Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN TEACHING AND LEARNING AT A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

DOROTHEA ZANDILE MCINZIBA

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Technology: Public Relations Management

in the Faculty of Informatics and Design

at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Supervisor:	Dr Trust Matsilele
Co-supervisor:	Dr Blessing Makwambeni

District Six

December 2020

CPUT copyright information

The thesis may not be published either in part (in scholarly, scientific or technical journals), or as a whole (as a monograph), unless permission has been obtained from the University

DECLARATION

I, Dorothea Zandile Mcinziba, declare that this thesis/dissertation's contents represent my unaided work and that the researcher has not previously submitted it for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it expresses my opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

December 15 2020

Signed   **Date**

ABSTRACT

Higher Education Institutions have appropriated social media for teaching and learning. However, very little has been done to understand the role of social media in teaching and learning. In particular, there is very little knowledge about reconfiguring learning spaces in ways that promote horizontal interactions, co-creation of knowledge between students and lecturers in line with a decolonised pedagogy. Also, there is a gap in knowledge about social media's potential to encourage decolonised teaching and learning. Firstly, this study investigates the role of social media in teaching and learning, and secondly, the study examines the nature of engagements between students and lecturers using social media.

The study employed a virtual ethnographic approach. Follow up in-depth interviews were conducted to understand further the participant observation results in the WhatsApp class groups. Theoretically, the study used the Carnivalesque approach as it was a normative fit when studying the intersection of technology, power and learning. The results have shown that social media's role is to enhance and support teaching and learning by creating horizontal power relations and horizontal communication engagements and further promoting deep understanding.

Keywords: Higher Education Institutions, Social Media, WhatsApp, Teaching and Learning, Dialogic Pedagogy, Carnivalesque, Power Dynamics

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

Technology has evolved for many centuries, and throughout its evolution, there has been the development of technologies for the betterment of communication, learning and human interaction. Gachago and Ivala (2012:153) observe that "the advent of Web 2.0 applications, collectively known as social media, presents schools and universities with the opportunity to go beyond traditional delivery formats and develop learner-centred personalised learning environments". These technologies and particularly social media have the potential and capacity to promote more empowering approaches to learning, where students and lecturers equally participate in the co-construction of knowledge through a dialogic pedagogy.

This study is located in South Africa, a country going through multiple crises that often hinder even the best technology can offer. Some of the challenges discussed later that impose challenges to teaching and learning include the triple problem of poverty, unemployment and inequality. From a historical glance, the Apartheid government in South Africa introduced the Bantu Education Act (1953) which sought to give 'inferior' education to non-whites while giving 'superior' education to whites. Bantu education would later become a trigger for the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement and the South African Students Association. Building on apartheid policies, in 1974, Afrikaans was imposed on black students as a compulsory medium of instruction; to which students mobilised and started the Soweto Uprising on June 16 1976.

There has been a flurry of new studies looking at decolonisation questions, and South Africa offers an exciting field of study. Firstly, the #FeesMustFall movement in its mature state called for a review of the curriculum and the learning material and teaching methods, which for long have been western.

Secondly, students protested to have their languages integrated into their everyday learning. This kind of education appreciates the local culture, idioms, languages and above all, nuances. This unique environment invites theorists such as Freire who writes on power and learning.

Freire (1970) opines that the relationship between teachers and students is that of teachers as subjects narrating information to listening objects which are in this case, students. He further states that what the teachers see as a reality regarding their subject matters tends to isolate the students' experiences on subject matters. Freire (1970) also asserts that the lecturer's role is "to fill the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that endangered them and could give them significance". Thus, the new content bares no meaning to students and becomes so withdrawn with their realities (Freire, 1970).

The history of education has been one where the more teachers fill the receptacles, the better teacher she is, the more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better they are" (Freire, 1970). Freire's views on the banking concept were a true reflection of the South African apartheid government in 1974 when it imposed Afrikaans as a language for teaching students who expected to understand the language and make meaning of their learning and experiences dictated by the apartheid government.

Freire (1970) describes the banking concept of education as that "in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits". Alam (2013:27) asserts that Freire's banking concept of education reflects dissatisfaction on the traditional classroom settings that are teacher-centred and where knowledge relied on what the teachers bring to class. The conventional classroom environment does not promote dialogical communication between teachers and students. According to Freire, education should be a dialogical process where knowledge sharing is according to one's experiences in an environment where existing hierarchies have been reconfigured and or dismantled (Alam, 2013:27).

South African Higher Education Institutions face the challenge of "contradiction in acknowledging and progressing beyond systemic contextual problems inherited from the past educational policies to attain participatory parity and preparing students for emerging technologies (Ng'ambi, Brown, Bozalek, Gachago and Wood, 2016:844). These scholars (Ibid:844) further state that such challenges are not unique in South Africa, and "the education that served as a foundation for building and entrenching inequalities in the past is now having to reverse the effects of unequal educational opportunities". The born free generation now faces "unequal educational opportunities as a default and the #feesmustfall protests in 2015, is a case in point" (Ng'ambi *et al*., 2016:844).

At the beginning of South African democracy in 1994, it was documented how Higher Education could make education more inclusive. However, the role that technology could play was not made explicit until National Plan on Higher Education, which noted how information and communication technologies could bring far-reaching changes in the higher education landscape in the twenty-first century (Ng'ambi *et al*., 2016:844). Due to South Africa's history, this has led to the country having a different route from that being used by the northern and southern countries "in using technology to enhance teaching and learning". It has also affected the various institutions now classified as advantaged and disadvantaged inherited from the apartheid era, and "have produced different visions on how technology could be used" (Ng'ambi et al., 2016:845).

The year 2015 was one of the most critical years in post-apartheid South Africa due to crucial conversations on access to higher education. South African universities' inclusiveness and decolonisation found its way in these discussions (Kamanzi, 2015). These discussions on the decolonisation of education in South African higher learning institutions started with #RhodesMustFall. The #RhodesMustFall movement's initial role was to remove John Cecil Rhodes' statue at the University of Cape Town (Habib, 2019).

The evolution of Information Communication Technology (ICT) brought about the uprising in the use of social media technologies that came with the developments of web 2.0 (Bamigboye and Olusesan, 2017:69). According to Murire and Cilliers (2017:1), there has been a significant shortage of skills in the South African economy due to students at Higher Education Institutions not completing their standard record qualifications due to inadequate students-lecturers interaction. As a result, out of the Information and Communication Technology tools; social media was specifically chosen as a possible solution to improve outcomes (Murire and Ciliers, 2017:1).

With the rise of Web 2.0 applications, social networking sites such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter have become increasingly popular among the youth which is now using new technologies "to create instant messaging practices" (Bosch, 2009:185). Bamigboye and Olusesan (2017:69) note that social media plays a vital role in human life as it has brought about "content, interaction and sharing pictures". University students have become the most active mobile phone users; mobile phones are now the most preferred form of communication (Murire and Cilliers, 2017:2).

Adding to this view, Chawinga (2017:1) notes that adopting social media technologies has changed how communication between lecturers and students occurs. It is imperative to explore the use of social media technologies as an educational tool. These social media tools create a learner-centred approach where students and their lecturers become active participants in teaching and learning, creating the opportunity and ability to communicate with each other more with their academic activities (Chawinga, 2017:1). Not only social media has allowed students and lecturers to participate in a learner-centre teaching and learning process actively, but it has also allowed the academics to share and publicise their work with a broader audience (Chugh, Grose and Macht, 2020:2).

South African students have made it a norm to use social media as a mobilising tool to make their challenges and concerns at the Higher Education Institutions known by the public, as was in the case of #FeesMustFall. Therefore, social media is a means to provide "learning spaces that are more inclusive and more representative of both the universities' academic and administrative staff and students" (Francis and Hardman, 2018:69). According to Francis and Hardman (2018:69), understanding the reasons for introducing social media to provide inclusive conversations and learning around decolonisation help universities maximise the use of decolonised learning spaces.

The students started decolonising the education campaign with academics, to decolonise the curriculum in higher education institutions. According to Francis and Hardman (2018:77), social media as a tool can create egalitarian spaces that can lead to decolonised spaces of learning. The effect of this on the division of labour is crucial to understanding this decolonising potential of social media as a mediating learning tool". In 2016, the #RhodesMustFall movement merged into #FeesMustFall, the driving motive for access to higher learning institutions; with massive student demonstrations throughout the country.

Social media played a significant role in mobilising students for the protests and mass demonstrations. Students ensured that information was widely shared on social networking sites; mostly Twitter and Facebook. Choudry and Kapoor (2010:10) assert that "the dynamics, politics, and richness of knowledge production within social movements and activist contexts are often overlooked in scholarly literature, and sometimes even in the movements themselves". This further shows how social media can be a platform for knowledge production, co-creation of knowledge, which led to decolonisation being realised.

This study explored social media's role in teaching and learning at a higher education institution in South Africa. The Cape Peninsula University of Technology was the selected case study for this investigation. This University presents an interesting dynamic as it is a technology university which should be at the forefront of embracing technological developments. However, there is also an interesting problem. The same university is mainly composed of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, wherein intersecting technology and learning lies the challenge if students cannot have access to relevant technological tools. It focused on how lecturers appropriated social media in teaching and learning. Although there is a knowledge gap on whether social media promotes horizontal interaction and co-creation of knowledge (a dialogic pedagogy) as envisaged in decolonised teaching and learning.

1.1   Statement of the research problem

Higher Education Institutions in South Africa have appropriated social media in teaching and learning., Ng'ambi, Brown, Bozalek, Gachago and Woods (2016:844) note that the advent of a democratic South Africa came with ideas that sought to create a more inclusive Higher Education through the use of technology. The National Plan on Higher Education did not document the role technology played in teaching and learning. However, it stated the potential technology had to change Higher Education (Ng'ambi *et al.* (2016:844). Yet, very little has been done to understand social media's role in teaching and learning, particularly in reconfiguring learning spaces in ways that promote horizontal interactions, co-creation of knowledge between students and lecturers in line with a decolonised pedagogy.

1.2   Research Objectives

- To investigate the role of social media in teaching and learning at a Higher Education Institution in South Africa
- To examine the nature of engagements between students and lecturers using social media
- To determine how social media is reconfiguring power dynamics between students and lecturers

1.3   Research Questions

- What role is social media playing in teaching and learning in higher education institutions?
- What do students and lecturers and students and other students engage about on social media?
- How does the use of social media shape power dynamics between students and lecturers in teaching and learning?

1.4   Significance of the study

This study will help us understand social media use in teaching and learning in Higher Education Institutions. More interestingly, the study will also bring new insights on power negotiation in a virtually mediated sphere in contrast to an offline space and the extent to which that power is reconfigured, understood, challenged or reaffirmed. The study will also contribute to the appropriations of social media in Higher Education, and the potential to improve teaching and learning praxis, through understanding the social media platforms used to engage and what students and academics engage about on social media platforms.

1.5 Delineation of the study

The study's purpose was to analyse social media's role in teaching and learning at a Higher Education Institution in South Africa. The study only focused on two class groups within the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, one in the Faculty of Applied Sciences and one in the Faculty of Informatics and Design. The study employed a qualitative methodology through a virtual ethnographic design approach; which guided the researcher in understanding students' and lecturers' online engagements. The researcher collected data through participant observation in the class groups' WhatsApp groups, thematic content analysis, and in-depth interviews.

The researcher selected first-year students in the Public Relations class in the Faculty of Informatics and Design and the Communication Skills class in the Faculty of Applied Sciences as the study's population. Both the groups were first-year students who knew how their classes WhatsApp groups operate. The students were all registered at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology at the study's time for the 2020 academic year. All races and genders took part in the research, and the age groups considered for students were 18 – 35 years, and for academics, the age ranged from 40 and above.

1.6 Structure of the study

The study comprises six main chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the study and its background, which stems from the evolution of technology globally and its history in South Africa. It further outlines the research problem that the study seeks to resolve, the study's objections, and the research questions that the research requires to solve the research problem.

Chapter 2 contains the literature reviewed regarding the use of social media in teaching and learning, social networking sites in teaching and learning, WhatsApp in teaching and learning, Decolonisation of education, and social media's role in decolonising teaching and learning. This chapter provides a view of social media use in higher education institutions and its appropriation in teaching and learning.

Chapter 3 is the theoretical framework section, which discusses the theories employed by the study, and how they complement each in finding the answers to the research questions that the study seeks to uncover.

Chapter 4 of the study unpacks the research design and methods employed in gathering data for the research. It provides details on the sampling procedure, data collection and analysis.

Chapter 5 presents and discusses the findings from the data collected for the study. The chapter further outlines the number of students within the two WhatsApp class groups and dissects one group according to its activeness.

Chapter 6 concludes the study and further provides future research recommendations in the same research topic and field.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

The student protests of 2015 and 2016, were sparked by the students' dissent and stance for removing the Cecil John Rhodes statue at the University of Cape Town, which then had the hashtag #RhodesMustFall on social media. This movement sought to address the decolonisation of education in South Africa, vis-à-vis the continued colonisation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in post-apartheid South Africa (Francis and Hardman, 2009:66). This study explores and understands social media's role in teaching and learning at a Higher Education Institution.

The year 2020 saw the entire world coming to a standstill due to the covid-19 pandemic. In South Africa, many educational institutions adopted social media as a teaching and learning tool by saving the academic year. According to Ng'ambi, Brown, Bozalek, Gachago and Wood (2012:354), there has been a noticeable increase in emerging technologies in higher education institutions in South Africa. Although most teaching and learning practices remain untransformed". Ng'ambi *et al.* (2012:354) further argue that though emerging technologies have aided transformative teaching and learning practices, they are also replicating traditional teaching practices.

Though there is more potential that emerging technologies offer, the use of these technologies has been "limited to prescriptive learning and replication of traditional teaching practices, namely passive, teacher-centred and didactic instruction" (Ng'ambi *et al.*, 2012:354). The emerging technologies have such an effect on teaching, and they have continued to be on the rise among lecturers and students in Higher Education Institutions (Ng'ambi *et al.*, 2012:354). Ng'ambi *et al.* (2012:354) further concur that emerging technologies "are being allocated specific affordances such as openness, real-life connection and focus on collaboration, and come with the promise of

radically transforming teaching and learning in education". In essence, emerging technologies afford both students and lecturers opportunities to reflect on the realities and experiences of their surroundings and the world.

Higher Education Institutions are struggling to grasp the potential in the use of emerging technologies in higher education, "which often leads institutional decisions, which hinder their adoption" (Ng'ambi *et al.* (2012:354). There has not been much research conducted on "how emerging technologies are being used in teaching and learning in Higher Education Institutions in developing nations in general and South Africa in particular" (Ng'ambi *et al*., 2012:354). According to Ng'ambi *et al.* (2012:354), it is of utmost importance that research "further explores the value of emerging technologies in terms of transforming teaching and learning practices".

This section presents and discusses literature considered relevant to the study of social media use in HEIs in South Africa. The researcher looks at social media and the nature and structure of HEIs in South Africa, focusing on history and technology integration. Since 2015, South African HEIs have gone through a radical shift. The researcher locates this shift as a turning point on understanding the drifts towards a decolonised education system involving decolonised teaching and learning.

2.2   Social media in teaching and learning

Some studies have been conducted on social media uses looking at political participation (Matsilele 2019; Matsilele and Ruhanya 2020; Mare and Matsilele 2020; Mutsvairo and Ronning 2019; Mutsvairo 2018), governance, and crisis coordination. However, to date, there hasn't been any study, to the best of my knowledge, on South Africa looking at the use of social media in the classroom setting, a gap this study seeks to fill.

What is social media? What is social about social media? Why social media? This study begins with these broad questions to help first articulate definitions of the concept of social media. Secondly, to elucidate the net effect of social media use in South Africa and give a detailed account of the social setup under which this study of social media use in HEIs is taking place.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2009:61) state that social media is "a group of inter-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content". Drury (2008:274) further defines social media as an online platform that allows people to share content that comprises ideas, opinions, insights and humour. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011:241) further suggest that social media uses "mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content".

Social media's popularity has introduced an entirely new "communication landscape" that started forming many years ago (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011:241). Mangold and Faulds (2009:358) assert that "social media encompasses a wide range of online, word-of-mouth forums including blogs, company-sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer email, consumer product or service ratings websites and forums, Internet discussion boards and forums, moblogs, and social networking websites to name a few". Eijkman (2009:240) notes that Web 2.0's social media tools have a "non-foundational approach to the nature of knowledge" which allows for diversity in the classroom and the ability to construct knowledge based on the different cultural differences that may exist.

Eijkman (2009:241) states that massification and internationalisation are two drivers for change. They silently raise intellectual colonisation when universities cannot account for how they have been neglecting or instead excluding the knowledge and social practices of "non-mainstream social groups". In this instance, social media "presents higher education with another, though this time countervailing, driver supportive of more discursively inclusive learning spaces" (Eijkman, 2009:241).

According to Francis and Hardman (2018:77), using social media as a tool means that there will be no teacher and learner. In social media spaces, there is no teacher-learner binary. Francis and Hardman (2018:78) assert that "the curricula, knowledge production and learning are the hands of the individual social media usage. Therefore, social media provides a space for decolonised education.

Lecturers are now making use of social media for teaching and learning purposes, prefer making use of their social media platforms to also relay important messages to their students. According to Bosch (2009:194) lecturers preferred having their students on their social media platforms. This makes it easier and quicker for them to talk to people they saw on social media on social media platforms daily (Bosch, 2009:194). Bosch (2009:194) further concurs that social media makes it easier for lecturers to easily communicate important information to students, than having to do so in class.

Eijkman (2009:240) concurs that the Web 2.0 and "its socially-oriented knowledge system has the potential to counter the current neo-colonial disprivileging of non-mainstream knowledge systems and discourse". Web 2.0 users have more opportunities to take part "in the construction as well as ownership and control of knowledge as its epistemic space distributes rather centralises epistemic authority and control" (Eijkman, 2009:250). According to David (2009:42), Web 2.0 is one decisive way to engage students, and

"they can benefit from being co-creators of knowledge, discourse, and learning".

Francis and Hardman (2018:79) state that "the ability for multiple epistemologies to exist within the social media learning spaces might give us further insight for how this can be made possible in courses at our universities". According to Eijkman (2009:250), social networking sites provide communication tools that easily allow users to engage in dialogue "about the form and the content of learning and incorporate diverse socio-cultural perspectives".

Eijkman (2009:242) further states that Web 2.0's new mode of socially focused and egalitarian knowledge production provides a powerful window of opportunity to disrupt Western epistemic. It also disrupts existing discursive hegemony and promotes more epistemologically and discursively egalitarian transcultural learning zones. Further research into social media might provide valuable insight into how universities can decolonise and transform their curricula and teaching practices using social media (Francis and Hardman, 2018:79). According to Francis and Hardman (2018:79), students chose social media and "it is time we explore their social media usage more deeply so that we can better understand how to decolonise our universities".

Chukwuere (2017:232) asserts that through the alignment and integration with Africanisation and digitalisation lies the successful decolonisation of teaching and learning process and other sectors. Chukwuere (2017:235) further says that South Africa's history can change by recognising our cultural values, concerns, heritage and indigenous knowledge. He avers that we can decolonise them by integrating a decolonised education system into digital content and making them technologically-oriented. According to Chukwuere (2017:237), the survival of education in this information age is tech-dependent. Therefore, institutions should embrace it through informed and effective decolonisation processes".

Manca and Ranieri (2016:217) argue that though there have been many different definitions for social media, the meaning still refers to social media being an application that allows its users to "create, share, comment and discuss digital content". The features within social media applications have led to social media being understood as a tool with a potential to "deeply transform teaching and learning practices as more social, open and collaboration oriented" (Manca and Ranieri, 2016:217). Manca and Ranieri (2017:217) further assert that social networking sites have the most ability in supporting knowledge creation through the "promotion of networks and social interaction".

2.3   The use of WhatsApp as a social networking site in teaching and learning

Boyd and Ellison (2008:211) define social networking sites as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and transverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Boyd and Ellison (2008:210) assert that social networking sites have attracted more users. They have also attracted the attention of academics, and industry researchers intrigued by their affordances and reach. According to Drury (2008:274), social networking sites comprise of websites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, to name a few.

Boyd and Ellison (2007:210) further state that social networking sites offer very consistent features and cultures that differ from the audience. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007:210) sites also vary in the extent to which they incorporate new information and communication tools, such as mobile connectivity, blogging and photo/ video sharing. Social network sites are different because they also allow users to express themselves, including making their social networks visible. It connects individuals as far as connecting strangers is possible (Boyd and Ellison, 2007:211). Boyd and Ellison (2007:211) concur that these social network sites not only allow

individuals to meet strangers, but it also serves as a communication tool to users who already know each other.

According to Sayan (2016:88), WhatsApp is a smartphone application that operates on nearly all current devices and operating systems used by all higher students. WhatsApp improves their achievement, performance and the amount of information learned. It also enhances the motivation of preparation with big or smaller groups. According to Yin (2016:15), Whatsapp is free to use and was reported as a tool for information sharing and knowledge construction. Yin (2016:15) further asserts that it allows people to interact with their families and friends. Students have now realised the potential of Whatsapp as a source of information for their learning.

Bouhnik and Deshen (2014:218) state that "there has been a growing use of WhatsApp as a communication platform for various student groups, and more recently for groups of teachers and their students as well. Teachers can now create groups within WhatsApp to communicate specifically with students' class group (Bouhnik and Deshen, 2014:219). According to Bouhnik and Deshen (2014:219) WhatsApp "has become a shared platform that enhances accessibility, encourages cooperation, and intensifies motivation to take an active part in academic assignments". This is in sync with calls for decolonised education that develops students who can problematise their reality and contribute to knowledge production.

WhatsApp enables information sharing between students regarding issues and concerns emanating from their academics. It also allows lecturers to plan their tasks (Rambe and Chipunza, 2013:333). This social networking application will enable students to freely express themselves in a non-restricted environment, thus removing the low participation constraints characteristic of lecturers (Rambe and Chipunza, 2013:334). Rambe and Chipunza (2013:335) argue that WhatsApp's use through information sharing has allowed students to develop "complex hierarchy of individual roles among students such as knowledge brokers knowledge seekers and givers

and informal mentors". As a result, WhatsApp can then be "interpreted as a platform that broadened and leveraged students' capacities like collaborative engagement and meaningful appropriation of educational resources" (Rambe and Chipunza, 2013:335).

Rambe and Chipunza (2013:335) argue that in some cases, WhatsApp has managed to serve as a tool to redress the inequalities between students from low-income backgrounds. Rambe and Chipunza (2013:332) further assert that WhatsApp can support collaborative problem solving of IT problems. According to Rambe and Chipunza (2012:332) "studies point at the capacity of MIM to foster knowledge sharing, enhance peer-based support on educational matters and nurture knowledge communities". Mohammed, Kumar, Saleh and Shuaibu (2017:221) social media platforms afford higher education institutions with the opportunity to improve teaching and learning. It further enhances "students-teacher" relationships and allows students to interact with themselves (Mohammed *et al.*, 2017:221).

2..4 The use of social media in the decolonisation of teaching and learning

Transformation of Higher Education Institutions has long been recognised since the post-apartheid government took over. Decolonisation is a very touchy discourse within South African higher education institutions. It has been seen as a sensitive matter for everyone to engage in and remains opposed by many (Padayachee, Matimole and Ganas, 2018:288). Oelofsen (2015:131) defines decolonisation as a process of doing away with colonial ways of doing things. Uzomah (2018:32) further asserts that decolonisation of education is thoughtful and collective measures taken by the government and its people to rectify the West's irregularities "on African indigenous knowledge".

Higgs (2012) asserts that what is taught and considered education in Africa is insignificantly European or Eurocentric; and is not African but a reflection of Europe in Africa. Higgs (2017) further states that his study calls for "An

African Renaissance in education, insisting that all critical and transformative educators in Africa embrace indigenous African world views and root their nation's educational paradigms in indigenous African socio-cultural and epistemological frameworks".

Le Grange (2016:3) opines that there are five phases in the process of decolonisation:

> rediscovery, mourning, dreaming, commitment and action. Rediscovery and recovery are processes whereby colonised peoples rediscover and recover their history, culture, language and identity. Mourning refers to the process of lamenting the continued assault on the world's colonised/ oppressed people's identities and social realities. It is an essential part of healing and leads to dreaming. Dreaming is when colonised peoples invoke their histories, worldviews, indigenous knowledge systems to theorise and imagine alternative possibilities – in this instance, a different curriculum. Commitment is when academics/students become political activists who demonstrate the commitment to include the colonised voices, in this case, in the university curriculum. Action is the phase where dreams and responsibilities translate into strategies for social transformation.

Higgs (2017) asserts that the African curriculum should focus on Africa, its people, and their African continent experiences. Failure to do so will result in unknown ideologies and epistemologies; education will be oppressive and irrelevant to the African people as already is the case with the colonial education systems in Africa (Higgs, 2017). Higgs (2017) further states that Africa's educational discourse is in dire need of liberation "from ideological hegemony which derives its power from the hegemony of Western Eurocentric forms of universal knowledge".

Keet (2017) states that the oppression of African people has caused displacements in the continent, and the knowledge of the African people by the African people is still primarily tied from the Western base. Keet (2007) further asserts that studies and or projects on 'decolonisation of knowledge'

will not succeed without 'academic resource and political courage to enter this battleground. The decolonisation of knowledge is a process in which disciplinary practices are successful in working against inscribed epistemic injustices of all knowledge formations can we claim ourselves a commitment towards epistemic justice without delay (Keet, 2007).

Almeida and Kumalo (2018) assert that to decolonise education in South African Higher Education Institutions, disrupting modes of commodification and negation is critical. Heleta (2018) states that the curriculum imposed by the apartheid government in South Africa promoted white supremacy and dominance. Heleta (2018) further asserts that the current South African higher education curriculum reflects colonial and apartheid worldviews, disconnected from the realities of the African people and South Africa's experiences.

Khoza and Biyela (2019:2665) state that it is crucial to decolonise students' knowledge of technology and the course content as it helps them to understand their learning needs. Students join higher education institutions, bringing in with them experience on technology and many other subjects that differ from that of the Higher Education Institutions (Khoza and Biyela, 2019:2666). Their knowledge of social media and its social networking sites is living proof that they come from different digital eras and have a good understanding of technology (Khoza and Biyela, 2019:2666). The use of online technologies in teaching and learning creates a learning environment driven by non-formal actors, as online theories and technology align with the culture of learning communities" (Khoza and Biyela, 2019:2677).

2.5   Generational group of the study

The study's primary focus is on two generations that have proved to be the epicentre of technology: generation Y and Z students. Generation Y and Z are mainly those born between the years 1980 and above. Ladhari, Gonthier and Lajante (2019:114) state that populations are grouped according to the generational cohort's theory as per their years of birth. Ladhari *et al.*

(2019:114) state that the generational cohort is a consumer segment that uses an individual's coming-of-age year as a proxy to postulate his or her value priorities developed through life experiences during his or her formative years, which may persist throughout that person's life. The populations are grouped according to their shared "values, priorities, attitudes, and behaviours that remain constant throughout a generation's lifetime" (Ladhari *et al.*, 2019:114).
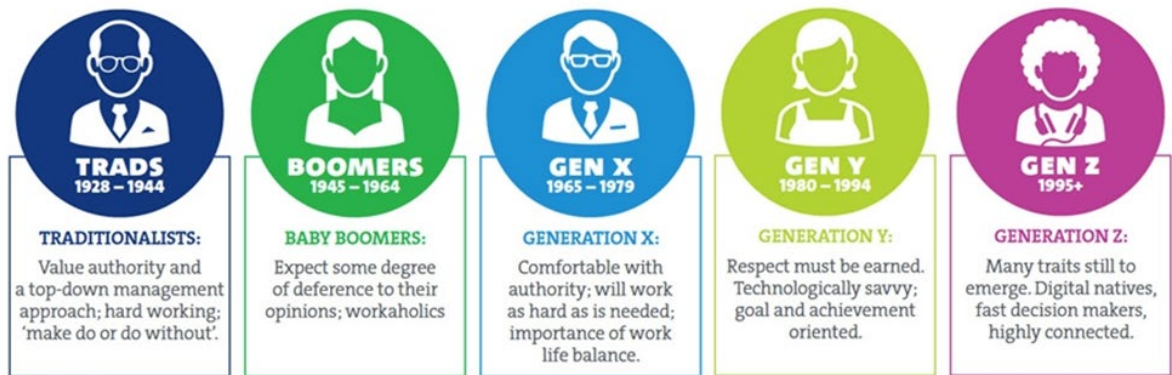
Figure 2.2.3: Generation typology (consultancy.uk, 2015)

The generational typology has been identified according to five general trends and figures 2.2.3 above gives a summary of the generation typology namely: (1) The traditionalist, referring to people born between 1928 – 1944; who value authority and a top-down management approach, (2) The Baby Boomers, born between 1945 – 1964 expect some level of respect to their opinions and are workaholics, (3) The Generation X, was born between 1965 – 1979, they are comfortable with authority and view the work-life balance as necessary; (4) The Generation Y were born between 1980 – 1994, they are technologically savvy and goal-oriented, (5) The Generation Z are born after 1995 and are digital natives (Consultancy, UK, 2015).

Miller and Mills (2019:79) state that Higher Education Institutions have become more "multigenerational" than ever before, with Faculties fully representing generations from Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and even a few Millenials (Generation Y) as employees. Miller and Mills (2019:79) further assert

that the students comprise "the majority of undergraduate students who are now transitioning from exclusively Millenial to include our youngest generation, Generation Z". Miller and Mills (2019:79) assert that generational diversity had presented higher education institutions with challenges in engaging and preserving relations with students. It has further shown that there are inconsistencies in undergraduate students' attitudes and behaviours in higher education.

2.5.1 The Generation Y students as the focus group of the study

Generation Y students also referred to as the "Millenial Generation", and the "Echo Boomers" are the study participants. Generation Y group are "digital natives, while older cohorts are digital immigrants" (Bento, Martinez and Martinez, 2018:236). According to Bento *et al.* (2018:236), Generation Y members are born in a "digital era, actively contribute, share and consume content on social media". Miller and Mills (2019:79) assert that the Generation Y students have always been "technologically connected and globally aware, steeped in a cultural emphasis on dangers and threats to young people . . .".

Bento *et al.* (2018:236) further state that the millennials are a generation eager to "contribute content and always tend to engage in conversations and are both producers and consumers of information". According to Bento *et al.* (2018:236) studies conducted in the past suggested that university students who were partly that of Generation Y "most of the time simply consume content instead of creating, just like other generations". Miller and Mills (2019:79) further state that due to the upbringing, Generation Z university students "arrive accustomed to a high level of guidance on educational expectations, considerable oversight of their daily behaviours, and a sense they are to be "sheltered" from threats".

Generation Y students believe that technology is part of their daily lives, and thus "expect both social organisations and learning environments to integrate technology into day-to-day life and work" (Miller and Mills, 2019:79). Generation Z students have not fully experienced "significant academic challenges and

failures before college; they tend to have high levels of optimism and low levels of resilience when faced with poor academic outcomes" (Miller and Mills, 2019:79). Miller and Mills (2019:79) further assert that in terms of learning, Generation Y students "seek clarity, practical applicability, and engaged teaching more than preceding generations".

According to Bolton, Parasuraman, Hoefnagels, Migchels, Kabadayi, Gruber, Komarova Loureiro and Solnet (2013:6), social networking sites are mostly and actively used by Generation Y, which is the generation that consists of people who were born from 1981 and 1999. Bolton *et al.* (2013:6) assert that Generation Y wields an extraordinary attraction from academics and managers to the extent that "it has become common parlance for Generation Y members to be called Digital Natives, rather than Digital Immigrants". According to Bolton *et al.* (2013:6) Generation Y "actively contributes, shares, searches for and consumes content – plus works and plays – on social media platforms." Generation Y has mastered the use of these social network sites "for many aspects of their lives, particularly communication".

2.5.2 The Generation Z students as the focus group of the study

Generation Z students are the research's focus as they are highly active on social media. They registered as first and second-year students during the academic year of the study. Mohr and Mohr (2017:87) describe the generation Z students as the dominant group currently entering colleges and universities as undergraduate students; who are further known as loyal, thoughtful, compassionate and open-minded. Mijara, Persada, Prasetyo, Belgiawan and Redi (2019:41) also concur that Generation Z is the most technologically adept generation and are familiar with new technologies.

Desai and Lele (2017:807) describe the generation z students as "the first global, most technologically literate and socially empowered", and an age group that values speed more than accuracy due to being born in a fast-paced and ever-changing society. They also share their social media experiences through

videos and links, gather and spread information (Desai and Lele, 2017:808). According to Seemiller and Grace (2017:21), educators must "recruit, educate, and graduate this new generational cohort effectively. They must understand the overarching characteristics, perspectives and styles of these students". Seemiller and Grace (2017:21) further assert that though not all people born in the same period share the same values and experiences, they share common values shaping their worldview.

Generation Z students have had more access to information through smartphones than any other generation at their age (Seemiller and Grace, 2017:21). Cilliers (2017:190) asserts that generation z students, often referred to as the digital natives, their daily lives revolve around technology. In the Higher Education environment, the Generation Z students "rely on PC-recordings instead of taking notes, tend to raise questions online, see a lecturer as "come and entertain me" and does not like waiting for a response but demands instant information and communication" (Cilliers, 2017:190). Manca and Ranieri (2016:217) further assert that increased use of social media in higher education "would lead to reconnecting academic institutions to the new generations of students".

CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Two post-colonial theories inform this study — Paulo Freire's Dialogic Pedagogy (1970) and Mikhail Bakhtin's Carnivalesque Approach (1965). Previously teaching and learning was characterised by top-down approaches, where students were assumed to be the empty receptacles (Freire, 1970). The dialogic pedagogy helped the researcher understand how social media can reconfigure teaching and learning, where students could also form part of knowledge production and become co-creators of knowledge. The Carnivalesque approach will help understand the subaltern, how students who have previously been excluded can equally improve their academic engagements with lecturers and other students and actively participate in conversations. At the same time, the Carnivalesque further aids in understanding power dynamics that play out between the lecturers and students.

3.2 The Dialogical Pedagogy

This study is mainly informed by Paulo Freire's Dialogic Pedagogy and the concept of the carnival. Having identified most teachers' teaching approach as a banking approach, Freire developed a dialogic pedagogy to build relationships between teachers and students. Freire (2000) refers to the banking approach as that which teachers 'deposit' information to students — the recipients, regardless of contents dichotomy. The banking approach created room for students to be silent and accept what they were told without questioning its existence as they were denied their right to speak. Freire's dialogic pedagogy was developed as means for students to give their world meaning, to co-exist in the same world as that of their teachers and giving it a meaning and also be able to reflect (Freire, 2000:88).

Freire (2000:91) defines dialogue as "a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialogue is the logical sequence". Freire's (2000) definition is founded on love, humility and faith in people and oneself; which he further states as non-existent in the banking method of education. Freire's dialogic pedagogy reflects a united people in a world where there's no room for divisions among people. Each one's experiences are acknowledged and a transformation of each one's realities. According to Freire (2000), it is only through dialogue that communication may occur, and without communication "there can be no true education". Shih (2018) asserts that there should be a connection between the context and complexity of its educational practice environment.

Dialogic pedagogy, as argued by Shih (2018) "represents a specific approach to understanding human beings and the social world, from which general principles of teaching and learning can be generated". Its interest is in humanising learning zones and the teacher not to see themselves as the sole content creator and not imposing their views on students (Shih, 2018). The dialogical theory is against "authoritarianism and license and thereby affirms authority and freedom" (Freire, 2000). Freire looked for education with two characteristics, one that enabled both students and teachers to be critically conscious of their relationships with the world, and one in which both are consciously aware of themselves as subjects in their contexts and most importantly, as human beings and to liberate themselves (Shih, 2018).

Dialogic pedagogy promotes dialogic communication where communication between students and lecturers is reconfigured. Through dialogue in teaching and learning spaces, the students and teachers can develop their critical consciousness and significantly bring about subjectivity (Shih, 2018). Communication between teachers and students is reconfigured in the sense that both engage in a dialogue by posing problems and or questions to each other. Information is presented to students so that they are allowed to probe and the willingness to know more (Freire, 2000). One of the principles of education improvements connected to sociocultural perspectives in teaching and learning is that dialogue plays a significant role in creating knowledge "as developing through

cooperative inquiry in an authentic context within a community of practice" (Innes, 2007).

Singh (2008:702) argues that Freire's understanding of dialogue is that of "conversations fostered in a spirit of inquiry that allow the participants not only to comprehend and delineate their world but also to transform it". The teachers' and students' roles shifts when teachers do not impose their views of the world on students, but rather engage with them in a dialogue regarding both their ideas (Freire, 2000). This can only be done once people find their true selves to tell their own experiences through dialogues (Singh, 2008:702). In "problem-posing education", the world is presented as a set of problems resulting in the student and lecturer relationships growing through learning from each other (Singh, 2008:706).

Innes (2007) states that dialogue "plays a central role in the construction of experience and useful knowledge". Dialogic communication allows students to support their positions through justification and "listen to others' positions with the goal of mutual understanding" (Innes, 2007). The goal is for the students to understand that the dialogue aims to "understand literature in depth, remember, and relate to it in terms of their own experiences" (Innes, 2007). Innes (2007) further states that "interactions must be contextualised in an activity structure that is authentic both from the students' perspectives and as a representation of the discourse in the disciplinary community of practice".

The dialogic pedagogy reconceptualises teaching and learning by promoting dialogic communication between the lecturer and the students. Communication between the lecturer and the students becomes horizontal because communication between them doesn't have to go through someone else to reach the person for whom it is intended; they directly communicate with each other. Beige and Mozayyani (2016:165) define horizontal communication as a flow of messages exchanged by members within the same level in a particular group or organisation.

3.3 The Carnivalesque Approach

The Carnivalesque Approach has been employed to complement the use of the dialogic pedagogy theory in the study. The Carnivalesque theory has been employed to understand the reconfiguration of power between the lecturers and students. In the context of this study, the researcher views the social media platforms adopted by the lecturers for teaching and learning as the carnival; to understand whether the platforms allow for power dynamics to exist and or shift.

Bakhtin (1984) defines the carnival as an event whereby everyday life rules are on hold, including society's hierarchies. The study will use the Carnivalesque approach to determine whether the same rules that apply during the physical classroom environment are the same in the virtual classroom setting, which will be a social media platform in the case of this study. It promotes equality and allows those taking part in it to question those in power, regardless of their status in society.

The carnival is an environment in which people live, and everyone participates in its activities. All that happens in the carnival stays in the carnival, and people are subject to its rules (Bakhtin, 1984:7). The Carnivalesque theory complements the dialogic theory through the form of communication that takes place during the carnival. Communication in a carnival becomes a dialogue between equals regardless of each party's social standing outside the carnival. It gives its participants the freedom to communicate and express their true selves, feelings and experiences of the world.

The carnival promotes dialogue in a very historical and functional manner, through which the existing power dynamics within the society hears the truth. In a physical classroom environment, the students meet with their lecturers by making an appointment and communication with the lecturer may be through a class representative outside of class. The lecturers' social media platforms as a teaching and learning environment will allow the research to understand what rules apply in the social media platforms for teaching and learning and whether they are the same as in a traditional classroom setting.

Virii (2012:283) notes that those in power are stripped of their powers and sociocultural standing. The carnival dismantles society's authoritarian power dynamics through dialogue and promotes dialogic communication between the participating community members. The carnival promotes a level of informality, humour, and horizontal communication and power relations whereby there is no middle man between those in dialogue (Makwambeni, 2017:244). Makwambeni (2017:244) further asserts that everyone has a right to speak in a carnival, and should they be dominated by one voice then that opens room for dialogue.

The Carnivalesque approach serves as a complementary theory to understand the actual existing power dynamics within the lecturers' social media platforms for teaching and learning. The social media platforms will serve as the carnival, which will be the environment where the students and the lecturers will live for a set period; and only live their everyday lives outside the platforms. The students are confined in the social media platforms during the teaching and learning period, and may only behave as they do inside the group and not outside of it. The Carnivalesque theory will help the study understand the students' behaviour on social media platforms compared to the traditional classroom environment.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology and methods used to address the study's objectives, which seek to explore social media's role in teaching and learning at a Higher Education Institution. The research methodology that was employed for this study is qualitative. Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005:4) define qualitative research methods as flexible and allow the researcher to prove the participants' responses further. Qualitative research methods enable the researcher to explore and investigate the information provided to have in-depth knowledge of issues, adding more information to what already exists (Mack *et al.*, 2005:4).

The study used the virtual ethnography and participant observation which allowed the researcher to form part of the participants' online space by joining the WhatsApp groups of each class. The virtual ethnography and participant observation complemented the content analysis and in-depth interviews in finding more information in supplementing the data that already received through the participant observation in the two WhatsApp class groups.

4.2   Methodology

The study uses a qualitative research methodology. The researcher chose to investigate the research questions by collecting data that allows the researcher to seek information by interacting with the study participants. The researcher chose this method for its effectiveness in obtaining information based on the opinions and the behaviour of the participants (Mack *et al.*, 2005:1). Mack *et al.* (2005:1) further assert that qualitative research provides descriptions of how people experience certain things, how they feel, their behaviours and relationships.

The study employs interpretive and, its ontological position is founded on realitivism and subjectivism. Scotland (2012:11) defines relativism as the realities of people being different from each person, with each person conscious of their world's facts. The interpretivism epistemology is based on the real world, and for it to exist, we need to be there and knowledgeable about it (Scotland, 2012:11). The researcher formed part of the two classes' WhatsApp groups to experience their world and realities of the online teaching and learning environments.

According to Scotland (2012:12), the interpretive aims to understand the occurrences from the individual's point of view by investigating their interactions with each other. The study investigates the role of social media in teaching and learning by observing the lecturers and students' engagements on social media.

4.3 Research Design

4.3.1 Virtual Ethnographic Approach

The study uses a virtual ethnographic approach, which Crichton and Kinash (2003) define as a method whereby one engages with people in an online platform to tell a story from their situations that their engagements may also inform. The researcher was added to two different first-year WhatsApp class groups from various departments at a university of technology, for the researcher to understand the nature of engagements between the lecturers and the students. The researcher used the virtual ethnographic approach to understand what the lecturers and students engage in and understand the everyday engagements between the lecturers and students and meetings amongst students in the respective WhatsApp class groups.

4.3.2 Participant Observation

The first step of the research was a participant observation, which according to Mack *et al.* (2005:13) is a qualitative research method that allows the researcher to observe the behaviour and the views held by the study participants. The

researcher used the participant observation method as it enabled the researcher to approach the participants in their environments (Mack *et al.*, 2005:13).

The researcher got permission from the group lecturers to use their WhatsApp class groups as the study's research population. The researcher joined the WhatsApp groups and introduced their presence and the reason for being part of the two groups. The participant observation was meant to be conducted for a month (July 1 – July 31). Due to unforeseen circumstances and less frequency of engagements within the groups, the researcher had to extend the observation period to two months (July 1 – September 31) to allow more time for better observation.

It provided the researcher with an opportunity to better understand the participants and their behaviours in the WhatsApp groups as a teaching and learning environment compared to the traditional classroom setting. The understanding of the participants by the researcher was based on learning about them as individuals within a group, what the WhatsApp group's purpose was for them, what kind of relationships existed between the lecturers and students in the online platforms and the behaviour that spoke to the nature of their engagements.

4.3.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

The second step after the participant observation was qualitative content analysis. Braun and Clarke (2012) define qualitative content analysis as a method used to systematically identify and organise meaningful patterns that emerge from the data collected; illustrating which themes are central in describing what is studied. The purpose of the qualitative content analysis in the study was to identify possible themes emerging from the data. These themes were rooted in engagements between the lecturers and students, and students with other students in the WhatsApp class groups.

These engagements also informed the type of relationship the students had with their lecturers. It mostly stemmed from the nature and level of engagements with

each other on the platforms. The researcher based the sampling size for the participant observation on 118 participants, and of the 118 two were the lecturers for the respective groups, leaving the study with 116 students altogether. Of the 116 students, 33 students were from the Environmental and Occupational Studies group, and the 83 students were from the Media Department group, respectively referred to as Group A (Environmental and Occupational Studies Department) and Group B (Media Department).

4.3.4 In-depth Interviews

The third stage of the research design consists of in-depth interviews with the lecturers and students. Mack *et al.* (2005:29) define the in-depth interviews as a technique designed for researchers to paint a picture of the research topic based on the participants' view. The in-depth interviews effectively give the face to what is being studied and provide meaningful experiences for both the researcher and its participants (Matsilele, 2013).

The participants for the in-depth interviews were selected purposively through the use of convenience sampling. Sharma (2017) defines purposive sampling as a method that relies on the researcher's judgement to choose the participants and or units to be studied. The non-probability sampling was also employed in the study because the population was selected based on the researcher's subjective decision. The researcher chose the purposive sampling method to compare two first-year groups using WhatsApp as a teaching and learning method. One group was in a Media Department, with the other group based in the Environmental and Occupational Studies Department at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in South Africa.

The use of in-depth interviews in the study was to allow the researcher to probe further into the type of content both the lecturers and the students posted on the group, to understand mannerism behind the nature of engagements and the level of interaction between the lecturers and students and students with other students. Since the researcher was also part of the two WhatsApp groups, the researcher selected ten students from each group to send an interview request

on Whatsapp privately. The ten students from each group comprised active participants in the group, slightly active students, and none active group members.

The researcher privately sent out a request for an interview supported by the interview schedule to each student and the two lecturers. Out of the ten students from each group, only five of each group responded to the request, some did acknowledge receipt but could not honour it, and others did not respond. The interviews were set to be conducted face-to-face and on a one-on-one basis with each of the selected students' respondents from each group, but due to covid-19, the researcher had to conduct the interviews with the students by making use of WhatsApp. Each of the students had different challenges as far as internet and data connections are concerned.

The researcher could only conduct the interviews using WhatsApp voice notes and the time frames from each interview as students would be busy with their virtual classes and assignments during the day. The only time that the researcher had for the interviews with the students was late at night and sometimes even during midnight as some of them would be using the midnight data to connect. Unlike the students' groups, the researcher scheduled lecturers' interviews using Microsoft Teams, an online communication platform to conduct meetings, workshops, and interviews.

The interviews with the lecturers were individually conducted on Microsoft Teams, to which only the researcher and the participant were part of each interview session and were both 30-45mins long The online platform afforded the researcher the ability to make use of the platform's features by recording and securely saving each of the interview sessions with the participants. The interviews were to supplement the data gathered from the participant observation and themes that emerged from the qualitative content analysis. The interviews were supposed to have been conducted face-to-face with each of the participants. However, it was impossible due to covid-19 and the nation-wide.

4.3.4.1 The sampling for in-depth interviews

The researcher selected candidates for the in-depth interviews on active participants in the class WhatsApp groups and those who were silent for the group's participant observation process. The researcher narrowed down the sample size for the in-depth interviews to 12 participants with the lecturers included because of non-response from the students and reluctance to participate. The number of student participants for the in-depth interviews amounts to ten students interviewed for the study, five students from each WhatsApp class group.

Table 4.3.4.1 below guided the researcher in linking each of the research objectives with the questions that speak to the particular objective and research method that responded to sufficiently get meaningful results for each of the research questions in response to the goals:

Research Question	Research Objectives	Research Method
What role is social media playing in teaching and learning at a Higher Education Institution?	To investigate the role of social media in teaching and learning at a Higher Education Institution.	**Participant Observation** was conducted with the students and academics
What do students and lecturers and students and other students engage about on social media?	To examine the nature of engagements between students and lecturers using social media	**Qualitative Content Analysis** was conducted to understand what learners and academics engage about on social media
How does the use of social media shape power dynamics between students and lecturers in teaching and learning?	To determine how social media reconfigures power dynamics in teaching and learning	**In-depth interviews** was conducted, to get in-depth information on views and issues that arise during the observation.

Table 4.3.4.1:Guide in linking research objectives and questions with research methods

4.4 Data Analysis

4.4.1 Qualitative content analysis

Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017:2) state that a researcher becomes an instrumental tool in the data analysis. They make judgments on coding themes that emanate from the data collected. Data analysis is the most complex phase within a qualitative research study, rarely discussed by researchers (Nowell *et al.*, 2017:1). The study employs the use of thematic analysis as its foundational qualitative method for analysis. Nowell *et al.* (2017:2) describe thematic analysis as a qualitative research method used to analyse data that stems across epistemic and ontological research questions. It is a method that allows researchers to analyse, organise, describe and report themes emanating from the data (Nowell *et al.*, 2017:2). It is useful in providing the researcher with detailed descriptions of the data in great detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006:6).

The thematic content analysis allowed the researcher to select themes emanated from the data, using participant observation and in-depth interviews as data collection methods. The researcher derived data from the online engagements the lecturers and students had in the WhatsApp class groups. It was limited to the text messages and ranged from how the engagements took place, the level of those engagements, and the relationships between the lecturer and student engagements. Braun and Clarke (2006:6).

The researcher conducted a thematic analysis of data in two phases. Firstly, thematic analysis of data emanating from the participant observation. Secondly, the researcher analysed data the in-depth interviews. For step one of the data analysis process, the thematic content analysis allowed the researcher to go through every engagement in the WhatsApp class groups. The researcher thoroughly read them to understand the nature of the engagements and what the lecturers and students were engaging about.

The researcher looked for engagements that highlighted the roles of social media in teaching and learning. Those who spoke to the nature of engagements on the WhatsApp groups highlighted the nature of relationships between the students and the lecturers. The researcher used a research notebook to highlight each content that fed to the study's research questions. The emerging themes from the WhatsApp groups' content were divided into three themes that the researcher could link to each of the research objectives and the questions.

The in-depth interviews with students were conducted using WhatsApp voice notes. They were the only means the interviews could be conducted and data collected due to Lockdown restrictions. The lecturer interviews were conducted through the use of Microsoft Teams. Both the mentions platforms allowed the researcher to record the interviews. The researcher then transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim. The researcher recorded data from those transcriptions on an excel spreadsheet that the researcher could use to identify links with the themes emanating from the virtual ethnography.

4.5   Challenges and Students' Response Rate

For this study, only two first-year WhatsApp class groups were selected as the sample. Both are from different departments: the Media Department and the Environmental and Occupational Studies department at a selected University of Technology in South Africa. The Media Department class group had 85 students in the group, and the Environmental and Occupational Studies department class group had 33 students in its group. Both these numbers excluded the two lecturers and the researcher. The researcher was added to the groups by the two respective class lecturers. The students were also informed of the researcher's presence in the group. The researcher also introduced herself and made their presence known to the students in both groups for the participant observation.

Even though the researchers had introduced themselves, and the students were aware of their presence in the group, there was no hostility observed from the online platform's students' behaviour. Both student groups engaged with the lecturer and paid no attention to the researcher being part of the group and observing their engagements with each other. The researcher also noticed there not being a response to the introduction message of themselves posted in each group. Instead, they all continued to engage with their academic matter and classes.

Initially, the researcher had planned to conduct follow up one-on-one, face-to-face, in-depth interviews with both the lecturers and five students from each WhatsApp class group. Unfortunately, due to the covid-19 pandemic that hit the whole world South Africa was declared on Lockdown Level 5 restrictions by the president of the country, Cyril Ramaphosa; which were effective on the 26th of March 2020. As a result of these restrictions, higher education institutions were part of the locked-down institutions, and alternative modes of teaching and learning had to be effected. Social media was the only method of teaching and learning.

The researcher's initial plan was to conduct face-to-face in-depth interviews, but due to the covid-19 outbreak in the entire world; this could not be made possible. The researcher then had to send the questions to the lecturers privately via WhatsApp. Afterwards, the researcher set up Microsoft Teams meetings with each of them for the interviews. With the students, permission for the interviews had to be sought via WhatsApp and privately with each of the students identified during the WhatsApp class group engagements.

It was very challenging having to set up the interviews with students, the requests for interviews and the interview schedule was privately sent to a total of 10 students from each group. Out of the ten requests sent per group, only five from each group responded to the interview requests which were then conducted on WhatsApp by making use of voice notes. The interviews had to be conducted after hours with most students as they had data challenges and were

busy with their virtual classes and academic work during the day. Some would only be able to do the interviews at midnight to use their midnight data to connect.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher observed the ethical requirements for conducting a study from the institution and with students. The researcher approached the two lecturers from the different departments and requested permission to use their class' WhatsApp groups for the study. Mack *et al.* (2005:17) assert that the researcher must inform the participants and alert those in the power of their presence and purpose. The researcher then proceeded with a request for permission from the respective departments' faculties. Their approval was also followed by permission granted by the respective institution in which the faculties are based. After the study's ethics application was approved, the researcher was added to the lecturers' respective WhatsApp class groups and introduced themselves to the students.

The researcher informed the students about who they were, what they were doing in the group, how they would do it and why. It was done for the students to be aware of the researcher's presence in the group and to be able to advise if they felt that the researcher's presence compromised their privacy. The researcher sought permission from the selected students to conduct interviews with them and reminded them of how they had their cellphone WhatsApp numbers, which was through the WhatsApp groups that the lecturers had added the researcher for the study.

The researcher also requested permission from the students to use voice notes for the duration of the interviews. Those who had agreed to the request had done so. The researcher guaranteed confidentiality to all study participants for all research methods used to collect the data. The researcher used a personal smartphone to collect the data, and only the researcher had access to the phone. The phone that the researcher used required a biometric pass for one to be able to unlock it. The WhatsApp account used to collect data was the

researcher's account, requiring a person to use a biometric pass to gain access to the WhatsApp account. Only the fingerprint of the researcher could unlock both the phone and WhatsApp for access. The researcher kept the data on the phone's internal memory. No one else, but the researcher, could access the information.

The researcher made a personal commitment to the participant observation participants and those who took part in the in-depth interviews to ensure that anonymity is guaranteed. Mack *et al.* (2005:17) state that the researcher involved in participant observation should ensure that they maintain confidentiality with their participants, and creates no information that could easily link back to the participants. For confidentiality purposes, the researcher did not use the participants' names in the study. Also, the researcher did not include the names of lecturers and their institution.

CHAPTER FIVE
RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the research findings based on the data collected during the first phase of data collection, which was the participant observation within the two WhatsApp groups. The study's objectives were to investigate the role of social media in teaching and learning, examine the nature of engagements between students and lecturers, and determine how social media use shapes power dynamics between lecturers and students in teaching and learning. The study used two first-year WhatsApp class groups from two different departments in a university of technology as a case study. The researcher presented results according to the three themes that emerged from the data collected from the virtual ethnography through participant observation and the in-depth interviews conducted to supplement the results from the participant observation.

The themes that have emerged in the study comprise data collected during the participant observation and in-depth interviews. The three themes emerged according to the data, which speaks to both the research objectives and the study's research questions. The research objectives of the study were to investigate the role of social media in teaching and learning at a Higher Education Institution in South Africa, to examine the nature of engagements between students and lecturers using social media and to determine how does the use of social media shape power dynamics between students and lecturers in teaching and learning.

The research questions that helped the study conclude the themes discussed were finding out the role social media plays in teaching and learning in higher education institutions, what students and academics and students and other students engage about on social media. The third research question was to determine how social media use shapes power dynamics between students and lecturers in teaching and learning. The three themes discussed below are social

media's role in teaching and learning, the lecturer and student engagements on social media and power dynamics.

5.2 The role of social media in teaching and learning

The two WhatsApp class groups have given two different results on social media's role in both these groups. The one group has proven that social media plays a role in enhancing and supporting teaching and learning. Simultaneously, the other group has demonstrated that social media also plays a role in re-enforcing the banking concept. The two results are discussed below in detail on how they were affected through the WhatsApp class groups.

5.2.1 The use of social media to enhance and support teaching and learning

The lecturer used the group to improve teaching and learning during and after the virtual learning classrooms on Blackboard Collaborate. During the virtual class, the lecturer would also be active on the WhatsApp group for students who had difficulties logging in on Blackboard, students with questions during the lecturer, and those who could not log in on the platform due to connectivity or data issues. The lecturer saw this as a very constructive initiative as it encouraged students to be active participants. Figure 5.2.1a is an example of the lecturer and students assisting each other with connectivity issues experienced:
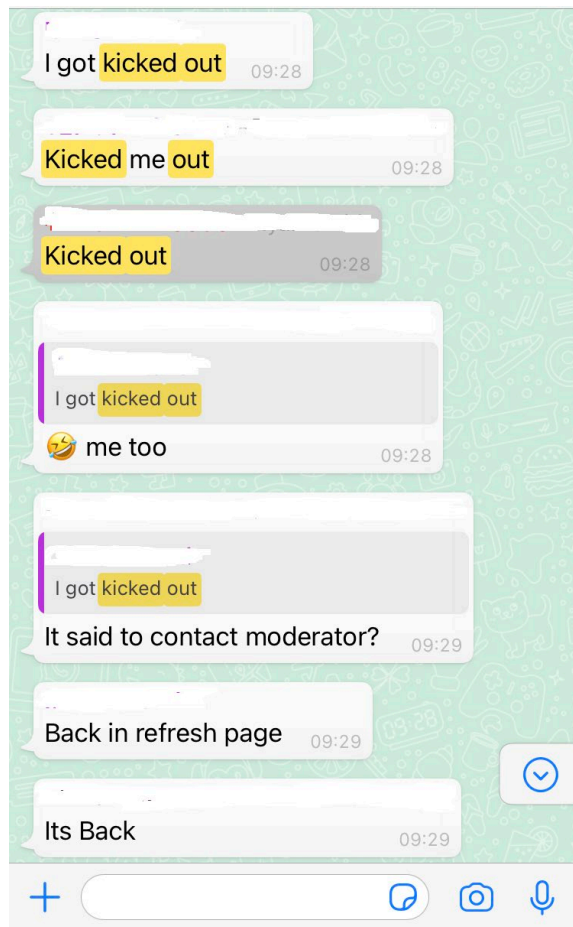
Figure 5.2.1a: Lecturer and students' connectivity issues

In this instance, the use of social media as a supportive teaching and learning tool has presented both lecturers and students with the opportunity that allows them to become co-producers of knowledge while engaging on social media. The nature of support is that students can freely engage with the lecturer after Blackboard Collaborate classes on the WhatsApp class groups. They assist each other on subject matters they could not understand during the lecture, such as sharing notes and how they reached answers to their calculations. Figure 5.2.1b below gives a clear indication of the peer to peer support between the students:
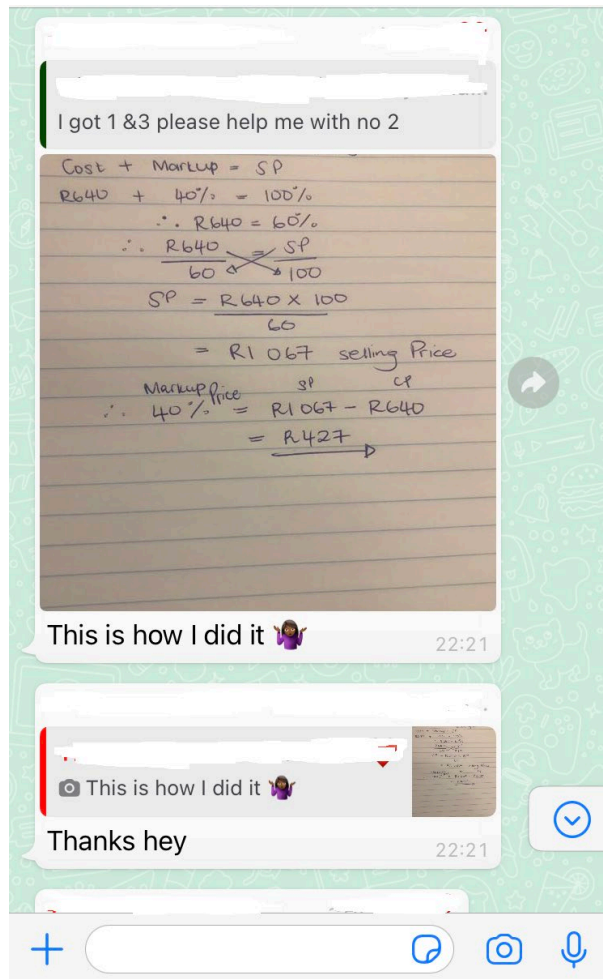
Figure 5.2.1b: Peer to peer learning support

Francis and Hardman (2018:77) assert that social media use in teaching and learning allows for a teacher and learner's respective roles to shift. The lecturer and student roles are dismantled to correct the lecturer should he contradict himself within the group. Social media has given them the ability to express themselves in their engagements with the lecturer freely. Figure 5.2.1d gives an example of when the lecturer was giving the student a different alternative in re-writing a test as was agreed on Blackboard Collaborate:
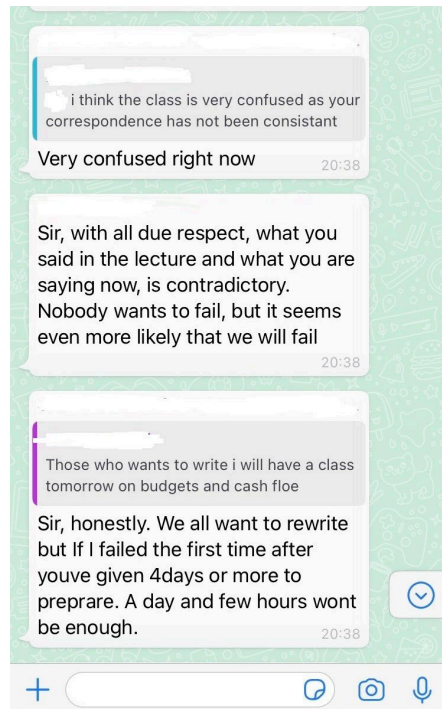
Figure 5.2.1c: The lecturer and student roles are dismantled

According to Freire (2000), it is only through dialogues that communication may take place and without communication, there can be no true education. The research findings have shown that the students can do more research in line with the lecturer's topic during class and ask questions for more clarity. During the in-depth interviews, the lecturer revealed that students were doing more research based on the subject matters he presents in class; which made him feel intimidated. It portrayed students as more knowledgeable than expected. The insert below is an example of what the lecturer had said during the interview:

"I am happy though I feel intimidated, I am happy when I pick up that students are researching what I am teaching them while teaching them. And as I said, yes it's intimidating. Still, it's a nice feeling to know that you are teaching students not just to accept what you are talking about, you are not giving them the fish you are giving them the fishing rod in that they are now learning and having the ability to learn on their own."

45

The use of Web 2.0 tools such as social media has provided the users with an opportunity to participate in co-construction of knowledge and has also given them control over their knowledge and are also contributing during the class (Eijkman, 2009:250). David (2009:42) also asserts that there is so much power in Web 2.0 that also gives the students the benefit of being co-creators of knowledge and learning. The WhatsApp group has created an inclusive environment where students can engage with the lecturer. In most cases, the engagements were not favouring the content that the lecturer has posted in the WhatsApp group.

An example of this would be the lecturer changing tests dates without consultation with the students, proposing different submission deadlines instead of those initially agreed upon during a virtual class session, and giving students an incorrect test paper to write. It means that the power has been dispersed to students and students are more able to engage with the lecturer and reflect on what the lecturer says and critically think and make decisions.

Contrary to what the students had to say during the in-depth interviews, the participant observation showed that students were very conscious of the group's subject matters. The students were willing participants in conversations on the course content, and the primary purpose was to understand course content and the subject itself. On its own, social media, particularly the WhatsApp class group, has created an environment that supported dialogic communication between the students and the lecturer. The students became co-producers of knowledge and were very conscious of their environment. They were willingly expressing their experiences with the subject lecturer and the subject itself.

5.2.1.1 Social media as a tool that re-enforces the banking concept of education

Social media has also emerged as a tool that also re-enforces the banking concept in teaching and learning. According to Freire (2000), the banking concept is whereby the learners are seen as passive empty receptacles, with lecturers as depositors of information such as course content, writing of tests, submission of assignments, and knowledge to the recipients; which in this case are the students. The lecturer in this particular group would post information on what the next submission deadlines were, what students were expected to do, and assist on how to find academic information on Blackboard. Figure 5.2.1.1a gives an example of the content posted by the lecturer on the group:
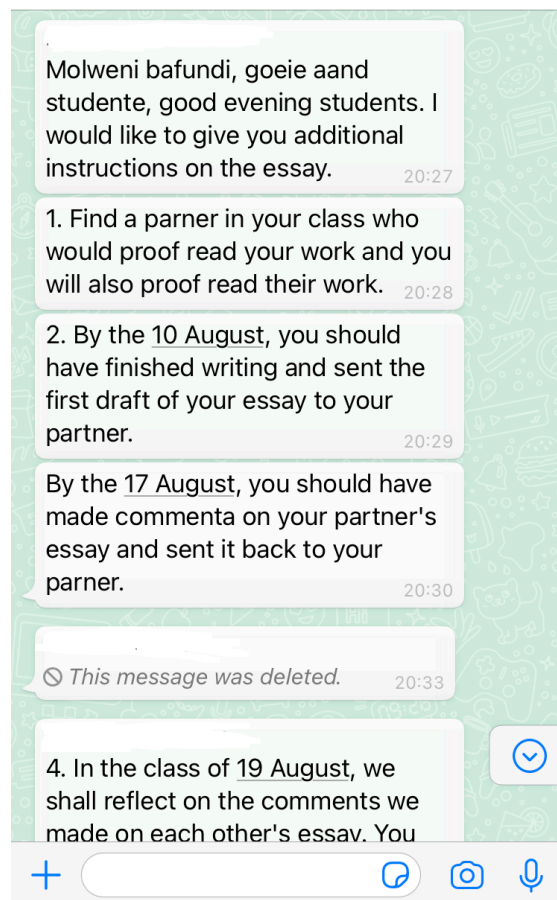

Figure 5.2.1.1a: The engagements between the lecturer and the students on WhatsApp

In this group, social media has become a traditional physical classroom in an online platform, where only a few students would ask questions and seek clarity. Figure 5.2.1.1a below gives an example where a student asks the lecturer about an outstanding task that should be submitted.
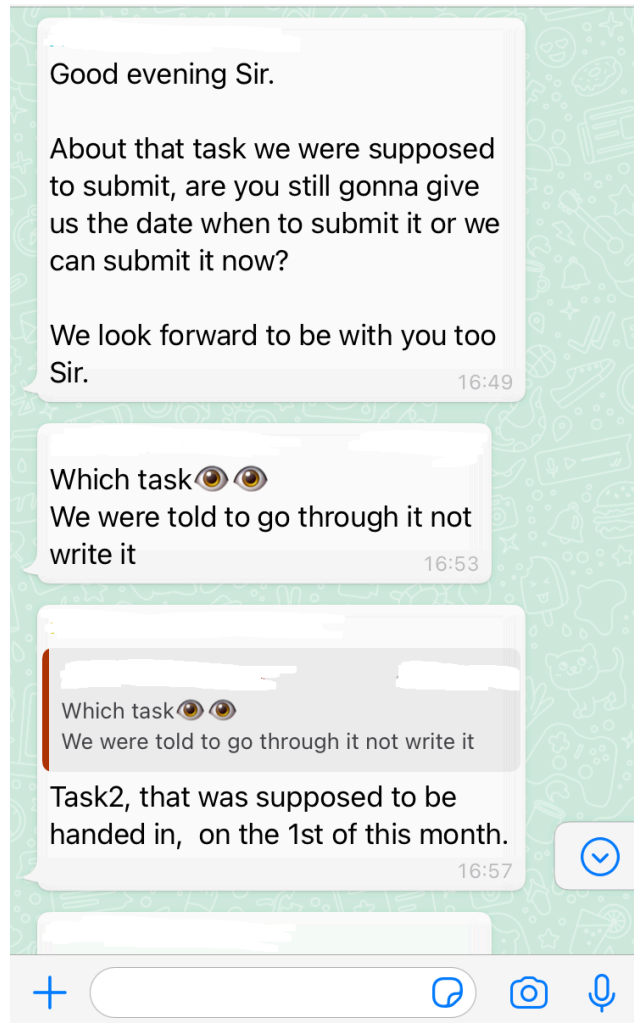
Figure 5.2.1.1b: An example of students asking the lecturer about the submission of tasks

This has given the platform that of the traditional setting, where only a few students would also participate in tasks whereby every student is expected to participate actively. The graph below explains the students' participation rate in the group compared to the number of students in the WhatsApp class group. Isah and Omori (2015:50) opine that the teachers issue a communique instead of communicating with the students in the banking education concept. The criticism that has been directed at the banking concept is that of the banking concept not allowing students to "challenge, think, explicate, hypothesize or

interrogate" but rather to ensure that more course content and the curriculum has been covered (Isah and Omori, 2015:55).

Group B Students

- Students in the group
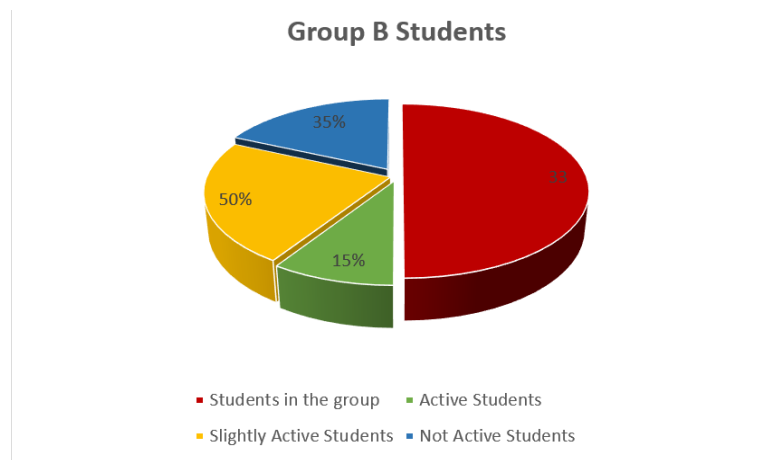- Active Students
- Slightly Active Students
- Not Active Students

35%
50%
15%
33

Figure 5.2.1.1c: The number of Group B Students

The pie chart above, Figure 5.2.1.1b gives a clear background regarding the number of students in WhatsApp class group B. The red pie slice indicates the number of students that were part of the group. The other smaller pieces of the pie are numbers of how many students were active in the group represented by the red pie slice indicating a total number of 33 students in the group, those who were slightly active, and those who were not active. This research refers to students who are not as active as those who were reflected as members of the group, but were not saying anything in the group, either to other students or the lecturer.

The students referred to as slightly active would post once or twice in response to what a fellow student said or what the lecturer said in the group. The slightly active comprised 50% of the number of students in the group. Students referred to as active are those who respond to what the lecturer says and participate in activities done in the WhatsApp class group; these students comprise 15% of the WhatsApp class group. There are also students that the research refers to them as non-active students, which in the context of the study were the students

that were reflected as members of the group but were the silent ones. These students comprised 35% of the WhatsApp class group.

The breakdown of these figures assumes that the non-active students are according to Freire (2000) those in which the banking concept has created room for them to be silent, to accept the information deposited in them as recipients regardless of the dichotomy that may exist in its contents. According to Ng'ambi *et al.* (2012:354) the use of emerging technologies in higher education, with WhatsApp being one of them, have been used to more transformative teaching and learning practices; which are also reproducing the traditional teaching and learning practices.

5.2.2 Lecturer and student engagements on social media

The nature of engagements between the lecturer and the students, as well as students with other students. The research question for the engagements objective was to determine what the students and lecturers and students with other students engage about on social media. The nature of engagements in both groups was that of academic purposes as engagements stemmed from the Blackboard Collaborate classes the students had with their lecturer. Figure 5.2.2 below is an example of the nature of engagements between the lecturer and students on social media.
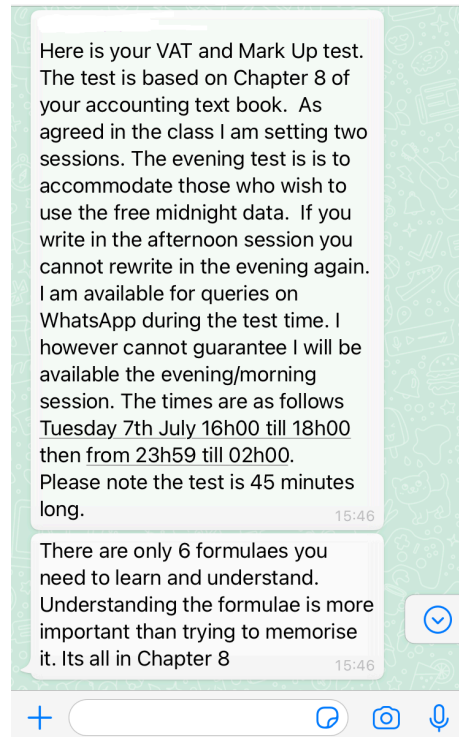
Figure 5.2.2a: The nature of engagements between the lecturer and students

For example, students would also use the group to ask questions about tests, assignments, and share notes. The lecturers would post announcements in the groups when they will have a class or announce the change of times for their classes and or cancel a class.

In Group A, the lecturer used the group to express disappointment in the number of students who would fail tests and assignments. There would be engagements between the lecturer and students that would probe the cause of the rate of failure in a test or assignment, and the students would point it out to the lecturer as to why they failed a certain test and by also indicating unfairness by the lecturer on the sections set on the test papers. It refers to the dialogic communication between the lecturer and students, which social media have enhanced in the teaching and learning practice. Wang and Yang (2020) also

assert that social media provides a platform for creating and building dialogic relationships between people and organisations.

The WhatsApp group with this group, in particular, Group A, afforded the students with the opportunity to inform the lecturer of their concerns with the subject as a whole and the new learning method. With the covid-19 pandemic striking the world and resulting in South Africa being on level 5 restrictions; which prompted all businesses, schools, and higher learning institutions to close down during the effected restrictions, students had to shift to virtual to continue with their learning.

Figure 5.2.2b: No students will be left behind

Figure 5.2.2b above is an example of students' engagements where they voice their concerns regarding more time needed for learning and understanding subject matters. The WhatsApp group allowed them to inform the lecturer how they felt they should be given more time to learn and understand the subject itself as many were coming across it for the first time and to which they quoted the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Dr Blade Nzimaned as saying "no student will be left behind".

The level of engagement between the lecturer and students has created a room for students to feel more comfortable and engage in the group, which has also led to introducing some informality between the students and the lecturer. The informality comes in referring to the lecturer as Mr Criddy or Criddy in the WhatsApp class group, showing that the power dynamics have been dismantled and power has been dispersed to students promotes horizontal communication with one another. This is well defined by Freire's (2000) definition of dialogic pedagogy where the relationship between the lecturer and students is built on mutual trust, and the case of this group social media created an environment for this to take place.

Group A was also as diverse as Group B as far as race and culture are concerned, and the rules of the group stated clearly that no language would be spoken in the group except for English. The language issues link to decolonisation as per Eijkman's (2009:250) assertion on social media tools that easily allow users to engage in dialogue "about the form as well as the content of learning and incorporate diverse socio-cultural perspectives. In Group A, you would find several students who would go against such rules by speaking their mother tongue and also give the impression that they were discussing an assignment or subject matters and claimed that they would be of better understanding if explained in their mother tongue, which was isiXhosa. When one was to go back to those engagements, you would find that they talked about fellow students in the group and the lecturer included.

When students were feeling the pressure about a certain submission that was due, they would post using remarks such as "anithule, caba niyapasa" which in English translates to "the way you are so silent suggests that you are passing" which only the Xhosa speaking group and a few others would understand what is meant. In some instances, the students would engage among themselves about a test that they were busy writing on Blackboard and its difficulties, followed by expressions like "SAGOWI" supported by crying emojis and translating in English means "I'm dying".
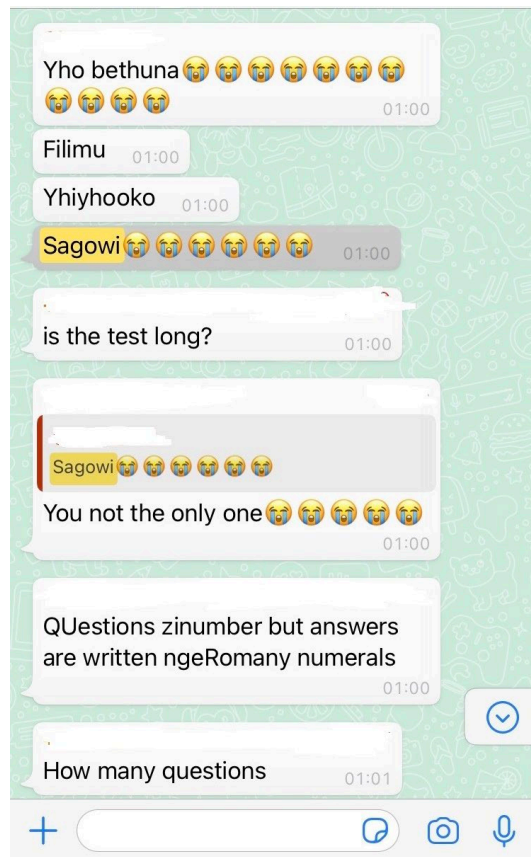
Figure 5.2.2c: IsiXhosa expressions among students based on a test written

The lecturer also engaged with students with regards to times that students would have to write a test. Many students had complained about low connectivity issues in the group, with some experiencing Eskom's load-shedding and others having data issues. The lecturer saw to it that the tests would be written twice a day, those who were comfortable with writing in the afternoon would do so and then those who were satisfied with writing at midnight would also do. The students would write the same test though it was at different times, the lecturer would set time on the availability of the test, and once that time was over, the students would be automatically kicked out.

In Group B, the lecturer's engagements are strictly professional and academic; whereby the lecturer is called by their surname or referred to as Sir. The students only ask questions that are academically related to their tasks and or assignments, which would be to find assignment instructions, submit a task and

when the next class would be. The study results showed that the students all saw their relationship with the lecturer as strictly professional and nothing engaged outside the scope of academics. No personal matters were discussed unless a student needs clarity or more information based on the lecturer's presentation during the class.

Though the engagements were centred around the lecturer posting content in the group, the students have shown that they were freer when interacting with the lecturer online. They may not have necessarily posed questions or sought clarity in the group, but they asked the lecturer questions privately. The nature of these engagements relates to a dialogic pedagogy where communication between them and the lecturer is horizontal and promotes deep learning where students are critically conscious of their knowledge, reflections and actions.

5.2.3 Power relations in teaching and learning

Palmer and de Klerk (2012:70) describe power relations as a form of existence that reaches almost every individual, influencing their actions and attitudes and learning processes of their everyday lives. Its primary purpose is to prevent others from becoming participants in decision-making processes, ensuring their passive agreements in situations (Palmer and de Klerk, 2012:70).

The power relations theme emerged from the third research question, which seeks to answer how social media shapes power dynamics between students and lecturers within the two specific WhatsApp groups. Traditional power relations have become more pervious as students' voices are getting more audience through social media use (Francis and Hardman, 2018:66). Social media can disrupt traditional power relations in teaching and learning (Francis and Hardman, 2018:67). In one group, social media as a teaching and learning method has decentralised power between the lecturer and the students.

The use of the WhatsApp group for communication and learning purposes has built far more mutual relationships between the students and the lecturer in such a way that when one would read the engagements on the WhatsApp group and also compare it to a traditional classroom setting, there would be a big difference between the two settings. Rambe (2012:132) asserts that using social media platforms as knowledge-centred learning environments where dialogic communication and academic behaviour are sustained, they present opportunities for deep learning engagements.

The results show that the role of social media in teaching and learning, in Group B, was to re-enforce the banking concept; whereby the lecturer is the most producer of content in the group. Students would then respond to the information posted in the group by the lecturer by thanking him or agreeing to what is being said by either the lecturer or in response to the other students' responses to the lecturer. The in-depth interviews supported the participant observation findings as students also raised the concern that they still preferred the traditional classroom environment instead of the virtual environment.

In Group A, the student and lecturer engagements were also academically oriented; but they were very informal when communicating to their lecturer and fellow students compared to Group B. The researcher could tell that there was an understanding between the lecturer and his students within the WhatsApp class group, representing the dialogic pedagogy as students were freer to engage with the lecturer in this platform. Freire's (2000) characterisation of the dialogical pedagogy in education consisted of enabling both students and the lecturer to be critical of their relationships with the world. Both are consciously aware of themselves as subjects and to liberate themselves.

The online platform gave the students more freedom to express themselves and also challenge the lecturer. In one of the WhatsApp engagements between the lecturer and the students, the lecturer had mistakenly sent a message meant for another group to Group A students. The students challenged the lecturer and even informed him that what has been posted in the WhatsApp class group is

not what was agreed upon during the virtual class. The lecturer eventually acknowledged his mistake in the group.

The challenge of the informality that comes with the online platform is the disrespect that occurs amongst students in the lecturer's presence. Though the rules of the group state clearly that the language to be used is strictly English, you would find students making use of isiXhosa who in their conversation talking about the other students in their presence and since they do not understand they would lie about discussing the subject matter in their mother tongue so they can understand more of what is required of them to do. This behaviour frustrated those who did not understand the language and resulted in insinuations made regarding other students.

In particular cases like this one, the lecturer exercised his powers as a lecturer and reprimanded the students involved by removing them from the class WhatsApp group. The students involved were put in "quarantine", which is a term that refers to punishing students by removing them from the group for a week and be added again after the quarantine period. The lecturer advised that during the "quarantine" period he conducts one-on-one sessions on Microsoft Teams with each student and the class representatives. During this process, the lecturer recorded the online meetings as proof of the student's engagement at fault, the lecturer, and the class representatives. The students were given verbal warnings for their behaviour in the class group and added after a quarantine week.

The lecturer described the WhatsApp class group environment as one that has drastically reduced his power as a lecturer on social media, but would still encourage students to research subject matters discussed during his class presentations. This, students, took as an initiative to become co-producers of knowledge and learning more than they are being taught as they would ask questions based on the subject matter presented by the lecturer, which the lecturer described as one that could be embarrassing and intimidating if a lecturer is not up to speed with their subject matter.

In the WhatsApp class group, the environment was less hierarchical, and the students are more formal with themselves and with the lecturer based on the students being freer to engage with the lecturer. This environment came with a level of informality amongst the students when referring to their lecturer. They would call him Sir and in some cases even Mr Criddy or Criddy, which they would never do in a traditional classroom setting.

> *"I have seen that I have been referred to as Mr Criddy, I've been referred to as Criddy which they would never dare do face-to-face."*

The extract above is from an interview with a lecturer regarding the informality of the WhatsApp class group. The students' level of informality and expressiveness in the WhatsApp class group was that of a carnival setting. All forms of hierarchy that existed in a traditional classroom setting were dismantled, and rules in the WhatsApp class group were as important as those of a traditional setting. According to Bakhtin (1984), in a carnival, the King is stripped of his powers and becomes equal to all those in attendance. Dialogue is promoted to which only truth may be told regardless of the King and his subjects' existing power dynamics.

In this study, the King was the lecturer, and his subjects were the students, and the WhatsApp class group was the carnival. The students were able to say no to the lecturer and challenge his decisions on dates provided on when tests would be written and were also able to express their unhappiness based on the scope provided for the tests. The WhatsApp classroom provided the students with the opportunity to inform the lecturer when they were not happy about how a paper was set. They even voiced their concerns based on a test that was incorrectly set and not meant for them.

The informal engagements between the lecturer and the students indicate horizontal power relations, which are different from the traditional teaching concept (banking concept). According to Ramcilovic-Suominen and Kotilainen (2020:3), horizontal power relations are social and cultural norms, including socially constructed habits that evolve within the environments that they have been constructed in. The horizontal power relations are produced during engagements with individuals in the same group level (Ramcilovic-Suominen and Kotilainen, 2020:3). These horizontal power relations have taken place during the interactions with the lecturer and students where the social media platform has created room for equality.

Students are supposed to be passive, empty receptacles to be filled with knowledge, but social media as a tool in teaching and learning; has equipped students to be active participants in a process through which they have also become co-producers of knowledge. Horizontal power relations promoted horizontal communication, which, according to Beigi and Mozayani (2016:165) is a flow of messages exchanged by members within the same level in the particular group or organisation. Horizontal communication also allows people to directly communicate with each other without having to through another person to reach the other, which further promotes participation and interaction between members (Beigi and Mozayani, 2016:165).

The horizontal power relations and horizontal communication speak to the WhatsApp class group for Group A. Their communication with their lecturer was horizontal in the sense that power has been dispersed to students. The actual environment was less hierarchical due to the lecturer being more accessible and the environment's informality.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The study sought to analyse social media's role in teaching and learning at a higher education institution in South Africa. To be able to seek results to the research problem, the study was guided by three objectives which were to: (i) investigate the role of social media in teaching and learning, (ii) examine the nature of engagements between students and lecturers on social media, (iii) and to determine how social media is reconfiguring power dynamics between students and lecturers.

6.2 Conclusion

The study sought to investigate social media's role in teaching and learning, examine the nature of engagements between students and lecturers using social media, and determine how social media reconfigures power dynamics between students and lecturers. The research comparison between the two first-year groups has shown that social media play a role in teaching and learning in a higher education institution, supporting and enhancing teaching and learning and promoting deep learning.

The first research objective was to investigate social media in teaching and learning at a Higher Education Institution in South Africa. The research question that spoke to this objective asks what role social media plays in teaching and learning in higher education institutions. Therefore, based on the two WhatsApp groups used for this study; in one group the role of social media was to support and enhance deep learning, which according to Filius, de Kleijn, Uijl, Prins, van Riejn and Grobbee (2018:113) is learning through which learners are encouraged to ask questions and critically think, while in the other group its role was to re-enforce the banking concept.

Deep learning occurs through mutual connections of new and previous knowledge and experiences (Archer-Kuhn, Wiedeman and Chalifoux (2020:107). When students' experiences, reflections, and critical thinking are integrated to respond to a learning condition, deep learning occurs (Archer-Kuhn *et al.*, 2020:109). It was used as an enhancing tool in teaching and learning through which students and the lecturer engaged while they were in a virtual classroom environment called Blackboard Collaborate.

Social media as an enhancing and supporting tool created room for the lecturer and students to become co-producers of knowledge through the engagements that took place on the WhatsApp group during class, and also allowed students to be champions of their learning by researching the lecturer's presentation on a subject matter for that particular day. It allowed students to challenge and question the lecturer's decisions and how things were done by the lecturer, e.g. the unhappiness on how a test was set.

In the other group, we saw social media re-enforcing the banking concept; where students were only responding to the information posted by the lecturer in the group, or participate in tasks that the lecturer would facilitate in the group. It also re-enforced so that students would only engage in response to what the lecturer had posted in the group, which would either be an announcement on submission deadlines and or when they would be writing a test or having a class. The second objective study was also achieved by examining the nature of engagements between students and lecturers using social media; which spoke to the research question of students and academics and students, and other students engage about on social media.

The lecturers and students' engagements were strictly academic in both groups. They all ranged from announcements on test and assignments, preparation for the next lesson and challenges faced during a test, or an assignment and generally with the subject. In one WhatsApp class group, social media created a room for dialogic communication between the lecturer and the students. The students were comfortable with the lecturer because there was a level of

informality between the lecturer and the students. The informality level was in the form of referring to the lecturer as Mr Criddy or Criddy in the WhatsApp group engagements. Regardless of the informality level in the group, those who were found violating the group's rules would be put in "quarantine" by the lecturer.

The research concludes that social media plays a role in reconfiguring power dynamics between lecturers and students in a teaching and learning environment. The third research objective sought to determine how social media reconfigures power dynamics between students and lecturers, linked to the research question on how does social media shape power dynamics between students and lecturers in teaching and learning. In the WhatsApp class group, the lecturer had power, but it was also dispersed to students, and the lecturer was no longer inaccessible to students. It created a platform where students were active participants and engaged in dialogues with the lecturer, which resulted in horizontal communication and power relations.

Social media plays a role in enhancing and supporting teaching and learning. The research findings showed that social media allows students to become co-producers of knowledge while engaging with each other on social media. The nature of support comprises students' ability to engage freely on the platform, assist each other on subject matters, and share course content. The lecturer and students' roles are destroyed as students could also inform the lecturer on inconsistencies with the information provided to them by the lecturer.

The students and academics and students and other students engaged on various issues which ranged from class presentations on BlackBoard, tests that were going to be written and discussions on upcoming assignments. The engagements also included feedback on tests already written, and the WhatsApp group served as a platform for students to engage with the lecturer on such matters directly. These engagements were academically oriented though there was a level of informality when they engaged with the lecturer and other students. The students and lecturer understood their relationship within the

WhatsApp class group and its primary purpose; they were also free to engage with the lecturer and their peers. The lecturer and students' engagements enabled them to be critical of their relationships within the group. They were consciously aware of their engagements.

Social media shaped power dynamics between students and lecturers in teaching and learning by dismantling power dynamics between the lecturers and students. It decentralised power between the lecturer and students and built far more mutual relationships between the students and the lecturer and created horizontal communication. The horizontal communication between the lecturer and students also caused a disperse of power to students due to the environment's informality and the lecturer being more accessible to students.

6.3 Recommendations and areas of further research

Similar research at traditional universities and other universities of technology would help see whether there would be any similarities and or differences to what the study has found. It would also be of great benefit to the research area of social media use in Higher Education Institutions in South Africa to also look into a different audience and different social media platforms as opposed to the first-year group used in the study as an audience and the social media platform used in this study, WhatsApp. The study was also limited by covid-19 challenges that the students were mostly facing, which ranged from connectivity issues and data issues; maybe if a similar study could be conducted in different times as that of the 2020 academic year, the student response would be much better than it was for the duration of the study.

The study focused on a first-year group level, further research into a different focus group that comprises third-year class and possibly postgraduates; would add to the knowledge of the use of social media in teaching and learning at higher education institutions in South Africa and abroad.

REFERENCES

Almeida, S and Kumalo, S.H. 2018. (De)coloniality through Indigeneity: Deconstructing Calls to Decolonise in the South African and Canadian University Contexts. *Education as Change*, 22(1):21.

Amaral, A., Jones, G.A. & Karseth, B. 2002. Higher Education Dynamics: Governing Higher Education.

Anderson, R., 2007. Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). *Descriptive Presentation of Qualitative Data*, 1.

Archer-Kuhn, B., Wiedeman, D. and Chalifoux, J. 2020. Student Engagement and Deep Learning in Higher Education: Reflections on Inquiry-Based Learning on Our Group Study Program Course in the UK. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, *24*(2):107-122.

Bamigboye, O.O and Olusesan, A.A. 2017. An Analysis on Impact of Social Media for Learning in Eastern Cape Universities, South Africa. *International Journal for Education Sciences*, 17(1-3):69.

Beige, A & Mozayani, N. 2016. Dialogue strategy for horizontal communication in MAS organisation. *Computational and Mathematical Organisation Theory*, 22(2):165.

Bento, M., Martinez, L.M. & Martinez, L.F., 2018. Brand Engagement and Search for Brands o Social Media: Comparing Generations X and Y in Portugal. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 48:236.

Bhattacherjee, A., 2012. Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices.

Bolton, R.N, Parasuraman, A., Hoefnagels, A., Migchels, N., Kabadayi, S., Gruber, T., Komarova Loureiro, Y. and Solnet, D. 2013. Understanding Generation Y and their use of social media: A Review and Research Agenda. *Journal of Service Management*, 24(3):6

Bosch, T. 2009. Using social networking for teaching and learning: Facebook use at the University of Cape Town. *Communicatio*, 35(2):194.

Boyd, D.M. & Ellison, N.B., 2007. Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-mediated Communication*, 13(1):210-211.

Braun, V & Clarke, V. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2).

Chawinga, W.D., 2017. Taking social media to a university classroom: teaching and learning using Twitter and blogs. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 14(1):1.

Chugh, R., Grose, R. and Macht, S.A., 2020. Social media usage by higher education academics: A scoping review of the literature. *Education and Information Technologies*, 2.

Chugh, R. and Ruhi, U., 2017. Social media in higher education: A literature review of Facebook. *Education and Information Technologies*, 23:607.

Cilliers, E.J., 2017. The Challenge of Teaching Generation Z. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1):190.

Consultancy UK, 2015. Generation Y less satisfied than other generations. https://www.consultancy.uk/news/2061/generation-y-less-satisfied-than-other-generations [20 June 2020]

Creswell, W. J., 2014. *Research Design 4th Ed*: *Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approach*. London. Sage

David, J. C., 2009. New Friend Request: The Relationship between Web 2.0 and Higher Education. *Journal of Student Affairs*, XIX:42.

Desai, S.P. & Lele, V. 2017. Correlating Internet, Social Networks and Workplace – a Case of Generation Z Students. *Journal of Commerce & Management Thought*, 8(4):807-808.

Drury, G., 2008. Opinion Piece: Social Media: Should Marketers Engage and How Can it Be Done Effectively? *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 9(3):274.

Eijkman, H., 2009. Using Web 2.0 to Decolonise Transcultural Learning Zones in Higher Education. *Campus-Wide Information Systems*, 26(3):240-250.

Filius, R.M., de Kleijn, R., Uijl, S. & Prins, F.J. 2018. Challenges concerning deep learning in SPOCs. *International Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning*, 10(1/2):113.

Francis, S and Hardman, J. 2018. #RhodesMustFall: Using Social Media to "Decolonise" Learning Spaces for South African Higher Education Institutions: A Cultural Historical Activity Theory Approach. *South African Journal for Higher Education*, 32(4):66-79.

Freire, P., 2000. Pedagogy of the Oppressed 30th edition. *Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York/London: Continuum, 2007 (first published 1970)*

Habib, A., 2019. *Rebels and rage: Reflecting on# FeesMustFall*. Jonathan Ball Publishers.

Heleta, S., 2016. Decolonisation of Higher Education: Dismantling epistemic violence and Eurocentrism in South Africa. *Transformation in Higher Education*, 1(1):4

Higgs, P. 2012. African Philosophy and the Decolonisation of Education in Africa: Some critical reflections. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44(S2):39-52.

Innes, R.B., 2007. Dialogic communication in collaborative problem-solving groups. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1(1).

Isah, A. and Omori, A.E., 2015, July. The Banking Concept of Education and the Use of Technology in Tertiary Instructional Delivery for Relevance at the Global Scene. In the *International Academic Conference on Social Sciences*. 50-55.

Kamanzi, B., 2015. "Rhodes Must Fall" – Decolonisation symbolism – What is happening at UCT, South Africa? The Postcolonialist. http://postcolonialist.com/civil-discourse/rhodes-must-falldecolonisation-symbolism-happening-uct-south-africa/ [23 October 2019]

Keet, A., 2014. Epistemic 'Othering' and the Decolonisation of Knowledge. *Africa Insight*, 44(1):24-35.

Khoza, S.B. and Biyela, A.T. 2019. Decolonising technological pedagogical content knowledge of first-year mathematics students. *Education and Information Technologies*, 25:2665-2667.

Kietzmann, J.H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I.P. & Silvestre, B.S., 2011. Social Media? Get Serious! Understanding the Functional Blocks of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 54(3):241-251.

Ladhari, R., Gonthier, J. & Lajante, M., 2019. Generation Y and Online Fashion Shopping: Orientations and Profiles. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 48:114.

La Grange, L. 2016. Decolonising the University Curriculum. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 30(2):3.

Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K.M., Guest, G. & Namey, E. 2005. *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide*. Family Health International (USA).

Makwambeni, B., 2017. Zimbabwe dancehall music as a site of resistance. In *Music as a Platform for Political Communication*. 244.

Manca, S. & Ranieri, M., 2016. Facebook and others. Potentials and Obstacles of Social Media for teaching in Higher Education. *Computers & Education*, 95:217

Mangold, W.G. & Faulds, D.J., 2009. Social media: The New Hybrid of the Promotion Mix. *Business Horizons*, 52:358.

Matsilele, T., 2013. The political role of the diaspora media in the mediation of the Zimbabwean crisis: a case study of The Zimbabwean-2008 to 2010 (Masters dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2013).

Mare, A. and Matsilele, T., 2020. Hybrid Media System and the July 2018 Elections in "Post-Mugabe" Zimbabwe. In Social Media and Elections in Africa, 1:147-176. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Matsilele, T., 2019. Social media dissidence in Zimbabwe (Doctoral dissertation, University of Johannesburg).

Matsilele, T. and Ruhanya, P., 2020. Social media dissidence and activist resistance in Zimbabwe. Media, Culture & Society, p.0163443720957886.

Miller, A.C. & Mills, B. 2019. 'If They Don't Care, I Don't Care': Millenial and Generation Z Students and the Impact of Faculty Caring. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 19(4):79.

Miraja, B.A., Persada, S.F., Prasetyo, Y.T., Belgiawan, P.F. & Perwira, A.A.N. 2019. Applying Protection Motivation Theory to Understand Generation Z Students Intention to Comply with Educational Software Anti Piracy Law. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 14(18):41.

Mohr, K.A.J & Mohr, E.S., 2017. Understanding Generation Z Students to Promote a Contemporary Learning Environment. *Journal on Empowering Teaching Excellence*, 1(1):87.

Murire, O.T. & Cilliers, L. 2017. Social media adoption among lecturers at a traditional university in Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. *South African Journal of Information Management*, 19(1):1.

Mutsvairo, B., 2018. Mapping social media trajectories in Zimbabwe. The Routledge Companion to Media and Activism.

Mutsvairo, B. and Rønning, H. 2020. The Janus face of social media and democracy? Reflections on Africa. Media, Culture & Society, 42(3):317-328.

Nakata, N.M., Nakata, V., Keech, S. & Bolt, R. 2012. Decolonial goals and pedagogies for the Indigenous Studies. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1):124.

Ng'ambi, D., Brown, C., Bozalek, V., Gachago, D. & Wood, D., 2016. Technology-enhanced teaching and learning in South African higher education – A review of a 20-year journey. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 47(5):844.

Ng'ambi, D., Gachago, D., Ivala, E., Bozalek, V. & Watters, K., 2012, June. Emerging Technologies in South African Higher Education Institutions: towards a teaching and learning practice framework. In *International Conference on e-Learning*. Academic Conferences International Limited

Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E. & Moules, N.J. 2017. Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16:2.

Oelofsen, R. 2015. Decolonisation of the African Mind and Intellectual Landscape. *Phronimon*, 16(2):131.

Parker, P.S, Smith, S.H & Dennison, J. 2017. Decolonising the classroom. *TIJDSCRIFT Voor GenderStudies*, 20(3):233-235.

Rambe, P. and Chipunza, C., 2013. Using mobile devices to leverage student access to collaboratively-generated resources: A case of WhatsApp instant messaging at a South African University. In *2013 International Conference on Advanced ICT and Education (ICAICTE-13)*. Atlantis Press.

Ramcilovic-Suominen, S. and Kotilainen, J., 2020. Power relations in community resilience and the politics of shifting cultivation in Laos. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 115:3.

Sayan, H., 2016. Affecting higher students learning activity by using WhatsApp. *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences*, 4(3):88.

Scotland, J., 2012. Exploring the Philosophical Underpinnings of Research: Relating Ontology and Epistemology to the Methodology and Methods of the Scientific, Interpretive, and Critical Research Paradigms. *English Language Teaching*, 5(9):11

Seemiller, C. & Grace, M., 2017. Generation Z: Educating and Engaging the Next Generation of Students. *About Campus*, 22(3):21.

Shih, Y., 2018. Rethinking Paulo Freire's Dialogic Pedagogy and Its Implications for Teachers' Teaching. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 7(4).

Singh, J.P. 2008. Paulo Freire: Possibilities for Dialogic Communication in a Market-Driven Information Age. *Information, Communication & Society*, 11(5):702-706.

Virii, A., 2012. Cultural diversity and the Zimbabwean Pungwe as a Carnival Space: A Comparison with the Brazilian Carnivalesque Experience. *Latin American Report*, 28(1):283.

Wang, Y. and Yang, Y. 2020. Dialogic communication on social media: How organizations use Twitter to build dialogic relationships with their publics. *Computers in Human Behavior, 104*.

Yin, L.C., 2016. Adoption of WhatsApp instant messaging among students in Ipoh Higher Education Institutions. *Retrieved*, 1(25):2018.

APPENDIX

Interview Guide

An analysis of the role of social media in teaching and learning at a Higher Education Institution in South Africa

Participant's name:

Gender and Age:

Date and Time of Interview:

Interview Duration:

Place of Interview:

Faculty and Level of Study:

Question 1

How would you describe your relationship with the lecturer and or students on social media?

Question 2

Are your interactions online similar with the offline interactions? If so, how? And if not, how so?

Question 3

Is there information that you censor on social media or you are more free when interacting online?

Question 4

Other than technological aspects, what are the sociological and psychological factors on using social media?

Question 5

What do you consider to be the aesthetic of social media?