperatives, academics need access to powerful knowledge about teaching and learning.

While South Africa has one of the largest higher education systems in Africa, with a gross enrolment rate (GER) of just above 20%, it lags behind many other countries in terms of participation of the full spectrum of those eligible to gain access. As is the case internationally, the number of university students in South Africa has been increasing, while the per capita investment of governments in universities has been declining with deleterious effects. For example, in this country, tenured positions have

declined significantly while the number of academics on contract across the system has risen to 65%; and the teacher-student ratio has increased by more than 50% between 2003 and 2020 (Essop, 2020) from 20.5:1 to 31:1. Universities are thus forced to achieve more with less, and teaching and learning have to take place in resource-constrained environments.

PGDips are designed to prepare academics to teach in the demanding context sketched above and in a system that still experiences the effects of the apartheid-era differentiation along the lines of race, language, and geographic area. One of these effects is the persistently weaker performance of black and coloured students compared to that of white and Indian students. Internationally, educational outcomes for lower-income groups tend to be worse than for middle-class or rich students as, generally, the latter are exposed to child-rearing and schooling practices congruent with the educational requirements of universities (Boughey & McKenna, 2021).

In South Africa, a university degree is associated with better employment prospects, as the per capita income of those with degrees is significantly higher than for non-degreed people. The unemployment rate for those with degrees is also lower than for those without a university education. In a country where it is critical to build the black middle-class, a degree is key to gaining access to relatively well-paying jobs, and the economy is in dire need of appropriately qualified people to fill the many available high-skill jobs, higher education cannot afford to continue to fail the majority.

Since the basic education system is still largely inadequate, it is the role of universities to ensure that students gain the knowledge, skills and practices needed to achieve success. As noted by Clarence (2021:2):

> Whether you have many years of experience or are new to teaching and lecturing in a university, whether you are tenured or working on contract, whether you have ten students or 500 students, you have the same moral and ethical responsibility: to do the best you can to

> enable the greatest number of your students to achieve meaningful success.

Teaching in ways that meet the real learning needs of students is thus a social justice imperative (Scott, 2009; Clarence, 2021; Czernowitz & Cronin, 2023). There are many reasons why young people struggle to be successful students. Schools should prepare pupils for multiple post-school employment and educational pathways, and not primarily for university study. In South Africa, it is widely acknowledged that many state schools do not provide students with the foundational knowledge, skills, literacies, and reading and writing practices required for university study. Ellery (2017) notes that for many students, university represents what she terms a code-clash in terms of their understanding of what learning means. For example, at school, learners engage with low volumes of work at a slow pace with frequent repetition of key ideas, concepts, and procedures. The curriculum content is often formulaic and highly teacher-directed, leading to learners approaching their studies in relatively passive ways. The amount of independent reading and writing required is minimal. This is in sharp contrast to the expectations for university study, where students are introduced to novel disciplines that require engagement with high volumes of complex knowledge, new ways of learning as well as the ability to work independently.

Ellery (2017, 2018) argues that students must develop disciplinary, learning and life literacies. *Disciplinary literacies* include ways of thinking, speaking, writing and being in the discipline; *learning literacies* are about what is needed to be a successful learner at university, including taking good notes, preparing for class, consolidating work after class, and so on (Middendorf & Pace, 2004; Meyer & Land, 2005); and *life literacies* are about taking care of one's health and wellness, ensuring adequate sleep, managing one's finances, etc. Most academics see their role as teaching the knowledge and skills of the discipline and the expectation is that students will develop learning and life literacies independently. Some students "crack the code" of the literacy demands of the disciplines. However, for many black and coloured students the so-called articulation gap (Scott,

2009) between school and university is already large, and there is evidence that students benefit when disciplinary literacies are made explicit, and they are provided with opportunities to practise and acquire these literacies. PGDips (HE) emphasise the importance of facilitating student learning in ways that bring forth core ideas and practices in the disciplines (Middendorf & Pace, 2004; Meyer & Land, 2005).

The #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall student protests of 2015 and 2016 were the result, amongst other things, of the high cost of higher education. They were also an expression of black students' sense of alienation from institutional contexts, particularly those of historically white universities. This alienation emerges from the academic difficulties that students experience, and the psychological toll taken by learning and living that requires them to become different kinds of people. Furthermore, even though universities attract students who speak many languages and hail from diverse cultural backgrounds, the language of learning and teaching is English, and institutional cultures generally privilege Western traditions. Until very recently, national resources have not been provided to develop indigenous African languages as academic languages and many academics cannot speak an African language.

The knowledge base of most academic disciplines is predominantly Western and textbooks of many disciplines are produced in and espouse theories and use examples from the Global North. Student and academic activists have been calling for the decolonisation of institutions and disciplines. This means that academics are called upon to revise curricula, including teaching, learning, and assessment methods so that they are more congruent with the life-worlds of South African students. Expanding the "archive" (Mbembe, 2015) on which curricula are based needs time and dedication to the decolonisation project, and given the multiplicity of demands on academics' time and energy, few are making the time to contribute to this effort.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has made evident the extent of the divide between middle-class urban-based students and those from working-class and rural backgrounds in terms of the extent to which living conditions are

conducive to studying as well as the extent of the digital divide. While it is the case that the current generation of students has more access to and are adept at using digital technologies, this cannot be accepted without question. Furthermore, in cases where students can be regarded as so-called digital natives, a consequence of access to digital technologies has resulted in many students struggling to read long texts and consequently their ability to write extended academic texts may be under-developed. Knowledge of appropriate pedagogical theory and a commitment to transformative education in universities in the Global South are necessary to enable pedagogically sound responses to these disruptions.

The rapid emergence and advancement of large language model generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) adds to the challenges that teachers face in higher education. For some students in higher education, because they believe that a degree will provide them access to well-paying employment, Gen AI seems to offer them a way of "completing" some of the most challenging tasks without much effort. Academics and academic leaders in higher education are grappling with the implications of Gen AI for teaching, learning and assessment. An additional issue for all concerned with teaching and learning is how to work with students so that they can use AI as a resource to support their learning rather than as a tool to escape the intellectual labour necessary to learn.

PGDips offer participants the resources to shape their practice in ways that are aligned to ideas, concepts and theories that are congruent with changing educational contexts and the real learning needs of their students (Scott, 2009). The next section will show how PGDips offer participants the opportunity to systematically engage with these ideas to enable the development of and reflection on transformative practice.

The role of knowledge, theory, and theorising in facilitating reflective practice for academic staff in higher education

In this section, we argue that knowledge, theory, and theorising are indispensable in fostering reflective practice amongst higher

education academics. These elements equip lecturers to respond effectively to the challenges of contemporary teaching, ensuring that they design and offer inclusive, relevant and innovative learning experiences for student success.

Teaching in higher education is a dynamic, multifaceted and contested endeavour, far removed from the oversimplified perception of teaching involving knowledge transfer from an expert (lecturers) to students. Academics must navigate the complexities of designing learning experiences, making informed decisions, and articulating their pedagogical choices. This process requires reflective practice supported by robust engagement with knowledge, theory, and theorising. The growing diversity of students, technological advancements, and evolving global, national and institutional priorities discussed above make critical reflection even more important for academic staff.

Learning to teach as becoming a reflective teacher

The belief that good teaching is an innate ability persists, even in higher education. This myth often positions academics as "natural" educators, relying solely on disciplinary expertise to achieve teaching effectiveness. However, research in higher education challenges this notion, emphasising that teaching is not a spontaneous or intuitive practice but a learned and refined skill. Rusznyak (2024), in her inaugural lecture, asserts that teaching is extraordinary and becoming a teacher involves learning a specialised practice with a knowledge base that evolves through continuous learning, reflection and transformation of practice over time. Although her assertion relates to the development of teachers in schools, this is also true for teaching in higher education. Ashwin (2017), writing about teaching in higher education, makes a similar point in his critique of the myth of the "inspirational teacher," arguing that effective teaching requires systematic planning, critical reflection, and evidence-based strategies. Teaching, therefore, is not a series of charismatic performances but a deliberate, reflective, and scholarly practice of learning to teach (Leibowitz et al., 2017).

A key aspect of learning to teach is the need to be reflective. Reflective teaching involves more than thinking about what works

and what does not. Reflective teaching involves "systematically re-evaluating our teaching experiences in order to improve our teaching practices" (Ashwin et al., 2020:vii). Brookfield (2017) is more explicit in his discussion of critically reflective teaching, arguing that teachers draw on four different lenses to examine their practice: the teachers' personal experience, the students' perspective, the perspective of peers and engagement with knowledge and theories in education. To this one may add values and ethics (Schwandt, 2005), emotions (Zembylas, 2014) and reflection as a way of being. While it is important to acknowledge the importance of all dimensions, the focus here is on knowledge and theorising.

Ashwin et al. (2020:x-xi, emphasis in original) make four important points about reflective teaching which are worth quoting in full:

> The first is that it *is* possible to identify teaching strategies which are more effective than others in most circumstances. Teachers in higher education therefore have to be able to develop, improve, promote and defend their expertise by marshalling evidence and by embedding inquiry and evaluation within their day-to-day practices. Second, all evidence has to be interpreted - and we do this by 'making sense'. In other words, as well as information about effective strategies we need to be able to discern the underlying principles of learning and teaching to which specific findings relate - we need to *understand* what is going on in this complex aspect of our academic lives. Third, we need to draw on this understanding to change our practices so that reflection is more than simply thinking about teaching. Finally, that our work as reflective teachers in higher education is connected to the future of our societies and to the life chances of students with whom we work. Therefore, our lives and sense of the good society are implicated in this work.

This notion of reflective teaching suggests that it must be informed by knowledge of teaching and learning, that it entails some systematic research, involves critical engagement

with knowledge in relation to context and that it is about transformation which will have a positive impact on students and more importantly on society. In the next section, we delve into knowledge that reflective teachers engage with.

Knowledge and theory

Teachers in higher education are often required to develop reflective teaching portfolios for confirmation of appointment or promotion. These portfolios should include a teaching philosophy and an account of their practice that is linked to their philosophy. This requirement is often met with frustration about the need to engage with educational knowledge or theory and assertions about being a discipline specialist and not a teacher. However, the discussion of reflective practice in the previous section emphasises the importance of engagement with knowledge and theory on teaching and learning to transform discipline knowledge into knowledge that can be taught, what Bernstein (2000) refers to as pedagogising of knowledge. This involves asking important questions about what we teach, how we teach, and how we account for the decisions that we make. These are not easy questions to address and according to Bernstein (2000), the process of pedagogising knowledge involves struggles over whose interests are served.

Teachers in higher education draw on different bodies of knowledge to provide students with access to their disciplines and professions. Broadly speaking, teachers need to be experts in their disciplines, and they need knowledge of how to design learning experiences to teach disciplinary knowledge and make it accessible to their students. Shulman (1987) offers a more relevant and nuanced account of what knowledge teachers should draw on that considers student diversity and the complexities of teaching and learning in higher education. His concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) stresses the importance of blending disciplinary expertise with pedagogical understanding to meet diverse student needs. According to Shulman (1987:9), to achieve PCK:

> Teachers must not only be capable of defining for students the accepted truths in a domain. They must also able to explain why a particular proposition is deemed warranted, why it is worth knowing and how it relates to other propositions, within the discipline and without; both in theory and in practice

Teachers need to guide students and help them to apply and critically engage with knowledge to foster deep learning (Clegg, 2009) and to achieve this they need to be experts in their disciplines *and* be familiar with teaching and learning knowledge that enables them to make decisions on what to teach, the pedagogical strategies that are most appropriate for the context and help them to address the *why* question. An awareness of the context which includes institutional policies, cultural dynamics and societal trends, amongst others, is also important. Teaching and learning do not occur in a vacuum and Rowlands' (2000) model of learning to teach involves becoming familiar with the interplay of the personal context of the teacher's personal experience, the shared context of colleagues and students and the public context of educational theory. These three contexts act together to provide resources to learn how to teach (Ashwin et al., 2020) and according to Brookfield (2017:83), this helps to build a "critical rationale" for or approach to teaching which is transformative, theoretically informed and contextually relevant.

Educational theory and theorising

> Everyone who can think, can ultimately also theorise; and the project of theorising therefore is inherently democratic (Kant [1784] 1970).

Kant's idea emphasises the universality and accessibility of reason. His framing of theorising as an *activity* conveys the important idea that if everyone has the capacity to theorise, and therefore no one group should dictate to another; it also highlights the value of diverse voices. This notion of theorising is aligned with the argument presented here that theorising is important for critical reflection and transformation.

Changes in the world of work, and the rapid evolution of technology in combination with increased social, economic and political inequities make teaching and learning in South Africa and globally, complex and challenging. These changes introduce anxiety and excitement into teaching and learning, requiring teachers to be adaptable and responsive to the changing contextual and student needs. To achieve this, teachers can draw on knowledge and theories that are publicly available to address teaching problems as well as everyday practices from an informed knowledge-based position. Educational knowledge provides teachers with "a language" to explain and, if necessary, justify the decisions that they make about teaching and learning (Ashwin et al., 2020). It also provides teachers with a language to *think* about their teaching that goes beyond the practice, fostering intellectual curiosity and systematic research which could result in developing new ideas. Winberg et al. (2023) argue that engagement with theoretical frameworks is crucial for fostering criticality - a fusion of thinking, being, and acting critically. This critical stance enables academics to address power dynamics, challenge epistemological hierarchies, and create transformative learning environments. Through engaging with educational theory, academic staff become part of a public conversation which could result in questions about the applicability of theory to new contexts, fostering more innovative and novel ideas. This is well-captured by Caillé and Vandenberghe (2020:29):

> Although we admire well-crafted systematic theories, we think that theory is most productive not when it gives the right answers (and even less when it gives a priori answers) but when it poses the right questions; to organize questions in such a way that one can give good responses to empirical questions, that is the task of a good theory. It unsettles, provokes, throws new light on old responses and raises new questions.

One of the strengths of higher education is that it draws on theories from a range of disciplines such as psychology, sociology and philosophy (Ashwin et al., 2020). This enables academics to apply theories that they believe will be useful to help them

teach their students in different ways and that help them to understand disciplinary knowledges and practices. In proposing this, we suggest that engaging in the PGDip can help academics to make better sense of the complexity of teaching and learning by helping them to understand the teaching and learning problems that they encounter from multiple perspectives. Ashwin (2017) argues that theorising involves simplification. The ability to simplify is necessary given that the social world is complex and emergent, making it impossible to be known fully except through the application of simplified concepts and theories. Addressing educational problems involves a process of examining the different perspectives or theories and deciding which of them are most useful to help to solve the problem being addressed. To make this decision, academics need a good understanding of the theories and their assumptions about the social world. Having said this, it is important to note that even though a theory can be useful in highlighting concerns, it cannot be a panacea for all concerns in the social world. Different theoretical lenses highlight different aspects of the world while excluding others. Ashwin (2017) suggests that teachers can move between different theories to select the one that is most suitable to help them to explain their practice. Theorising goes beyond understanding theory; it involves selecting and applying abstract concepts to highlight particular aspects and interpret teaching experiences, critically reflecting on these and generating new insights. Engaging with theory in this way transforms reflective practice into a scholarly endeavour.

Role of PGDips

Formal programmes on teaching and learning in higher education, like the PGDip, provide structured opportunities for academics to integrate knowledge, theory and theorising into their teaching practices. These programmes bridge the gap between theoretical insights and practical application, enabling educators to navigate the complexities of higher education. PGDip (HE) programmes emphasise the interplay of educational knowledge and practice. Participants engage deeply with theoretical frameworks, linking them to real-world challenges in the classroom. This process fosters reflective and adaptive teaching, equipping academics

to respond effectively to diverse student needs and institutional priorities. By grounding teaching in evidence and theory, PGDip programmes promote scholarly teaching that is reflective, innovative, and impactful. Graduates of these programmes often contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), advancing pedagogical knowledge and practices within their disciplines. The following section demonstrates, through an examination of chapters in the book, how theories and concepts play themselves out as participants engage in the programme.

Teaching in the PGDip context: embedding theory and pedagogical principles

In mass higher education contexts, the teacher's role is often backgrounded in policy documents about pedagogy and assessment and teachers' involvement in implementing teaching and learning activities is downplayed (Horrod, 2023). Horrod (2023) suggests that teachers and teaching are often portrayed in pejorative ways that undermine the importance of teacher specialisation or expertise. The PGDip addresses this tendency to sideline teaching by engaging explicitly with pedagogical principles and values and using a range of contemporary global and local higher education scholarship to inform teaching practice. Chapters written by PGDip facilitators and alumni in this volume are all supported by theoretical frameworks and pedagogical strategies gleaned from the various courses.

PGDip participants and alumni are encouraged to research their own teaching practices and develop identities as teachers of their disciplines alongside their researcher identities. The chapter in this volume by West, for instance, explores the concept of semantics as a dimension of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) to demonstrate the shift in the researcher's gaze "from a disciplinary expert to that of a teacher of the discipline". Two chapters draw explicitly on Archer's theory of morphogenesis. The first by De Klerk et al., uses Archer's theory to track the "agential and identity shifts" experienced by one graduate of a PGDip, while the second, by Adams, showcases how the professional academic identities of a number of PGDip graduates were "shaped by the interplay between structural, cultural and agential enablements

and constraints" within the PGDip (HE) as well as within institutional and departmental contexts. Furthermore, Uys et al. describe how they have used Shulman's (1987) knowledge base categories as a lens to describe the kinds of teacher-education-specific knowledge learnt on the PGDip in their university. They argue that this framework "allowed us to evaluate how the PGDip has shaped us as professional educators in our disciplines by surfacing the knowledge competencies" needed by teachers in higher education.

The planning of PGDip teaching and assessment requires significant conversations (Olsson & Roxå, 2013) about pedagogical competence amongst course designers and facilitators about teaching and assessment challenges. Examples of these are how to engage participants in meaningful reading and writing in preparation for tutorials using reading response questions, how to enact the "flipped classroom" (Talbert & Bergmann, 2017), how to achieve a balance between content dissemination and active engagement and how to implement alternative assessment-for-learning practices in line with university policies and expectations. The PGDip pedagogy relies on local case studies that are empirical and reflexive. Many of the course texts focus specifically on exemplars from the Global South that call for contextually relevant, transformative teaching at universities. There is consideration of PGDip participants' knowledge and understanding of knowledge-making processes in their disciplines and the varied roles that they play in teaching and assessing students. The chapters in this volume by Campbell and Atemkeng demonstrate how educational knowledge can inform curriculum, including teaching and assessment practices in undergraduate and postgraduate classes.

In course planning processes, there is an attempt to give concrete meaning to processes of decolonising the curriculum and to promote diversity and inclusivity. Courses are supported by a critique of the prevailing student deficit model and the recognition that stand-alone generic programmes and interventions do not address the dynamics of the changing demographics at the university (Boughey & McKenna, 2021). The course pedagogy aims to help lecturers to find ways of working in their institutional

crevices such that they satisfy institutional demands, while at the same time widening those pockets of freedom (Jansen, 2024). The end goal of PGDips is to facilitate a shift in thinking where academics see their teaching practice as opportunities for solutions to teaching-related problems and scholarship.

Modelling teaching practice for learning-centredness

The modelling of good teaching practice in the PGDip has emerged strongly as a key pedagogical strategy. The course facilitators collectively explore ways of explicitly enhancing the congruence of learning outcomes, pedagogical strategies and assessment practices and explicitly emphasise reflective practice when designing aligned curricula and tasks. Significantly, teaching on the PGDip moves away from a focus on the performance of individual teachers to context-specific practices of teaching and learning (Boud & Brew, 2016). Facilitators design contextualised embodied activities that are built from practice as learning "located in settings of application". Leibowitz et al. (2017:201) point out the implications of a practice approach for learning to teach as "including all aspects that comprise practices, including time, space, artefacts, and opportunities for people to learn from one another, and seeing the responsibility to learn to teach, as distributed". The focus is therefore on creating an enabling environment for teaching and learning rather than prescribing ways of acting. Although the PGDip offers staff development in a formal class setting which involves scholarly and reflective reading and writing, it encourages a practice orientation where lecturers can learn by doing and interacting with others who teach within and across disciplines.

There is a strong focus on modelling teaching and assessment concepts and processes for understanding rather than for dissemination and acquisition (Ashwin et al., 2015). The centrality of a dialogical approach is highlighted, showing how the knowledge project is premised on critical engagement and the iterative process of constantly appraising ideas. Value is placed on participation and interaction as participants identify key pedagogical challenges in their disciplines and exchange ideas

and strategies with colleagues on the course. Facilitators respond to participants' divergent ideas and give new insights on topics and issues that might not have been considered. Padayachee et al. point out in their chapter that PGDip facilitators are required to "model their own reflective practices of curriculum negotiation by involving participants optimally".

Identity transitions

The teaching environment in the PGDip enables participants to move out of their disciplinary silos into a sharing space that helps them to re-conceptualise their identities as educators in the university. The shift from being a disciplinary expert to being a teacher in a discipline is captured in many chapters in this book on PGDips in Southern Africa. The chapter by Mashifana et al. highlights the limitations of subject matter expertise alone in enacting sound engineering education. The authors, lecturers in Chemical Engineering, reflect on the positive impact of the PGDip (HE) in nurturing their "holistic pedagogical effectiveness". They identify the pedagogy of care as the theory that helped them to become reflective practitioners focused on improving the quality of learning for their engineering students. A similar auto-ethnographic study by West uses Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) to investigate "the development of a disciplinary expert's gaze towards education". Drawing on Archer's theory (2004), De Klerk et al. track the journey of one PGDip (HE) alumnus to show the "temporal agential and professional identity shifts" that occurred as a result of participating in a PGDip. In a similar vein, the chapter by 'M'amosa 'Mateboho Evodia et al. explores the factors that gave rise to the "evolution of teacher identities within the context of the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Programme at the National University of Lesotho".

Disciplinary teaching and learning

Over the years, PGDip course designers and facilitators have sought to ensure that course participants emerge from conversations in class ready to tackle teaching and learning challenges in their disciplines in a context of massification and resource constraints. PGDip participants are given opportunities

to develop an in-depth understanding of pedagogical approaches and to show evidence of shifts in their professional, pedagogical, and personal practice. They are presented with various frameworks like *decoding the disciplines* (Middendorf & Pace, 2004), constructive alignment and congruence (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Hounsell & Hounsell, 2007) and a tiered assessment plan for balancing low-stakes and high-stakes assessments (O'Neill,, 2023). Campbell and Atemkeng consider challenges such as the need to achieve constructive alignment in their courses as well as some of the attendant challenges with achieving it in practice. PGDip participants enrich the programme by offering useful paradigms and concepts derived from their own teaching contexts such as the "internal supervisor" used in the helping professions described in this volume. In their chapter, Graham and Masson provide insights into strengthening reflective supervision capacity in the PGDip by showing how the "internal research supervisor" can enhance the quality of the supervision process "in a more sensitive, complex, and theoretically informed manner". They argue that supervisors should learn to reflect on how to create "an individualized and developmental environment" for each student.

Creating a space for mutual sharing and discussion has enabled participants and alumni to reflect deeply on the disciplinary nature of teaching and learning and on how best to enact educational principles and practices in their teaching contexts. Uys et al. point out in their chapter that a key strength of the programme is its multi-disciplinary approach as participants "learn with and from diverse academics". It is unsurprising that so many of the chapters in this volume bring the nature of disciplines into the discussion of teaching and learning. There are chapters that focus specifically on the formulation of discipline-based PGDips in specialised areas of supervision and research. For example, Fru et al., in their reflection on PGDip (HE) supervision courses, highlight the limited focus on postgraduate pedagogy within the science disciplines. They argue for a "specialist PGDip course targeting the science postgraduate supervisor, supported by principles from humanities-based curricula" to enable contextually relevant approaches for science supervision. This would enhance the learning of specific forms of thinking required in their field of study.

Reflective pedagogical practice

Reflective teaching practice is a key characteristic that supports teaching in the PGDips. It requires a rethinking of deeply entrenched teaching practices and a paradigm shift away from long-held assumptions on the part of course facilitators and recognises first, that PGDip participants are not always proficient at "doing reflection" and second, that reflective practice is not cultivated or valued in some disciplinary contexts. The goal of instilling critically reflective practice has been integrated explicitly into the course pedagogy and assessment in most PGDips. Drawing on reflection scholars (Mezirow, 1981; Schön, 1987; Ashwin et al., 2015, 2020), facilitators have used thinking strategies, incisive questions and prompts to enable teaching staff to reflect on and re-conceptualise their course design, teaching and assessment practices. In some courses, participants are given questions to interrogate and carefully examine a particular teaching event or critical experience. Several chapters in this volume involve a deeply reflexive process of examining shifts in teaching identities and in re-thinking many of their assumptions about teaching and learning in their teaching contexts. In the chapter by Tshuma, course facilitators reflect on a collaborative PGDip showing how co-constructed activities can enable levels of deeper reflection compared to individual reflexivity.

The range of disruptions described in the context section of this chapter has given rise to new forms of reflexivity in responding to the world of ongoing innovations in digital technology. During these times, lecturers are required to make judgements on and interpret the demands of external requirements (Ashwin et al., 2015:52). Many lecturers have become more open to the transformative possibilities of pedagogically informed teaching and assessment by engaging critically in discussions about online and blended teaching approaches. They might recognise, for instance, the value of embedding reading and writing strategies in large classes where most students require academic literacy support to engage meaningfully with theories, concepts and processes. Resilient pedagogical practices (Thurston et al., 2021) have come to the fore for promoting constant adaptation and flexibility during disruptive times. PGDips create the space to raise

questions and debate the sustainability of resilient pedagogical approaches in the context of massification and neo-liberalism in higher education.

Learning-focused assessment practices

One of the major recent developments in higher education is the recognition of the central role that assessment plays in student learning. Collaborative innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the reformulation of programmatic and transparent learning-oriented strategies (Dison & Padayachee, 2022). Assessment modules are offered in all PGDip qualifications, but there is a common approach across courses to reformulating assessment tasks and promoting student engagement in line with an *assessment for learning* paradigm (Carless, 2015). *Assessment for and as learning* emphasise self-awareness and the process of learning, as opposed to focusing merely on its outcomes (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). The process of working with authentic assessment tasks has enabled participants to apply assessment concepts, principles and frameworks in their own disciplinary contexts and to address the powerful culture of summative assessment that favours assessment for accountability. Diversifying assessment away from a reliance on the examination has become a contentious issue in universities and has been resisted with the rise of generative artificial intelligence. PGDip courses draw on scholars like Dawson (2023) to present an alternative position for rethinking anti-cheating approaches and to challenge perceptions of "trustworthy" traditional exams.

Flexible assessments have been integrated into PGDip courses to demonstrate the value of assessment choices and to centre issues of trust and responsibility-sharing (O'Neill, 2023). Based on practice-based approaches to assessment for learning, PGDips (HE) problematise traditional markers of success and rigid marking practices and propose strategies for forging strong student-lecturer partnerships. Effective and varied teacher feedback is regarded as a key lever that can be modelled to shift the nature of learning (Hattie, 2015) as students develop an understanding of quality, are better able to apply feedback, and become more autonomous. The intention of incorporating

authentic tasks is for participants to rethink their teaching and assessment purposes away from the emphasis on methods that promote a high-stakes, "assessment for marks" culture. West's chapter is based on his experience of participating in an authentic assessment task in the PGDip that required active engagement with assessment challenges in disciplinary contexts.

Evaluating teaching

Teaching on the PGDip does not always lend itself to summative evaluation processes with smaller class sizes, but facilitators have implemented several formative evaluation and reflective strategies to elicit feedback and inform their reflective judgement. Through this process they have identified student and teaching-related areas that can be strengthened, and they are prompted to think deeply about what they are trying to achieve and what assumptions and values support their teaching and assessment practices. Traditional forms of evaluation often yield limited feedback on the impact of the courses in achieving transformative shifts in perspective and praxis. Atemkeng's chapter shows how he used evaluation data to inform curriculum design in a programming course in Mathematics. Padayachee, Dison and Ganas in this volume, as PGDip course designers and facilitators, explain the difficulties in demonstrating the impact of professional learning programmes. They propose the "3P Evaluation Framework" "as a mechanism to capture and illustrate the wide-ranging impact of the PGDip on teaching practices, agency, and advocacy, as well as transitions in academic identity".

Concluding notes

This edited collection, written by PGDip facilitators and alumni, recognises the value of scholarly and transformative approaches to academic practice in higher education. The analysis of different aspects of contextually relevant professional learning programmes highlights the complexity of translating professional expertise into accessible and appropriate learning experiences for students. The book showcases the critical reflections of academics who participated in PGDip programmes and who are re-imagining new ideas for engaging meaningfully with students in diverse

learning modes and modalities. Student learning is at the heart of these contemplations as the chapters in the book offer a rich account of strategies and approaches for creating an enabling environment for student engagement and for all students to have an equitable chance to succeed.

The chapter has argued for the importance of postgraduate diplomas in higher education in systematically helping academics to become reflective scholarly teachers in a constantly changing and complex higher education system. Given the importance of the PGDips in higher education, designing curricula presents unique challenges attributable to the multidisciplinary nature of higher education studies. Course designers must carefully articulate the knowledge and skills that they aim to impart and model the practices that they advocate. This approach ensures that participants gain meaningful access to educational knowledge and its practical applications.

The chapters in this book present possibilities for rethinking and redesigning teaching and assessment strategies to promote diversity and inclusivity. Engagement with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is a key learning outcome of many of the PGDips, and is a process through which participants develop agency as critically reflective teachers. The articles in the book bear testimony to this.

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