

WELCOME TO UNIVERSITY: HAVE A SEAT PLEASE

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Abstract

The teaching and learning milieu in a post-apartheid South Africa has transmuted fundamentally. Twenty-five years ago a university class accommodated 100 students; this has augmented into a class of approximately 2000 learners. Notwithstanding this transformed learning environment affects students, academics, and learning process significantly. Failure to deliver supplementary fiscal and human resources has left both students and academics unsupported. The proliferation of students has simultaneously and surprisingly seen a reduction in academics within faculties. Ineffectual organizational human resource and infrastructural developments has compounded the challenges. Scholarship on pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning in large classes is examined, adopting a qualitative desktop methodological approach. The adverse impact on first-year students and academics at universities in South Africa is documented. The results from this study denote the challenges experienced by academics and students in endeavoring to maintain academic standards. Sociological insights on the complexities, challenges, and possibilities that lie ahead are examined.

Keywords: University, academics, learning, large-classes, resources, challenges, South Africa, Students.

1. Introduction

On the night of the 9 January 2012, it is estimated that approximately six thousand hopeful students and parents assembled, outside the inaccessible gates of the University of Johannesburg. When the campus unbolted its gates at approximately 7h30 on the 10 January 2012, a sudden rush toward the open gates causing a deadly stampede “A desperate attempt to claim a place at university for her child ended in tragedy for one parent when she was crushed to death in a stampede at the gates of the University of Johannesburg’s Bunting Road campus, after applicants desperate for a berth rushed the varsity’s gate” (Mail and Guardian, 10 January 2012, p 4). The lethal pursuit of one parent to secure a space for her child at university has drastically transformed the structure and nature of academic operations impacting directly on the intellectual project at all South African (SA) universities.

SA universities were traditionally designed to serve small racially segmented student populations that earned a seat based on privilege, race and exceptional academic performance. Black students’ access was confined to limited qualifications, systematically omitting their advancement in math, medicine, and science. Despite these tyrannical laws, bush colleges under difficult conditions went on to produce eminent global scholars in the fields of math, medicine and science. The SA Bantu Education system demarcated strict racial parameters, which prescribed a substandard intellectual project, cultivating truncated criteria aimed at black students. Access to bush colleges was regulated and judiciously supervised to uphold and maintain the suppression of the larger African, Indian and Colored populations of SA. The deliberate incapacitating of education delivery for all black scholars remained a prevalent feature throughout the public schooling system with sizable academic, infrastructural and

resource apertures (Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012, p 19).

Final year high school students require a matric bachelors pass to compete for a seat at university. A substantive reduction in the prerequisites for a matric bachelor's pass has witnessed a dramatic proliferation of students that satisfy minimum academic entry requirements (Anonymous (a), ND). Minimum entry requirements do not automatically indicate preparedness and proficiencies of the applicants. The dropping of pass grades has adversely compromised student preparedness for university success. Redressing apartheid imbalances compelled the education sector to reserve seats for historically marginalized students. Previously privileged white schools and universities slowly and somewhat reluctantly began to diversify their student populations. This resulted in an unprecedented number of historically excluded students gaining access to schools and universities that were equipped with adequate resources, expertise, and world class facilities previously reserved for the privileged white populace. The shift toward a multi-racial schooling system was initially met with a small degree of success nevertheless it gained momentum (Benatar, 2010). The end of apartheid, removed racial institutional barriers, driving black students to capitalize on open reserved university and school access.

2. Theoretical Context

The SA Council on Higher Education (CHE) designates four capacities of curricula; (a) curriculum analysis (genesis); (b) Curriculum design (construction); (c) Curriculum development (growth) and (d) Curriculum re- conceptualization (transformation) (Ndebele et al., 2013). The remodeling of undergraduate curricula is critical to inaugurate the tractability of the curricula to embrace global south scholarship. A fundamental understanding of how and why we can learn in large classes and transmit appropriate skills to students is cognized. Schubert (1996) highlights four different theoretical methodologies on university curriculum development. i. The Social Behaviourist approach, identifies necessities for efficacious curriculum traditions. Considering conceived curricula's relevancy to pre and post -apartheid contexts. Prevailing models must be dissected for it efficacy (Schubert, 1996). The application will advance academic proficiencies delivery. Thereby realizing the placement of proficient graduates in the workplace. ii. The Intellectual Traditionalist approach demarcates victory as "the great works" of ones' past, which is currently irrelevant. The implications of apartheid must be considered in new subjective and inclusive curriculums. The aim to deliver theoretical knowledge; facilitate flexible interpretation and produce critical thinkers. iii. The Experientialist approach establishes contextual victory and knowledge constructs via prevailing proficiencies. Schubert (1996) identifies skill, a body of knowledge and value as essential elements of curricula initiated in learning experience frameworks. This facilitates a seamless exchange of knowledge. Juneja (2012) indicates that an experiential education benefits outweigh traditional education. iv. The Critical Reconstructionist approach is frequently aligned to social injustice recognizing disproportion. The efficacious curriculum is positioned with achievement as irregularity impact adversely on learners. The curriculum originates with considering preceding educational inequalities (Schubert,1996). Curriculum, cognized via the past effects positive outcomes.

3. Research Methodology

This study has utilized external desktop research that sought to collect data and related scientifically compiled evidence. The review of diverse scholarship and secondary research has supported the framework of this paper. This particular research approach "does not imply anything about the importance of the information, only that it is being used for research beyond the specific informational need that prompted the original gathering of the data. All primary research may ultimately become someone else's secondary source" (Stewart and Kamins, 1994, p 4). Desktop research encompasses

assembling data from prevailing reserves and is favored as it is cost efficient and considerably less contentious than field research (Juneja, 2012). This approach has been necessitated by the onset of COVID-19, which has infiltrated every crevice of the academy. Therefor the realization and accessibility of external desktop research was established. The collection of qualitative and quantitative studies, reports, policies and journal articles were accessed to buttress academic conclusions.

Dual forms of online desktop research were expended. This involved perusing pertinent scientifically buttressed websites; including but not limited to the SA Council for Higher Education (CHE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in pursuit of relatable and measurable evidence prescribed in policy frameworks. Researchers relied on their particular teaching experiences, pedagogies, and interactions. The associated body of existing knowledge engaged in discourse vis-à-vis academic and student exertions. Consideration of multifarious global methodologies and pedagogies have been espoused to seek resolutions to teaching and learning. The happenstance appears pedagogically insuperable. The implications of the forthcoming conclusions and recommendations are determined by a sociological priorities and implications ascribed to learning to learn in large classes. The current contextual university challenge of large classes is attended to within a pre and post-apartheid context and result in equally constructive outcomes. Central to the paper is an exposition of SA higher education (HE) transformation. This contextualizes contemporary complexities of massification associated difficulties. The results of this study are formulated on extensive existing teaching and learning pedagogies realized in relation to first year social science students at South African universities.

4. Transformation

Intended higher education policy aimed at redressing apartheid inequities, the process commenced in 1990 with adjustments to human resource equity and student demographic transformation at universities around the country. This policy mandated SA universities to move toward inclusive multiracial practices (National Commission on Higher Education, 1996). The implications have had far reaching impact on multiple stakeholders. The ideological restructuring saw the admission of qualifying Black students with inconsistent educational dexterities. The 2004 academic sector transformations, is candidly liable for rising student numbers. The resolution to restructure academic faculties culminated in shrunken faculties.

The sprint to fulfill racial employment quotas at universities witnessed the hire of young unestablished Black academics. These appointments functioned in contradiction to university objectives (Ramnund-Mansingh and Seedat-Khan, 2020). The commercialized model imported into the academy caused business sagaciousness. The universities institutional culture, impelled by amplified pecuniary profits removed humanist university traditions. (Ramnund, 2019). One of the key motivations behind the Green Paper for Post School Education and Training (2012) aimed at increasing the number of previously disadvantaged students in tertiary institutions is to improve and enhance human and economic development. Transformation forced unprecedented academic and administrative workloads on tenured professors and new inexperienced black staff. A growing dissatisfaction among tenured professors around encumbered research productivities and incapacitating the completion of doctoral studies for junior black staff, was overlooked by executive management, further impeding the intellectual project. Ramnund-Mansingh and Seedat-Khan (2020), indicate that black women academics were strong-armed into large first year classes. The burden of high workloads fissured family work life balance, for black woman in particular. Work spill over reportedly impacted adversely on the women's

health, inducing stress related physical manifestations of diabetes, hypertension, depression, anxiety and similar health conditions. The sacrificial cohort were undoubtedly black women, deliberately obstructed their opportunities for promotion, further diminishing their presence in a historically male dominated sector (Ramnund-Mansingh and Seedat-Khan, 2020).

Academics were forced to socially construct a new reality in the transformed classroom. Instrumental curricula ought to be contextually relevant and must include components and respond to specific skill sets and language competencies of students in a post-apartheid classroom. An outcomes-based response, guided by research, teaching, development, information dissemination, and consultation, must be prioritized. The question of what drives curricula in a post-apartheid fluid HE environment is of perilous significance. The current curricula need to be renovated so the content resonates with the experience, philosophies, and acuties of the present-day cohort of students. Seedat-Khan, Jansen and Smith, (2016) has led the way with publishing and prescribing local academic textbooks produced by SA academics. The failure to accommodate historically diverse students and their accompanying proficiency levels is central to developing a viable relevant academic program.

5. Defining Large Classes

The definition of large classes is complex and reasonably subjective. To examine the context of “large” in large classes, the University of Texas Faculty Innovation center defined large classes as anything more than a 100 students. 2005 United Kingdom (Bandiera, Larcinese and Rasul, 2010) statistics revealed classes of 120-160 students. Global studies focus on innovative ways to teach large classes has failed to provide identifiable positive outcomes. The adverse impact on quality of education appears as a recurrent finding (Bandiera et al., 2010; Ndebele, Badsha, Figaji, Gevers and Pityana, 2013). The enigmatic SA classes of 1000 to 2000 students’ needs to be scrutinized with exigency. Jenkins (1993, p 180) refers to large classes between 30-60 students in a global context, and has not recognized the unique challenges of developing countries.

Developing countries like SA have identified large classes as problematic for a plethora of reasons, a causal link between universities and the country’s national development agenda has to be cemented. Large classes are acknowledged by their inability to physically accommodate students, access limitations for academic consultations, informal haphazard tutorials, as well as inadequate in-depth comprehensive feedback. There is a well-defined distinction between the following classroom configurations. i) a large class that can be accommodated in one venue; ii) venue limitations that result in repetitive lectures, with less qualified teaching assistants; iii) or simulcast lectures where classes are transmitted to multiple venues on the same or different campus simultaneously.

6. Understanding the Numbers

The SA Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Green paper for Post-School Education and Training (2012) predicted that student enrolments at the twenty- six universities would reach 1.5 million a year by 2030 and 4 million a year by 2030 at other tertiary institutions in the country. The SA student numbers increased from 578 132 in the year 2000 to 975 837 in 2016 (Maluleke, 2019). Class sizes have consistently and justifiably been recognized as one of the education sectors preferred scapegoats’ (Moore, 1977, p 20) proliferating challenges. Students were occasionally forced to leave the venue, when there was no space or access to the already overcrowded classroom. Student representative councils summarily dismissed classes because of the safety hazard that overcrowding presented. Journalists scurried to capture the images and stories of overcrowding. Fee paying students openly voiced their dissatisfaction and began exiting public universities for seats at privately owned institutions (International Education Association of SA, 2009).

In 2008, 8.4% of SA privileged students turned to high-priced internationally branded private universities to secure a seat. These universities include but are not limited to Independent Institute of Education, Vega, Monash and MANCOSA. In 2010, 46882 students enrolled at private universities, indicating a substantial increase. In 2016, private universities registered 14.6% of all university students in the country, with a total of 168 911 students (Maluleke, 2019). Private Australian, British and American universities responded to the demand for university seats. While the arrival of these international education brands may have eased the burden on public universities, they returned us to apartheid ideologies. These institutions are significantly more expensive than public universities, making them accessible to wealthy historically privileged sectors in society. To date 2 840 859 students between the age of 18 and 24 failed to advance into universities. The reason provided by 19.5% of the cohort indicated contentment with their level of education, 50.8% cited lack of funds foiled plans for further study; 11% were unable to attend university lending to family commitments and 18% of the cohort failed to meet the minimum academic requirements for university entry (Maluleke, 2019). While this is symptomatic of the fractured post-apartheid challenges, we need to consider the 50.8% or 1 400 000 candidates who experienced funding challenges to attend universities. Even if access to funding was secured, the university system and infrastructure was by no means in any position to accommodate these candidates. Ramlachan (2019) contends that the solution to managing increasing student numbers is a partnership between state and private universities. “The relationship between private and state higher education can be exploited within the context of high demand for access to education” (Ramlachan, 2019, p 4).

7. Massification

Tlali, Mukurunge and Bhila (2019, p 1561) advance that “massification is defined as the mass adaptation of a phenomenon by the suppression of its distinguishing features”. Scott (1995) used massification in the context of universities to decrease the rapid increase in student enrolment. The implications for managing large classes effectively necessitates adoption of diverse strategies and additional pecuniary resources (Jawitz, 2013, p 18). Wambuguh (2008) recommend a tested and effectual four-prong strategy for teaching large classes; the numbers that Wambuguh (2008) and as Bruton and Crull (1980) refer to are relatively small paralleled to the numbers in this study. McGee (1988) advances and tests definite effective ways to interact with and teach students, these recommendations are contextually unreasonable in the existing SA context. The University of Johannesburg’s business management program has reported between 3500 and 4000 students per annum with venue constraints being for a maximum of 700 students. These large first-year classes undoubtedly surpass the capacity of venues, necessitating inventive teaching models. Larger lecture venues accommodate between 300 and 700 students, academics teaching in these venues have reported finding students, seated on stairwells, and the floor. These overloaded classes, present fatal fire and safety hazards. Jawtiz (2013, p 8) recognized, the SA large class phenomenon is characteristically concomitant to first-year in explicit disciplines. The sociology program at University A in SA has been evidently recognized as a large class. Statistics indicated in Table 1 signify exponential student growth in Sociology between 2012 and 2020. Table 1 demonstrates the increase in first-year sociology student enrolments. This number of students has shattered the ability of academics to fortify higher-order cognitive skills which support capabilities among first-year students. These large class deprive students of indispensable competences.

Table 1

Year	University A	
	1 st Semester	2 nd semester
2012	983	875
2013	1571	1397
2014	1963	1667
2015	1356	1302
2016	1502	1396
2017	1468	1360
2018	1527	1551
2019	977	865
2020	1812	1632

First year Sociology Student Numbers: 2012 – 2020

8. Inadequate Infrastructure

Little detectable evidence of infrastructural developments to accommodate large student numbers or its prioritization is forthcoming. The deliberate arrest of university infrastructure expansion and the failure to establish new universities; in response to demands for increased access has intensified university challenges. The strain imposed on universities, their resources, infrastructure, administrative and academic staff has shattered a formerly efficacious academy. Jawitz (2013) points out that when practical training is required, or one-on-one interface is indispensable in subjects of music, dance, and architecture, numbers are restricted, preventing the exponential growth of students in these and other similar faculties. Infrastructure with inadequate seating, lighting, sound, and technological resources are considered large classes unable to support the students (Jawitz, 2013, p 24). Hornsby (2013) advances that large classes undermine learning experiences producing a ripple effect on the country's economic development. Hornsby (2013) provides evidence of mounting challenges in large classes leading to developing countries scarce pecuniary resources, impoverished student body, inadequate university infrastructure and limited human resource capacities (Hornsby, 2013, p 22). The increasing student numbers, make it progressively challenging to deliver essential skills to students due to the universities inadequate number of available classrooms. This shortage of space is responsible for the collapse of a long established academic tradition offering intimate tutorial sessions. Tutorial programs are a critical component of the first-year experience; helping to reinforce and increase academic proficiencies and capabilities that buttress analytical erudition and intellectual engagement. The limited space prevents the effective delivery of traditional small tutorial programs. The proficiencies developed in small tutorial units are no longer realistic.

9. Academic Challenges

While student numbers continue to grow, the numbers of academics that service these students remains unchanged; and in some instances, they are further reduced. The rapidly increasing number of undergraduate students entering universities presents a series of challenges for the state, academics, administrators, students and executive management of universities. Central to these challenges, we advance that excellence in teaching and learning should be an unqualified fundamental yield. The lack of physical infrastructure to administer formative and summative assessments has escaped the eye of education legislators. The mismatched academic assessments have witnessed the use of ineffective take-home open book tests; which fail to expose students to indispensable experiences essential for advanced cognitive development. The disservice to students, the inadequate standard of qualifications has long

acting impacts on societal economic, health and political attainments. Hornsby (2013, p 16) believes that policy makers in developing countries must mandate universities to comply with legislation that ensure students acquisition of critical thinking, problem solving skills and higher order cognitive proficiencies; failure to engage with the subject matter substantively will witness a deterioration in the standard of academic content, learning, infrastructure, assessments, and critical components of a university qualification.

The infrastructural and human resource constraints at universities failed its amassed applicants. Doctoral candidates and adjunct staff, with limited academic experience demonstrate inadequate pedagogical experiential knowledge that first-year teaching demands. The burden on inexperienced academics to deliver repeat teaching has been largely unsuccessful. Carpenter (2006) points out that large classes may also be subject to the perception by the faculty that academics who teach large classes are of a lower and or higher academic rank. The non-attendance of tenured professors in a mentoring capability is largely culpable for this colossal failure. Evidence of low concentration levels, inadequate assessments models, erratic attendance, limited opportunities for academic engagement threatens the success of obtaining a degree. This tenuous university milieu has witnessed the hegira of tenured professors. Their expertise facilitates seamless entry into prominent academic positions in first world countries (Ramnund, 2019).

Large classes affect academics in the following ways: a) An academic may be uncomfortable because of the size of the class. b) An academic may be awkward because of the inability to control student behavior. c) Inability to command student attention. d) The difficulty of being heard. e) Limited opportunities for rewarding personal interaction with students. f) The inability to engage with the students to determine if a proper understanding of the material is being developed. g) The inability to determine anything in the classroom environment to track the development of higher-order cognitive skills. If students are taught by means of traditional passive lecture formats, they are unlikely to develop higher-order cognitive skills. Hornsby (2013) argues that this is counterproductive to the dexterities required in a competitive environment, characterized by economic growth and innovation. Regulated funding results in the appointment of fewer graduate assistants intensifying academics administrative, staffing, assessments, infrastructural, workload, resourcing and teaching responsibilities (Badat, 2010). These challenges are ignored at an institutional level, which advanced on a continuum and resulted in the overall dissatisfaction and impatience of both students and academics over a protracted period (Blackie, Case and Jawitz, 2010).

10. Student Challenges

The transmuted university student population is an intended result of democracy in SA. ‘Overall the higher education system still reflects the legacy of apartheid when it comes to participation by ‘race’ group and socioeconomic status, and when it comes to who among these students finish their degrees on time and with good marks’ (Lange, 2017, p 33). This condition is expected to predominate without fundamental vicissitudes in teaching and learning pedagogies. Empirical evidence indicates that larger numbers result in poorer student performance and higher failure rates; class sizes are one of the differentiating variables affecting and impacting student performance (Bandiera et al., 2010). Failure to engage the discourse and provide clinical models will intensify failure indicators. Institutional inadequacies and repeated failure to successfully respond to critical requests from students resulted in a succession of academic disturbances and student protests culminating in the successful 2015 fees must fall campaign. SA has realized a shift in student activist with mounting demands for fee concessions and

unrestricted free access to university. Moore (1997, p 20) identified the association between inadequate university resources, large class sizes and student unrest. The 2015, "Fees Must Fall" campaign realized a 0% fee increase in 2016. The critical discourse on free HE further intensified the prevailing complications and confronts over large classes and the scholastic rigor of the alumni (Badat, 2010).

11. Intellectual Engagement with Students

Carpenter (2006) points out that meeting individual students' educational needs, in large classes result in 'surface learning', which forces rote learning and memorization of facts. This results in the reproduction of knowledge and the regurgitation of facts rather than allowing students to critically engage with the course content. The sheer number of students makes inclusive discussion during a regular lecture impossible (Hanover Research, 2010). Large classes reinforce didactic teaching aids with limited interaction. Particularly if academics subscribe to conventional teaching approaches (Hornsby, 2013; Carpenter, 2006). Academic outcomes for kinesthetic, visual and auditory learners are dependent on specific classroom conditions. The decreased interaction and academic engagement in large classes can result in strained interpersonal relations between students and academics (Hornsby, 2013; Carpenter, 2006). The interaction is impersonal because of the distance between the student and academic. The consequence of the 'Sage on Stage effect' where the academic appears remote and impersonal and a very 'real' communication gap between instructor and students is perceived (Hanover Research, 2010). Seating configurations in classes make group discussion problematic (Hanover Research, 2010). The theatre-like seating arrangements contribute to student passivity; students lack motivation to engage appropriately with the content (Hornsby, 2013). The remoteness creates an atmosphere; making students feel insignificant and voiceless inciting detachment resulting in waning attention. The characteristics of the large class inhibit student interactions; motivated by fear and embarrassment among peers (Hanover Research, 2010). This lack of commitment from students becomes increasingly evident (Hornsby, 2013).

12. The Intellectual Project

Universities have identified that learners who have secured a seat are not always adequately prepared to cope with the stringent academic rigors. The primary purpose of attending university is to improve the quality of life for learners and their families. SA ubiquitous poverty places the burden and hope of poverty alleviation on the student at university. The existence of unprecedented unemployment rates, has established a highly competitive work face. A university qualification improves employment opportunities for graduates, providing opportunities for their families. The existing academic deficits prevalent in large classes reduces success opportunities, further engraining poverty and unemployment among the poorest of the poor. University handbooks delineate the requirements prescribed and authenticated by the South African Qualification Framework-SAQA and CHE. These requirements include delivery of tutorial programs, safe lecture venues, appropriate assessments, regular consultation, revision of academic content, self-study and examinations. The prescribed SAQA and CHE guidelines that facilitate proficiencies associated with a bachelor's degree are not realized in the current university context. The task team responsible for the design and development of undergraduate curriculum structure for CHE identifies curricula as highly contested intrinsically linked to historical power relationships that exist in current teaching environments, which is rather speculative, and fundamentally reactive (Ndebele et al., 2013).

Questions of whom determines standards and criteria for evaluations are presently ambiguous. It is expected that while the DHET has provided the standards accepted in curricula development and design, the implementation is problematic and sporadic in the classrooms. This includes appropriateness for

purpose, which must consider the relevance to the current context. The student's exposure to Zulu, English or Afrikaans as a language of competency and delivery as a point of departure (Ndebele et al., 2013) has not received adequate attention in the transformation process. The task team offers evidence that western theoretical models and frameworks influence existing curricula and will continue to do so if we do not consider a paradigm shift sharply.

A renewed production of African scholarship in the social sciences is being delivered by Seedat-Khan et al. (2016), widely adopted by SA universities for SA students, penned by SA academics. In particular cases, the reluctance of particular academics to adopt African scholarship is evident in design modules. The alignment to a decolonized curriculum is fundamental to the growth and maintenance of the intellectual project. Academics have responded to the call aligning teaching models to existing socio-political and economic contexts. It is important that these new courses are designed around area specialization advancement and innovation. Hornsby (2013, p 12) identifies that the correlation between quality education and socioeconomic development; which increases demands on universities to offer seats to students in an already overburdened institution. This impacts directly on academic excellence, improved income levels and strong economic growth in families and communities both locally and globally.

University proficiencies include but are not limited to; 1) an increase in critical and higher-order cognitive rationality; 2) helping students to recognize knowledge as a changeable and developing dimension; 3) Establishing how new information is enhanced; and 4) modify understandings and methodologies to confront philosophies, to realize the fundamental purpose of a bachelor's degree. Failure to deliver adequate teaching slots outlined in the faculty handbooks is a result of inadequate facilities and scarce human resources. University students must ideally acquire key intellectual, specialist academic abilities and progressing proficiencies as they navigate their degree. Evidence of a collapsed tutorial program is widespread linked to inadequate infrastructure, threatening the quality and adequacy of the intellectual project.

The forfeiture of intimate academic group interactions under the guidance of postgraduate students, denies learners critical academic engagement that would conventionally cultivate interrelated academic and cognitive proficiencies. Motivating and emboldening academic engagements for students with lecturers, tutors, information technology specialists and library services on existing platforms, were intended for small classes. The paramount concern for academics is endeavoring to cultivate problem solving and critical thinking skills in large classes. Traditional assessments have not established a differentiation between large and small classes (Carpenter 2006, p 33). Carpenter (2006, p 29) established that once additional performance area criteria such as long-term retention of knowledge, problem-solving proficiencies, and higher-order cognitive capacities are included; the evidence indicates smaller classes produce students with increased proficiencies. Hornsby (2013) maintains that large classes are a detriment to the usefulness of a university degree, negatively impacting performance; motivation; engagement and the acquisition of higher order, problem-solving and critical thinking proficiencies.

13. Degree Complete

Large Humanities classes are synonymous with state owned universities. The process acquiring a university education results in the acquisition and transference of skills into communities via graduates. The quality of education and the planned outcomes of a university degree can have detrimental effects, if universities fail to maintain global economic standards. Insights into the complexities, challenges, and

possibilities that lie ahead for large first-year classes and the students' opportunities to completing a three-year bachelor's degree in the recommended time frame is paramount (International Education Association of SA, 2010). A university degree ideally results in the development of skills and attitudes that are crucial, which include essential literacy, numeracy, motivation and perseverance toward economic growth (Hornsby, 2013, p 18).

14. COVID-19 Curricula Clarifications

The pandemic has mandated expeditious transformation in the global academic community. The COVID-19 world health organization's safety protocol has coerced the world into a virtual realm, universities have settled into virtual classrooms. Has the pandemics arrival unearthed a possible elucidation to the current complexities of teaching and learning in large classes, this discourse is meticulously assessed. Private universities transitioned seamlessly with negligible adverse impact on students. In person seminars evolved into virtual webinars with students from sprawling geographical locations in attendance. A single virtual class has the capacity to facilitate a class with 1300 students simultaneously. The virtual model facilitated the delivery of academic content in 40 minutes, permitting 20 minutes for queries which are operationalized via the online message chat functionality. Webinars are recorded and uploaded onto a portal for students to access at leisure. Students can repeat the recorded classes without limitations. The academic reinforces the lecture with power point presentations with provide in depth knowledge with voice over content.

15. Strategies for Large Classes

Jawitz (2009) makes a case for exploiting economies of scale. It is resource efficient to be able to use one lecturer to provide a learning experience to a large group of students, either in one or simultaneous venues. This approach saves time and human resource expenses. The academic presentation, communication with students, preparation and distribution of information and formulation and distributing of tasks and assignments must be standardized on technological platforms. Overcoming institutional resource constraints and the use of different learning techniques is a mechanism that facilitates teaching large classes (Wolfman, 2002, p 258). This should encompass; 1) using interactive discussion, possibly making use of student volunteers to move around with roving microphones; 2) getting students to develop arguments for different elements of material; 3) switching between formal lecture delivery and interactive participation while drawing on students experiences to illustrate how they relate to theories, or concepts such as the sociological imagination; 4) using a combination of both the intellectual traditionalist approach and the experientialist approach is an expedient solution. 5) Making well planned but limited use of slide presentations in class, 6) managing and administering the course effectively can also assist the learning experience.

Several practical strategies can be adopted to encourage active learning in large classes (Hanover Research, 2010) at universities, these include: i) Establishing structure and a set of clearly defined expectations; ii) Assessments that are prudently planned within the possibilities of a large class; iii) Engage regularly via efficient communication networks in the semester; and iv) Identify administrative constraints at the outset. Teaching strategies that use different instruction practices include; class discussions, group activities, take home tests, open book tests, visual sociology assignments, online tests, group projects demonstrating an understanding of the sociological imagination. A well prepared curriculum with an active academic portal helps students actively engage with academic content independently. and finding new ways to encourage student lecturer interaction. This can be through the use of learning management sites, blogs or even social media. The use of popular social media accounts by tutors to interact with students can be highly effective.

Establishing working groups to meet virtually outside, to collaborate on skills positioned assignments. The reliance on virtual classes must be embraced to preserve academic delivery to large classes. These must encompass immediate response systems managed by teaching assistants. Constructing online forums, blogs, videos, podcasts, and regular communication unearths new possibilities for large classes. Jawitz (2012) argues that large-scale classes are suited to providing overviews of the discipline, concepts and phenomena. This provides students with basic grounding concepts of the discipline (Jawitz, 2013, p 3). Large classes can also assist students to understand the link between the materials they engage with, material conditions in their own lives and broader social issues, which combine the social behaviorist, approach, and the critical reconstructionist approach. This results in students being motivated by the teaching experience and enhancing their sociological imagination.

Several variables influence student learning outcomes and engagement; these variables need to be given due consideration when formulating teaching and learning strategies for students learning mechanisms. Students are resilient and can easily adapt to new learning strategies; curriculum design; instruction techniques and assessment types (Hornsby, 2013). The effectiveness of teaching methods includes traditional learning approaches, which involve a passive format where information is delivered in a traditional lecture format. The contemporary method utilizes a constructivist approach requiring students to actively engage with the material; which requires the use of discussion groups and collaborative activities. Effective teaching methods that combine a constructivist approach and active learning methods help students to recall facts, but smaller discussion group activities produce higher-level comprehension. Group orientated discussions make use of team learning and student-driven discussions result in improved performance and greater participation, self-confidence and leadership skills (Carpenter, 2006). Active learning approaches are insufficient in comparison to traditional lecture models.

A comparison of traditional lectureship approaches merged with discussion, demonstrated better learning preservation when likened with strategies that made exclusive use of active, cooperative methods. The preminent approach must combine traditional lectures with constructivist, active learning activities. According to Carpenter (2006), students do not favor active learning methods because of the class time lost with activities; fear of not achieving the prescribed academic content timeously; and a concern about a change from the traditional class expectations to an active structure. Jawitz (2013) identified that when teaching large classes, academics must include constructive active teaching methods which involve structured and controlled collaborations. These include the jigsaw method and the use of case studies which are constructive for students, as opposed to uncontrolled, unstructured experiences. The effectiveness of these methods demonstrate significant improvements in learning outcomes (Carpenter, 2006).

Carpenter (2006) argues that to determine whether new strategies are developing higher-order cognitive abilities in students, and that research and student evaluations need to embrace new measures of learning outcomes. Jawitz (2013) explains that academics who are successful at mastering this environment must scrutinize the behaviors and methods of motivational speakers on TED Talks, because they have mastered effective techniques to engage large audiences. This is achieved by establishing a firm sense of identity, confidence, authority, and credibility. Academics are advised to draw on traditions of instruction, performance, motivational speaking, and dramatic production to teach a successful class (Jawitz, 2013). Examination scores should be complemented with formative assessments of comprehension, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. This requires revamping existing curriculum and redesigning current teaching resources and class activities.

Table 2

Problem Solving Dexterities	Writing Abilities and Communication Proficiencies	Cognitive Development and Critical Thinking Aptitudes	Interpersonal Relationships
Tutor Feedback. Weekly small online group consults with tutor.	Academic Writing Webinars. Compulsory grading. Formative assessment.	Online Multiple Choice Test. Key Sociological concepts. Compulsory grading. Formative assessment.	Class Representatives. Nominate and vote in one representative per 100 students.
Online Sociological Imagination Assignment. Operationalize sociological theory. Compulsory grading. Formative assessment.	Essay Skills Workbook. Essay writing activities. Supported by model answers.	Tutorial Submissions. Theme centred submissions. Compulsory grading. Formative assessment.	Disability Office. Weekly meetings to facilitate students' special requests.
Draft submissions. Written feedback to students confronting learning challenges.	Referencing Webinars. Compulsory Grading. Formative assessment.	Community Engagement. Provide students with access to university initiatives to cultivate a culture of volunteering.	Student Counselling Webinar. Provide students with information on university mental health programs.
Academic Consults. Academic engagement to clarify fundamental conceptual deficiencies.	Turn it in Webinar. Compulsory Grading. Formative assessment.	Verbal Feedback. Feedback to students confronting learning challenges.	Financial Aid Briefing Provide students with information on NSFAS and related funding sources.
Moodle Webinar. Compulsory grading. Formative assessment	Plagiarism Webinar. Compulsory Grading. Formative assessment.	Student Associations and Groups. Provide information on clubs and associations. Students are required to secure membership to one cultural club.	Medical Clinic. Provide students with information on university health facilities.
Teaching and Learning Support. Identify at risk students and avail support.	Grammarly. University funded license. Frequency of use assessment.	Student Sport Clubs. Provide students with information on university sport clubs and facilities. Students are required to participate in one sport.	SRC. Provide students with information on the role of the SRC.
Microsoft Excel Webinar. Compulsory grading. Formative assessment.	Information and Communication Technology Webinar. Compulsory grading. Formative assessment	Online Visual Sociology Submission. Stimulate critical thinking skills. Compulsory grading. Formative assessment.	Microsoft Outlook Webinar Compulsory grading. Formative assessment.
Power Point Webinar Compulsory grading. Formative assessment.	Microsoft Word Webinar. Compulsory grading. Formative assessment.	Mock Take Home Exams. Verbal feedback online.	Podcasts Recorded lectures.
Student Centred Groups. Encouraging independent learning and responsibility.	Group Work. Facilitates work ethic development.	Self-Assessments. Facilitate independent learning.	Peer-Assessments. Facilitates cooperative learning.

Proposed Clinical Model for Teaching and Developing Student Proficiencies

16. Leave No Student Behind

Capitalizing the sociological dimension of large classes, provide the opportunity to exploit the energy that comes exclusively from large numbers of people gathered in one place. Jawitz (2013) describes how lecture theatres can sometimes feel like rock concerts these days. This provides academics with an opportunity to demonstrate the significance of the lecture and construct its fundamental significance in the university experience. It delivers the prospect to navigate existing complex group dynamic in a post-apartheid context. The academics ability to draw on the energy and build on the excitement of the first year group significantly impacts the learning process. 'Turn crowd atmosphere to pedagogical use' (Wolfman, 2002, p 258) it offers the academic the ability to exploit additional observable levels of diversity; something which is unlikely possible in small classes. So large classes can, therefore, be a valuable resource providing the perfect combination of intersecting societal factors. This is an ideal environment to facilitate diverse, backgrounds, experiences, learning styles and problem-solving abilities, using interactive techniques to embrace previously disadvantaged students (Jawitz, 2013).

17. Conclusion

Universities graduates possess indispensable specialist skills when receiving a degree. Their employment projections and income are associated to their capacities and proficiencies associated with their specific qualification (Hornsby, 2013). University graduates have reportedly healthier lifestyles, lengthier life expectancies and increased efficiency. Hornsby (2013, p 42) contends that substantial positive improvements at universities is directly associated with technologically advanced societies, innovation and knowledge transferal between graduates and people without university qualifications. These societal conditions motivate entrepreneurship which create employment resulting in significant economic growth. The distinctive nature of SA's racialized universities mandates expeditious modifications to teaching approaches and learning strategies for large university classes. Evidence supports the key finding that the prevailing context does not merit a single methodology. We have established that large first-year classes are severely problematic.

The number of proficient academics are inadequate to meet the needs of and teach first year large classes. These classes necessitate a team of academics, yet prevailing proficient senior academic faculty members have been reluctant to teach large classes. Carpenter (2006) identifies the problem rests with who teaches these large classes; the current prevailing protocol at South African universities identified that new, part-time, and postgraduate students are appointed to teach large classes. They are thrust into the classroom with minimal preparation and guidance. Carpenter (2006) established that the dominant discourse is about communicating key disciplinary concepts and proficiencies to students. Inexperienced academics have limited access to relevant intellectual property required to deliver discourse successfully. While senior academics are amenable to developing curricula guidelines and policies they have shifted the intricate module preparation to junior staff. This standard of content delivery and students' as knowledge recipients is unregulated in large classes. Carpenter (2006) has claimed that the challenges with this popular approach compromises the intellectual project. The absence of senior academics in large first year classes impacts the development of key cognitive student proficiencies. (Department of Higher Education and Training and the Centre for Education Policy Development, 2010). The integration of content delivery and proficiencies development demands a comprehensive understanding of disciplinary complexities and factors encumbering learning (Carpenter, 2006). Carpenter (2006) maintains that if we acknowledge these inadequacies and recommit to advancing the intellectual project, universities must compel senior proficient academics to teach large first year classes. This is only realized in adequately resourced lecture venues that

allow for establishment of key components of the intellectual project. These factors must be considered; 1) the distinctive apartheid university history; 2) transformations in higher education policy; 3) racial and gender demographics in the classroom; 4) post-apartheid teaching challenges; and 5) large classes. Senior academics continue to circumvent the first-year teaching team, universities have failed to address this primary fracture. The current preoccupation with COVID-19 has witnessed the prioritization of virtual teaching capacities and a shift to effective online models. Universities have expeditiously adopting virtual pedagogies and models; this has realized convenient, accessible, multilingual academic resources that students can access at leisure on a virtual university platform.

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