

*International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*  
Vol. 24, No. 10, pp. 189-209, October 2025  
<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.24.10.9>  
Received Jul 21, 2025; Revised Sept 8, 2025; Accepted Sept 18, 2025

## Western Dominance vs. Local Needs: Mismatches in Internationalised Teacher Training Curriculum in South Africa

Nosihle Veronica Sithole\* 

Department of Postgraduate Studies Education  
Central University of Technology, Free State, South Africa

Xolani Khohliso 

Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching  
Central University of Technology, Free State, South Africa

**Abstract.** This paper endeavors to discuss critically the mismatches between the international teacher training curriculum and the South African context in teacher training institutions. The exponential growth of the internationalisation phenomenon has influenced the curriculum in higher education. Consequentially, higher education, including teacher training institutions, adopted an international curriculum. Nevertheless, several mismatches have been identified, including the relationship between the knowledge and skills required by the South African economy and provided by higher education and the curriculum failing to meet social needs such as employability, high mobility, entrepreneurship, and slow economic growth. Using critical theory and Participatory Action Research (PAR), this study examined the mismatches created by the internationalised curriculum in a South African teacher training institution and proposes context sensitive adaptations. Four lecturers were selected to be co-researchers in addressing the research phenomenon of the study per PAR's guidelines. Content analysis strategy was employed to analyze data collected. We found three discrepancies: internationalised curriculum in teacher training institutions proposes a 100% standardized curriculum for all, which is unsuitable for institutions in developing countries, particularly South Africa; the language of instruction only accommodates 70% of South African students; and assessment strategies fail entirely (100%) to match the country's level. We argue that although various countries and scholars advocate for the internationalised curriculum, it should be modified for adoption in South African context. The study aspires to contribute to the foregoing debate of including the international teacher training curriculum in higher education in the South African context.

---

\*Corresponding author: Nosihle Veronica Sithole; [vsithole@cut.ac.za](mailto:vsithole@cut.ac.za)

**Keywords:** Internationalized Curriculum; Mismatches; Teacher Training; Critical Theory; South Africa

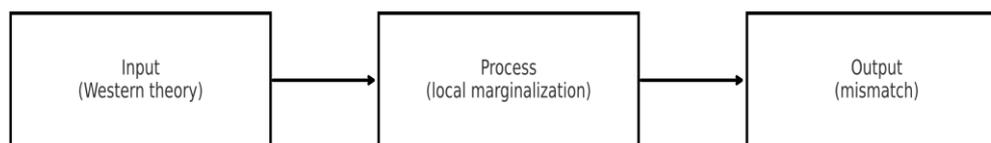
## 1. Introduction

Globally, internationalisation in higher education is influenced by social, political, economic, and cultural factors (De Wit, 2020; Rensburg, Motala & David, 2015). The evolution of globalisation has a massive influence on internationalisation in higher education globally. Internationalisation in higher education emerged over the past 30 years from a marginal and minor component to a global, strategic, and mainstream factor in higher education (Knight & De Wit, 2018). Furthermore, internationalisation in higher education has been regarded as an essential strategy within institutions for broadening knowledge, giving students global competencies and experience, and increasing competitiveness within education.

Nevertheless, there are notable mismatches in various countries; consequentially, this study aims to identify mismatches, to analyze lecturers' perspectives and to propose context sensitive adaptabilities on internationalised curriculum. For instance, Teferra (2019) asserts that the internationalisation of higher education in South Africa has resulted in more coerced instructional practices as it fosters a specific curriculum approach. Higgs (2016) argues that the internationalisation of higher education only provides the use of English as a medium of instruction in curriculum delivery. This is evidence that the South African higher education system is Westernized. Renfors (2021) studied the internationalisation of the curriculum in a non-English-speaking country, Finland, and claims that lecturers need the competencies, resources, and tools to adapt their teaching methods to an international, culturally diverse teaching and learning environment.

Knight and De Wit (2018) found that the international dimensions of higher education may have become too disconnected from the local context through increasing international academic mobility. Moreover, De Wit (2020) argues that the internationalisation of higher education is primarily designed in a Westernized, largely Anglo-Saxon, and predominantly English-speaking way, showing a more coerced form of internationalization. De Wit proposes moving from coercion to intentionality and inclusion forms of internationalisation in low and middle-income countries. While the above studies focused on the internationalisation of higher education, few studies examine how internationalized curriculum marginalize local contexts in teacher training, particularly in South African settings. Diagram 1 demonstrates mismatches through a conceptual framework.

### Conceptual Framework of International Curriculum Mismatches



**Diagram 1. Conceptual Framework of International Curriculum Mismatches**

This framework explains how international curriculum mismatches emerge along a simple causal chain. Input refers to the uncritical adoption of Western theories as the primary knowledge base curriculum design, assessment standards, and pedagogical expectations. As these ideas move through the process, they are translated into local policies and classroom practices in ways that marginalize contextual realities. This is through silencing indigenous and community knowledges, privileging dominant languages and encoding assumptions about resources and prior learning. The result is the output which is a mismatch between what the curriculum intends and what students, lecturers and labour markets require in the local setting. Thus, actual needs manifest in relevance gaps, inequitable participation and limited transfer to real world challenges.

Therefore, our study aims to redefine the mismatches of the internationalised curriculum in South African teacher training institutions. In this study, we use the concept of internationalised rather than internationalisation as our convictions suggest that the curriculum currently used in higher education institutions is already internationalised. Thus, the application of internationalised concepts and focus on mismatches in teacher training institutions make this study valuable to the extant body of knowledge on the topic. This paper discusses the related literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology, findings and discussion, concluding remarks, and recommendations.

## 2. Literature Review

This section presents literature reviewed in relation to the research phenomenon.

### 2.1 Internationalization of higher education

The concepts of internationalization have gained more recognition worldwide in modern times. In such a way, some scholars confuse the meaning of internationalisation with globalisation. Kamwendo (2016) and Rensburg et al. (2015) argue that these two concepts cannot be used interchangeably as if they are the same. However, they share similar characteristics of being driven by social, economic, political, and cultural factors. Internationalisation is a product of globalisation. De Wit and Hunter (2015) buttress the argument that the internationalisation of higher education is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education to enhance the quality of education and to make a meaningful contribution to society. Similarly, Kamwendo (2016) opines

that the internationalisation of higher education as specific policies and initiatives of countries and individual academic institutions or systems are established to deal with global trends. Higher education internationalisation can also be linked to university strategic plans, national policy statements, regionalization initiatives, international declarations, and academic articles (Knight & De Wit, 2018). The above covers the understanding of the internationalisation of higher education. Hence, it was vital for this study to focus on the comprehension of internationalised curriculum.

## **2.2 Internationalized curriculum**

In this study, the international curriculum is recognized as an internationalized curriculum as it is observed that the curriculum used for teaching and learning in higher education is already internationalised. The internationalized curriculum is conceptualized as content, pedagogies, and assessments that foster (a) an understanding of global perspectives and how they intersect and interact with the local and the personal, (b) intercultural capabilities in terms of actively engaging with other cultures, and (c) responsible citizenship in terms of addressing differing value systems and subsequent actions (Clifford, 2009). Leask (2015) posits that an internationalised curriculum incorporates international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the curriculum's content regarding learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and the support services of a study program.

Internationalization of curriculum refers to the process of incorporating global perspectives, content, and experiences into educational programs and materials. It aims to broaden students' understanding of the world by exposing them to diverse cultures, languages, histories, and global issues. It also aims to contribute positively to an interconnected society by equipping them with knowledge, skills, and perspectives to navigate diverse contexts. Rensburg et al. (2015) advocate that primarily, higher education curricula have always been internationalised since they involve international language, content, and structures. In this study, mismatches refer to aspects of the internationalised curriculum that must be more suitable or are unmatchable to the South African context.

Some scholars have noted the mismatches of the internationalised curriculum. De Wit (2020), Liagouras, Protogerou and Caloghirou, (2003) and Teferra (2019) argue that the curriculum that is currently used in higher education institutions inadequately meets the social needs and mitigates challenges faced by societies, such as skills needed in society, reduction of unemployment and increase of student mobility. It is noted that South African graduates who have completed their teaching degrees often decide to move abroad after their qualifications, affecting the country's economy.

Liagouras et al. (2003) note concerns about the relationship between the knowledge and skills required by the economy and provided by higher education. These scholars further opine that higher education has to offer a curriculum that reflects the skills and knowledge required to improve the economy. Teferra (2019) posits that some institutions vigorously pursue aspects of curriculum

internationalisation intentionally, while others do so under coercion and contestation. Knight and De Wit (2018) assert that this is because of our more interdependent and connected world, and these imbalances must be addressed and recalibrated.

Rensburg et al. (2015) state that the internationalisation of higher education in South Africa should emphasise democratic values intended to benefit everyone, global dialogue and mutual learning, and collaborative partnerships. Kotecha (2012) argues that for South African universities to successfully adopt internationalisation of higher education, they need to develop clear strategies for incorporating internationalisation into their processes to benefit institutional development in the country.

### **2.3 Lecturers Perspectives on the Internationalized Curriculum**

The internationalisation of higher education curricula has raised a rigorous and wide debate across the globe. Rensburg et al. (2015) alludes that lecturers' perspectives vary from discipline to discipline. In addition, Kamwendo (2016) opines that perspectives on the internationalised higher education curriculum in South Africa should be explored in the light of democratic values and beliefs that would benefit every individual through undertaking collaborative research, sharing knowledge and resources, building mutual capacities, and enhancing mutual economic benefits. He further asserts that this system can encourage honesty, openness, responsiveness, shared commitment, and sound academic and social values.

The internationalised curriculum is gaining strength every day because globalisation in South Africa has resulted in internationalised curriculum policies. Literature indicates that scholars perceive the internationalised curriculum as serving the interest of outsiders rather than incorporating the country's values and beliefs (Higgs, 2016; Kamwendo, 2016; Rensburg et al., 2015). The overall perception regarding the internationalised curriculum in South Africa is that the curriculum theory and practices are European, resulting in its failure to serve the country's needs. Rensburg et al. (2015) perceive internationalised curricula as presenting advantages and disadvantages.

For instance, the internationalised curriculum presents opportunities for cross-border higher education, including an increased supply of higher education, greater access for students, support for the knowledge economy, development of joint degrees, fusion or hybridisation of cultures, growing comparability of qualifications, an increasing role for the market-based approach, economic benefits for education providers, and diversification and generation of new academic environments. It also presents challenges such as quality of provision, with inequality of access leading to a two-tier system (Rensburg et al., 2015).

Clifford and Montgomery (2015) explored university lecturers' perceptions of the internationalisation of the curriculum. They discovered that lecturers need help to make and implement decisions around an internationalised curriculum, as the design and enactment of the curriculum are social practices. They advocate that it

is essential to consider the degree program holistically and to support the practical issues of internationalised curriculum at the degree program level (Clifford, 2009; Leask, 2013). Teferra (2019) perceived the South African higher education curriculum as the most internationalised system in the world, resulting in more coerced instructional practices. Given the ongoing perceptions mentioned above regarding the internationalised higher education curriculum, this study employed a theoretical framework to better make sense of the discussion.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

In this study, we adopted a critical theory concerned with inequality and oppression. Beyond theorizing, oppressed critical theorists strive for social change and the creation of a fair and just world (Dell'Angelo, Seaton, Smith & Totten, 2014). The Frankfurt School established a critical theory that included great philosophers against materialism, including Karl Marx and Hegel. These philosophers strongly emphasized that social justice must be served by empowering central objectives. Furthermore, critical theory helps identify factors that limit human freedom and proposes out a plan to overcome such factors (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). This goal further encourages collaboration between all stakeholders who are experts, such as academics, to generate solutions.

Against the above, this study employed critical theory as a theory since, as we, the current authors, are academics, we sought to understand mismatches of the internationalised curriculum. This theory allowed us to collaborate with lecturers as instructors to understand the limitations of the international curriculum. For critical theorists, dialogue must lead to action that liberates human beings from the circumstances of slavery (White, 2003). In critical theory, tangible progress is achievable through interdisciplinary collaboration. It considers historical, psychological, sociological, cultural, institutional, and multiple individual perspectives. Critical theory in education evaluates how education, curriculum, and classroom interactions serve societal needs. Thus, it is appropriate for this study.

The internationalised higher education curriculum serves a particular group of individuals or elite countries, possesses power and superiority over a particular group of people, and requires others to adopt and submit to those powers. Moreover, the internationalised curriculum needs to be diversified. Instead, it is an oppression of other higher education institutions. Thus, critical theory is used to deal with the issues of power and inequality. The theory has been used to deal with matters of race, economy, class, and gender. It concerns how education, religion, and other social institutions interact to construct a social system (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Within the curriculum, critical theory provides the tools to explore, determine, understand, and eventually address the issues important to each diverse group within the complex social, historical, political, and institutional practices used to create the classroom environment in which students and their instructors interact. Critical theory has inspired studies in education that have focused on providing

a "voice" to groups whose opinions have historically been suppressed (White, 2003). Therefore, critical theory in this paper explores mismatches of the internationalised curriculum in teacher education institutions.

The role of critical theory in this research was to demonstrate the linkage of the internationalised curriculum with the needs of the country and how great importance is in the modification of the curriculum that will support its evolution towards freedom in the internationalised curriculum, which is the intention of this study. According to Brookfield (2005), there are five characteristics of critical Theory; however, in this research, only two are implied. To begin, generating knowledge, in the context of this study, means the study generated knowledge that will assist lecturers in understanding better how to facilitate an internationalised higher education curriculum in their context that will be less oppressive.

Additionally, normative grounding outlines that an internationalised curriculum must envision a less alienated, more just, and more democratic curriculum to suit each country's needs. Applying critical Theory to education studies allows a rigorous investigation of how dominant ideologies educate people to believe specific ways of organizing curriculum and pedagogy are in their best interest (Jay, 2021).

#### **4. Methodology**

This section provides a detailed description of the study's research methods.

##### **4.1 Data Collection and Analysis**

This paper is located within a critical research paradigm concerned with power relationships within social structures (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013). The critical paradigm stresses that the researcher must be a transformative intellectual who liberates people from their historical, emotional and social conditions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This study's purpose was to highlight mismatches (misfits) of the internationalised in a selected teacher training university. Through the critical paradigm the mismatches were presented with recommendations to effect transformation and liberation in higher education in South Africa. Participatory Action Research (PAR) was employed as an approach to this research since it prioritizes the value of experiential knowledge for tackling problems caused by unequal and harmful social systems and envisioning and implementing alternatives (Cornish et al., 2023).

PAR was relevant in this study because it involved the participation and leadership of those experiencing issues who take action to produce emancipatory social change through systematic research to generate new knowledge (Baldwin, 2012; Cornish et al., 2023). PAR allowed us to involve lecturers who are using an internationalised curriculum, which is observed as an unequal system, and we envisioned suggesting alternatives for implementations in a South African context. PAR lecturers who were fully involved in addressing the problem were enabled to identify the misconceptions and propose recommendations. All lecturers had an equal opportunity to have their say; this made it easy for us to

address the research phenomenon. Furthermore, in this study, the two principles from PAR were used to successfully address the research problem: transformative processes and collaboration through dialogue (Cornish et al., 2023). In the context of this study, these principles permitted a collaborative method to address the research question and guided us in ensuring the proposed solutions are transformative.

Homogeneous purposive sampling was adopted to select four participants for this study. A homogeneous sampling strategy was used since it argues that participants are selected based on similar characteristics (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). Therefore, the criteria involved lecturers lecturing at the University of Technology on a full-time basis, from the humanities faculty, responsible for lecturing teacher development programmes, from year level one to year level four, have above five years of lecturing experience and were between the age of 35-50 years old. Furthermore, in qualitative studies, the sample size is usually small (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), thus only four lecturers were sampled.

In addition, PAR prioritizes depth over breadth; four participants provided intensive dialogue. The four lecturers were granted the opportunity to be co-researchers of three crucial questions: firstly, what is your conceptualisation of the internationalised curriculum in higher education? Secondly, how do you experience the internationalised curriculum across the following three goals: curriculum content, learning and teaching activities, and assessment in your program? Finally, how do you perceive the internationalised teacher education curriculum in higher education?

After data was collected by each co-researcher a focus group discussion was held online via Microsoft Teams for 60 minutes to discuss findings. The flow of the discussion was guided by the above three questions; we recorded the discussion and took notes at the same time to ensure all information was accurately and fully captured. The advantage of this virtual discussion was that we engaged with lecturers while they were in a comfortable and unthreatening space. Creswell and Creswell (2017) note that collecting qualitative data online through chat room interactions, e-mail, instant messaging, and videoconferencing benefits both the researcher and the participants. During the process, lecturers shared ideas and interacted with each other. Our role was that of facilitator by asking open-ended questions and posing follow-up questions. In addition, the focus group discussion was also audiotaped, and notes were taken to ensure the information they provided was kept safe.

Thematic content analysis was employed to analyse data. The literature has discussed thematic content analysis as one of the methods that can be used in qualitative research to analyse data and measure trustworthiness in research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Thematic content analysis assists in understanding what has been said in a text during data collection. In this research, we listened to the audiotaped recording several times to capture correctly what was shared by participants. Fortunately, Microsoft Teams provided transcriptions (the text) of participants' responses or group discussion. After that, we categorised data

according to their similarities to developing themes. Member checking and audit trails were used to ensure validity and generalisability. Therefore, focus group discussion transcripts and data analysed were returned to participants to ensure the accuracy of the data. Participants were requested to verify and confirm their original words.

Ethical issues were considered in this study; permission to conduct research was requested and granted by the CUT Research Office and the ethics number HREIC SF 08/11/2023 was allotted. Other ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and voluntary participation, were explained to the participants and adhered to throughout the study. All participants were kept anonymous by giving them pseudonyms, e.g. Lecturer 1, Lecturer 2, Lecturer 3 and Lecturer 4. Below are the findings of this study.

## **5. Results and Discussion**

In an attempt to address the study's research questions, the following themes emerged: the internationalised curriculum in teacher training institutions proposes a standardized curriculum for all, which is not suitable for institutions in developing countries, particularly South Africa. The language of teaching and learning only accommodates some South Africans, and assessment and teaching strategies are not at the country's level. In this study, mismatches refer to unsuitable or unsuitable aspects presented in the internationalised curriculum.

### **5.1 Theme 1: Internationalised curriculum in teacher training institutions proposes a standardized curriculum**

The findings of this study outlined that the first mismatch of the internationalised curriculum in teacher training institutions is that it proposes a standardized curriculum for all, which is unsuitable for institutions located in developing countries, particularly South Africa. Participants acknowledged that this international curriculum operates with common goals, content, and assessment strategies that do not match the South African context. The argument raised by participants was that this international curriculum is designed in developed countries that are already geared for education, while in South Africa, we are still learning education.

For instance, South Africa is still working on fully comprehending what it is to be in the classroom, why education should take place in the classroom, and what strategies could best be used in the education setting to ensure appropriate teaching and learning to provide opportunities to meet social needs. Another participant commented that an internationalised curriculum indicates a specific power that is imposed on the powerless since the standardised curriculum is accepted and used by everyone. Chances of modifying it have yet to be put into place.

Lecturer 2 had this to say:

*“The internationalisation of curriculum in higher education does not fit perfectly into our education system here in South Africa as we are a developing country. For instance, the international curriculum concentrates on activities that develop internationalisation such as*

*research collaborations, online learning and the use of technology, which, in our case, is still at an infant stage."*

In addition, Lecturer 3 posited:

*"The mismatch I have noted with the international curriculum is that it is a nationwide curriculum with expected knowledge that is given to us for adoption and considers little abilities for our abilities. I would say it ignores our education system. It is a general curriculum for everyone whether suitable or not."*

Lecturer 4 also elaborated:

*"This international curriculum is equal throughout the globe, while we are not equal in terms of education and resources in our institutions. That is the mismatch I have observed; it has an equal framework, which does not fit our education system and country's status."*

The above finding shows that participants felt that a standardized curriculum needs to be a match. Zhao et al. (2023) argued that standardized curricula in education present benefits and impediments. The limited flexibility it offers to educators and students, due to the uniformity of the curriculum, may restrict lecturers' ability to adapt teaching methods and materials to meet individual students' diverse learning needs and styles. This can hinder creativity, critical thinking, and personalized learning experiences. Moreover, a standardized curriculum often strongly emphasizes standardized testing, which may lead to a "teaching to the test" mentality and a focus on rote memorization rather than a deeper understanding and application of knowledge (Zhao et al., 2023).

In addition, UNECE (2018) asserts that the standardization of curriculum in education institutions such as universities means the policymakers need to consider the cost of the standardized curriculum and its complexity in achieving regional objectives. Sparapani and Perez (2015) further advocate that the issue with a standardized curriculum is whether it is appropriate for everyone and meets the educational needs of different people with different ideas. In this mismatch, critical theory can be used to provide a strategy since it argues for social change and the creation of a fair and just world. This will allow dialogue or collaboration with relevant stakeholders, such as policymakers, to modify the international curriculum to a fair and accommodating curriculums for all South Africans. Another mismatch was indicated in the language used for teaching in this international curriculum, which is discussed below.

## **5.2 Theme 2: Language of teaching and learning that does not accommodate the linguistic diversity of all South Africans**

During the discussion, participants admitted that the internationalised curriculum is communicated in a particular language for all (English), which only accommodates some regions of the country. Therefore, they regarded the language used for teaching and learning in teacher training institutions as a mismatch. Participants felt that they were not all English first language speakers. Some students in South Africa are still learning the language. Therefore, we need more than one unified language for teaching and learning to fit our context.

Furthermore, considering the painful history of the Republic of South Africa, where the language was used as an oppression and marginalisation tool, it is, therefore, a thorny issue to use English only for scholarship, communication and pedagogy in the context of South Africa. Apparently, the language used for the international curriculum favours a specific group of students, particularly those in elite countries. Participants mentioned that the English language used for teaching and learning reveals inequalities as students from marginalised or less privileged communities may find it challenging to comprehend the curriculum successfully. Below are the comments of participants:

Lecturer 1 stated:

*"The international curriculum uses English for instruction, assessment and any other activities of education, for me, this is not fair and it not accommodating every South African student. I have observed that some students are fine with the content, but the comprehension language of the content is stipulated. In my view, this is a mismatch.*

Lecturer 4 added:

*"Taking into consideration our paradigm in South Africa, the internationalised curriculum presented a foreign language to some provinces and nations that shows the domination of power. The language we are using for teaching and learning was just given to us and really it is somehow not best fitting. Language must be accommodative for all."*

Lecturer 2 commented:

*"For me, I feel that binding lecturers and students into one language is a mismatch because we may not best accept the language used; however, since it is an international thing, it is adopted."*

Given the above arguments of participants, the language of the internationalised curriculum in higher education continues as an ongoing debate. The above finding is well supported by scholars. Higgs (2016) opines that using English (only) as a medium of instruction in the curriculum delivery indicates that the higher education system is still highly Westernized. Rensburg et al. (2015) advocates that primarily higher education curricula have always been internationalised since they involve international language, content, and structures. Kamwendo (2016) sheds light on how a few higher education institutions have taken the initiative to decolonize the curriculum by introducing specific programs, such as African Indigenous Languages, as core and fundamental curriculum modules.

One of the principles of the critical theory used in this study is normatively grounded, which outlines that curriculum must envision a less alienated, more just, and more democratic curriculum to suit each country's needs. In addition, the theory serves social justice by empowering central objectives, identifying factors that limit human freedom, and carrying out a plan to overcome such factors (Dell'Angelo et al., 2014). In the context of the mismatch discussed in this second theme (language of teaching and learning), the theory calls for an internationalised curriculum, which accommodates the country's needs by using

indigenous languages that will create an equitable linguistic environment for every student to achieve.

### **5.3 Theme 3: Assessment and pedagogical strategies of the internationalized curriculum need to be more consistent with the country's level**

This study discovered that teaching and assessment strategies of the internationalised curriculum are outside the country's level in terms of education and resources. It was argued that international countries are already developing their teaching and assessment, considering their performance level. Participants felt that the developed countries are already advanced in terms of assessment, they have assessment strategies in place, and they have relevant resources to undertake any form of assessment.

In addition, participants felt that assessments in the internationalised curriculum could be more strategic to our country's needs. During the discussion, participants argued that in developing countries like South Africa, the international curriculum presents a mismatch of theorizing assessment, providing limited practical since the country has limited resources. It was apparent that we are at a different level regarding academic performance; therefore, assessment strategies in the internationalised curriculum still need to achieve the purpose of education in our country fully.

Lecturer 3 announced:

*"I would say assessment stipulated by international curriculum unmatch our education system to some extent. Developing countries' students are well informed of various assessment strategies and resources required to administer those strategies. In contrast, here in South Africa, our assessment does not include a variety of strategies to enhance them."*

Lecturer 4 remarked:

*"Our assessment systems currently in higher education are confusing and they are particularly addressing our social issues. The assessment strategies on the curriculum are in a global stance which might not align to our educational aims."*

Lecturer 1 added:

*"The mismatch in teaching and learning and assessment is that it ignores our education system, it is somehow ahead of our development, and it enforces massive assessment rather than addressing South African education needs"*

Participants above argue that the internationalised curriculum's teaching, learning, and assessment must be more fully strategic in our South African context. Leask (2015) argues that internationalised curricula incorporate international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the content of the curriculum in terms of learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and the support services of a study program. Its structure needs to offer adequate practical skills but focuses on assessment in competition with wealthy countries. According to Teferra (2019), this international curriculum incorporates several

international aspects of teaching and learning, such as the content, teaching strategies, assessment strategies, outcomes, and objectives, which do not meet social needs. Zhao et al. (2023) further argue that although the curriculum contains international educational standards that provide professional development for instructors, the development and implementation of the assessment process should align with student performance. Teferra (2019) argues that the country's values, needs, and priorities must be prioritised in this international curriculum goals when preparing students.

Further, local values, needs, and priorities should direct the why, what, and how of teaching in the curriculum. Critical theory in education evaluates how education, curriculum, and classroom interactions serve societal needs. According to Dell'Angelo et al. (2000), the curriculum must take on a critical orientation that will strive to collaborate and create a foundation for social justice, equality, and empowerment. Critical theory in this mismatch provides the tools to explore, determine, understand, and eventually address the issues important to each diverse group within the complex social, historical, political, and institutional practices used to create the classroom environment in which students and their instructors interact (White, 2004). Therefore, the theory assisted in providing ideas on diversifying teaching, learning and assessment suitable for South African students while considering the international aspect.

## 6. Discussion of Findings

Across the dataset (N=4 lecturers), three mismatches emerged with clear convergence of 100% (4/4) rejected a standardized global curriculum as unsuitable for South Africa. The 75% (3/4) identified the English only medium as marginalizing and 75 % (3/4) reported misaligned pedagogies and assessments that outpace local resources and priorities. Collectively, these findings describe a systematic drift between imported curricular logistics and local educational ecologies that produce inequities in access, participation and relevance.

**Table 1: Mismatches and illustrative lecturer perspectives**

<b>Mismatch</b>	<b>Representative Perspective</b>
Standardized global curriculum unsuited to local context (100%)	"This international curriculum is equal throughout and resources... it does not fit our education system." Lecturer 4
English only instruction ignores linguistic diversity (75%)	"The international curriculum uses English for instruction... this is not fair and not accommodating every South African student." Lecturer 1
Pedagogy / Assessment beyond local capacity and needs (75%)	It is ahead of our development and enforces massive assessment rather than addressing South African education needs." Lecturer 1

### 6.1 The Paradox and a Globalized Solution

The paradox is stark, a curriculum branded international narrows rather than broadens inclusivity by treating diverse systems as if they were homogeneous. In practice, international curriculum defaults to Western epistemic, linguistic, and pedagogical norms, thereby obscuring local knowledge, languages, and socio-material constraints. We argue that a globalized curriculum framework can resolve this contradiction through the three integrated layers depicted below:

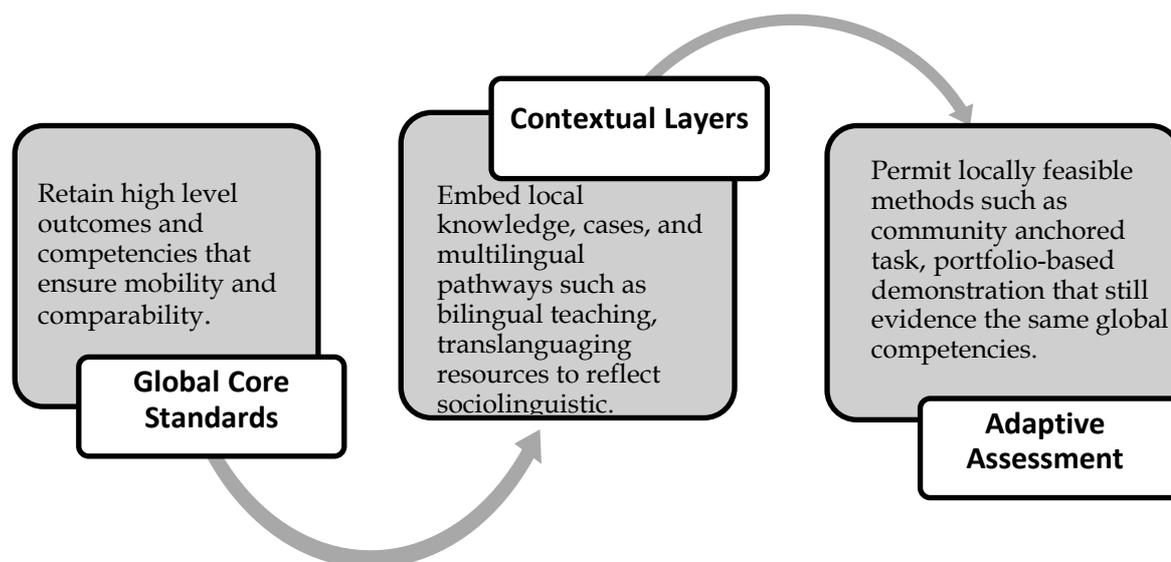


Diagram 2

### 6.2 Comparative Perspectives

South Africa's pattern is not unique; many systems adopting foreign curricula report similar tensions and have responded by localizing content, pluralizing language policy, and diversifying assessment while preserving a global core. The national and program level examples elsewhere will serve as blueprint frameworks that are locally adapted university initiatives adding indigenous language modules and community-based cases that show that equivalence is not uniform as it undermines portability.

In our sample, the unanimity against standardization (100%) and the strong signals on language and assessment (each 75%) align with this international pivot toward context responsiveness with global comparability. The comparative lesson is pragmatic as it starts with competencies that travel, then designs for context in languages, resources and labour market relevance so that graduates are both globally conversant and locally effective. Therefore, we put forward our synthesis by arguing that evidence indicates that the way in which internationalism is operationalized determines whether it reproduces mismatch or advances equity. A globalized model incorporates standards held constant and means adapted as it offers a viable, monitorable pathway to reconcile global legitimacy with local justice.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

We conclude this study by explicitly arguing that successfully implementing an internationalised curriculum in South Africa requires a thoughtful and context-sensitive approach. South Africa can create a more inclusive and effective education system by adapting the standardized curriculum to include contextualized content knowledge, developing a multilingual education strategy, aligning assessment and pedagogical methods with the country's level, and incorporating local educational research. The mismatch between global educational standards and the unique needs of South African students demonstrates that the curriculum must meet international benchmarks and serve the nation's developmental goals as a whole, including South Africa as a developing country.

This study recommends that there should be a reconciliation of the internationalised curriculum with South Africa's context, as it is critical to tailor the standardized curriculum proposed by teacher training institutions. While international standards offer valuable benchmarks, they must be adapted to integrate indigenous content knowledge and practices. Teacher training programs such as a Bachelor of Education degree should accentuate the integration of South African history, culture, economy and societal issues. In integrating contextualized knowledge into the curriculum, future educators will be better equipped to address South African learners' unique challenges, ensuring that the education system remains relevant and practical.

The linguistic diversity of South Africa presents a significant challenge for the internationalised curriculum, which often employs a pedagogical language that only accommodates some South Africans. Developing a multilingual approach to education is crucial to address this issue. Educational materials and teaching methods should be available in multiple indigenous languages, reflecting the country's linguistic diversity. Moreover, teacher training programs should prioritize multilingual education strategies, enabling educators to teach students in their home languages effectively. This approach will foster inclusivity and improve educational outcomes for all learners.

The assessment and pedagogical strategies of the internationalised curriculum must be aligned with the realities of South Africa's education system. Currently, these strategies often need to be more consistent with the country's level of development, leading to disparities in educational achievement. To bridge this gap, assessment methods should be contextually relevant and designed to measure academic knowledge, practical skills, and competencies. Furthermore, pedagogical strategies should be adapted to suit South African learners' learning approaches and needs, incorporating experiential and problem-based learning approaches that resonate with our context.

South Africa's rich tradition of scholarship in teaching and learning, research, and innovation should be leveraged to inform the adaptation of the internationalised curriculum. By incorporating findings from the studies and successful educational practices, policymakers and educators can create a globally informed

curriculum which is context applicable. This includes recognizing and integrating indigenous knowledge systems and teaching methods that have proven effective in South Africa. Encouraging collaboration between international and local educational researchers will ensure that the curriculum remains dynamic and responsive to the needs of South African learners. Although the above findings contribute to understanding the research phenomenon, the fact that it focused only on the perspective of lecturers, omitting students' views in the research remains a huge limitation. A future limitation is the selection of a single teacher training institution in South Africa.

## 8. Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this study.

## 9. Acknowledgments

To the study participants, we humbly appreciate you for the supportive role you played towards completing this research. We would also like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoLT) through UCDG DHET funding and Research Development office for financial support in completing this research.

## 10. References

- Baldwin, M. (2012). Participatory action research. *The SAGE handbook of social work*, 467-481.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499915571707>
- Bedenlier, S., & Zawacki-Richter, O. (2015). Internationalization of higher education and the impacts on academic faculty members. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 10(2), 185-201.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499915571707>
- Brookfield, S. D. (2005). The power of critical theory for adult learning and teaching. *The adult learner*, 85(1), 43-48.
- Clifford, V. (2009). The internationalised curriculum:(Dis) locating students. In *Internationalisation and the student voice* (pp. 195-206). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344614560909>
- Clifford, V., & Montgomery, C. (2015). Transformative learning through internationalization of the curriculum in higher education. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 13(1), 46-64.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344614560909>
- Cornish, F., Breton, N., Moreno-Tabarez, U., Delgado, J., Rua, M., de-Graft Aikins, A., & Hodgetts, D. (2023). Participatory action research. *Nature Reviews Methods Primers*, 3(1), 34. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43586-023-00214-1>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage publications.
- De Wit, H. (2013). An introduction to higher education internationalisation. *Milan: Vita e Pensiero*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344614560909>



## Appendix 1: Informed Consent Letter to Lecturers for Interviews



1 Mothusi Rd, Thabong  
Welkom  
9463  
31 October 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Informed Consent Letter**

My name is Nosihle Veronica Sithole, I am a Lecturer at Central University of Technology, Free State under the Postgraduate Studies Department. I am conducting research on internationalised teacher education curriculum: lecturers' perspectives in South Africa. The purpose of this research is to obtain in-depth information on lecturers' perspectives of the internationalised teacher education curriculum.

Since this research study seeks to obtain deeper information and add knowledge to the body of literature, I have selected lecturers to be part of this research study. Data will be generated with individual interviews.

By writing this letter, I humbly request your acceptance to be part of this research study. Your activities will be to be engaged in the individual interview which will take place face to face or virtual or in any comfortable setting of your choice. The interview will not be more than 45minutes per session.

### **Please note that:**

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your input will not be attributed to you in person but reported only as a population member opinion.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- You have a choice to participate or not participate in this research, and you will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- You are at liberty to withdraw from this research, should feel too much pressure and you will not be penalised for that.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- Interviews will be audiotaped for accurate transcribing. No pictures or videos will be taken during this activity.
- After the research has been completed, a report of the findings will be provided to you.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

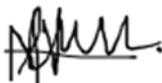
Thank you in advance for considering my request and your contribution to this research.

Should you wish to contact me or have any queries, I can be contacted at

Cell: 072 599 9300

Email: [vsithole@cut.ac.za](mailto:vsithole@cut.ac.za)

Yours faithfully  
Nosihle V. Sithole



Should you accept my request and be willing to take part in this research, kindly complete the following consent form.

**DECLARATION (to be completed by lecturers who will be involved in individual interviews)**

I..... (full names of participants) hereby confirm that I understand the nature of this research study, and I consent to participate in the research study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby provide consent to:

	Y	N
Audio-record my interview / individual interview		

Signature of participant

Date

.....

## Appendix 2: Discussion schedule



### Internationalised Teacher Education Curriculum: Lecturers' Perspectives in South Africa

#### Biographic data

1. Department & Faculty:  
.....
2. Lecturing experience:  
.....

#### Questions

1. What is your conceptualisation of the internationalised curriculum in higher education?
2. In your programme, how do you experience internationalised curriculum across the following three goals: curriculum content, learning and teaching activities, and assessment?
3. Generally, how do you perceive the internationalised teacher education curriculum in higher education?

THANK YOU!

### Appendix 3: Ethical Clearance



#### RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

**Date: 8 November 2023**

This is to confirm that ethical clearance has been provided by the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee [01/06/16] in view of the CUT Research Ethics and Integrity Framework, 2016 with reference number:

**HREIC SF 08/11/2023**

<b>Principal Investigator</b>	Ms N Sithole
<b>Project</b>	Staff research – non-funded
<b>Title of research project</b>	INTERNATIONALISED TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM: LECTURERS' PERSPECTIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA
<b>Resolution Number</b>	08/11/2023

You will be ethically responsible for the following:

- adhere to the principles of rigorous data collection, analysis and interpretation consistent with the design of the study;
- keeping a data trail for possible auditing purposes and safe-keeping of raw data for a period of three years after publication of the results/findings;
- Respecting the confidentiality of the data.

We wish you success with your research project.

Regards

Prof JW Badenhorst  
Chairperson: Humanities Research Ethics and Innovation Committee