



Curriculum Enablement and Posthumanism: Pathways for Creating and Implementing a Community Development Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that the application of transcendent disciplinarity as a lens for critical inquiry and curriculum enablement is urgent in a posthuman era. The paper asserts that a curriculum must be responsive to societal needs by providing students with a "toolbox" for developing functional and productive societies. The community development degree is pedagogically premised on utilising multiple disciplinary synergies primed for analytically and practically improving the human condition. The article uses critical terms in posthumanism, such as relationality, resilience, and sustainable communities, to evoke a return to the local by analysing the creation and implementation of a responsive community development curriculum. Through pedagogical approaches that infuse collaborative and cooperative learning with active learning strategies, we argue that the community development curriculum should be structured to enhance the capabilities of students to assist communities in adapting and transcending to transformation. This paper followed a systematic literature review of journal articles extracted from SCOPUS, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and EBSCOhost electronic databases. A final sample of twenty-four articles was reviewed, analysed, and presented using ATLAS.ti flow chart diagrams. The study's findings revealed that posthumanism-inspired transformation normatively conceives the earth as a connected entity and places as entangled and interconnected. The article further interrogates how the posthuman approach can be used to create and implement pathways for curriculum enablement.

KEYWORDS

Posthumanism; curriculum enablement; collaboration; relationality.

INTRODUCTION

Posthumanism is an essentially contested concept that provides openings to think differently about how humans are conceived, not as non-exceptional but entwined with other beings (Erstad et al., 2021; MacDonald et al., 2016). However, creating new ideas, as is required in community development, demands new methods of teaching that disrupt traditional ways of thinking, knowledge development and practice (Bush & Glover, 2016; Muraraneza et al., 2017). One could argue that in its new and emergent form, community development is still a nascent discipline that is not easily appropriated by any conceptual stream (Wang, 2019). This does not negate the need for scholarly engagement on how curriculum arrangements for community development in a post-humanist societal landscape can be enabled. Logically, curriculum development is expected to be responsive to societal challenges and issues of public interest (Berge, 2017). As the current and potential future curriculum challenges have emerged from the dynamics of human society, such as technological advancement, as discussed in Muraraneza et al. (2017), curriculum design can only come from a clear understanding of this posthuman process. For this reason, we focus this article on curriculum responsiveness to societal needs by providing students with a "toolbox" for the evolution of functional and productive societies in a posthuman era. The article begins by outlining the post-1994 policy dispensation illustrating the South African state's policy intentions and how it sought to align the curriculum to societal needs.

With the advent of democracy in 1994, there has been various policy enunciations in South Africa seeking to consolidate the higher education sector. One such example is the medium-term strategic framework (2009-2014), trying to redress the quality of education (Molapo & Pillay, 2018). This necessitated the creation of a new curriculum that empowered previously disadvantaged communities (Pak et al., 2020). Ever since, as has been confirmed by several researchers, curriculum design has become essential in education, capacitating students and responding to community needs (Annala et al., 2021; Rahimli, 2012; Vashisth et al., 2021). Therefore, this article argues that the posthuman approach (PHA) in curriculum development has the potential to capacitate students while enhancing intellectual and practical societal contributions.

Curriculum enablement and community development

Van Rensberg (2014, p. 43) defines *enablement* as a process that is "collaborative, reciprocal and focused on mutual reinforcing-making positive change possible and promoting agencies for all stakeholders." These essential descriptors of enablement must be embedded in the community development curriculum. The central emphasis of curriculum enablement is to equip students with relevant skills that make them critical thinkers who can provide solutions to challenges of their communities (Bush & Glover, 2016). Enablement is appropriate in higher education as it focuses on the evolution of agency for students and communities. In the context of the community development discipline, enablement entails that qualifying practitioners

espouse a core set of skills that ensure individuals, groups and organisations have the means and opportunity to participate in shaping their own lives (Forlano, 2017). As an emerging occupation, community development is increasingly responsible for various transformative processes at the community level through coaching, facilitating, guiding, collaborating, and encouraging stakeholders to promote civic responsibility and consciousness. Such prerequisites seem to go against the grain of a posthuman society based on a post-anthropocentric society configuration that does not place the human being at the centre (Forlano, 2017; Makunja, 2016).

Scholarly perspectives on integrating posthumanism in curriculum development

This section uses existing literature to answer three seminal questions: 1. Are we in the posthuman phase? 2. How has this posthuman phase influenced curriculum enablement? And what is the perspective on weaving a PHA in curriculum design? These questions are critical to any descriptors of a posthuman society as literature has grappled with articulating curriculum enablement in a posthuman context. The term 'post' implies a period after something. In this case, does a posthuman society suggest a new era of human identity and organising? It seems to indicate a paradigm shift in which the current model of human nature has been overtaken by new ontologies, paradigmatic shifts, and ultimately a fresh conceptualisation of society broken from a humanist era (Bayley, 2016). But is there a break in terms of human organising to give such a definitive explanation of a posthuman reality? This has severe implications for curriculum enablement, as integrating posthuman realities in curriculum design is fraught with difficulties. Recent studies show that the exhaustive use of the posthuman concept as a compelling curriculum design strategy has generated a debate in posthuman scholarship (Bayley, 2016). And this is happening when there is little consensus in describing contemporary society as outrightly posthuman (Stone-Johnson & Hayes, 2021). As a result, a mid-point solution to this debate has seen some proponents arguing that curriculum design must be meaningfully adaptive to societal changes (Čepić & Papak, 2021). Therefore, this article also states that there is a need to rethink and introduce new approaches to curriculum development within the posthuman context.

In some instances where the PHA is used as a central organiser in the curriculum design, humans are not conceived as autonomous from the surrounding world, as construed by the humanist worldview (MacDonald et al., 2016). However, despite this global acknowledgement, the biggest challenge is changing human thoughts and institutions (Berge, 2017; Erstad et al., 2021). Thus, transforming a post-anthropocentric description of modern society requires us to move away from a humanist worldview by changing approaches, knowledge production, and dissemination.

In South Africa, for example, efforts were made to adapt to severe and persistent institutional challenges through the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training Faculties (RSA DHET, 2013) with little success. The above development is happening against a backdrop where higher learning institutions across South Africa recognise that their curricula

must adapt to exploit opportunities that drive community development (Bush & Glover, 2016). At the same time, policymakers and scientists are becoming aware that curriculum enablement can effectively address societal needs (MacDonald et al., 2016). Therefore, it becomes vital to place communities and the need for transformation at the centre of a mutually reinforcing and entangled knowledge interface. However, little has been done to address this problem. For this reason, this paper argues for pathways in curriculum development that require rethinking how we value humans, other species, the planet, and beyond (Zembylas, 2018).

It is important to highlight that while curriculum development is essential in the posthuman era, the more significant and more extensive debate on whether we live in a posthuman society is not the focus of this paper. Instead, this study expounds on the turn away from humanism, identifies curriculum enablement pathways during this turn, and the critical resources that the responsive community development curriculum demands (Bayley, 2016; Berge, 2017). Therefore, it identifies strategies for evolving a responsive community development curriculum in a supposed post-humanist context.

Pillars to an effective community curriculum development

In more recent years, these developmental imperatives have been driven by the university's desire to be innovative (Makunja, 2016), responsive to its community's developmental needs (Pak et al., 2020), and embrace the concept of engaged scholarship (Vashisth et al., 2021). This study's focus suggests a sustainable framework for a responsive community development curriculum that ensures exit-level outcomes and emphasises a transformative praxis. In a broad discussion on enablement, scholars have identified six enablement pillars that are applicable and critical to an effective community development curriculum in a posthuman era (Zembylas, 2018; Stone-Johnson & Hayes, 2021). The table below outlines the six pillars and their application to a community development degree in a posthumanist context.

Table 1: *Pillars of Enablement in Community Development*

Pillar	Description and application in a posthuman society
Choice, Risk, and Responsibility	- A prerequisite for an enabling curriculum as informed consent is paramount for ensuring collaborative relationships
Participation	- To enhance ownership and expand the decision-making and collaborative capabilities of communities
Vision of Possibilities	- Dialogical approaches are rooted in hope, optimism, and exploring options for positive transformation.
Change	- Mutually desirable transformation is an essential outcome
Justice	- Expansion of agency ensures injustices are disabled through critical engagement
Power Sharing	- A shared understanding of multiple knowledge sites provides opportunities for enhancing various sources of power

While the above pillars can be applied in multiple disciplinary contexts, the application of the six enablement pillars in the posthuman era seems applicable as it emphasises the holistic and collaborative transformative praxis of communities. Therefore, it can be argued that embedding the enablement pillars above into the curriculum can effectively shape capacity-building capabilities, access facilitation, identify and ascertain nodes for service development, and ultimately be a change agent.

The evolution of posthumanism and curriculum design

Since the mid-1980s, curriculum design has been predominantly a human-centred and user-centred paradigm (Forlano, 2017). However, the implication of posthumanism is challenging curriculum developers to focus on complex socio-technical systems in responding to community needs. The quest for changing university curricula by the South African government was based on two main imperatives. First, the scale of change in the world and the demands of the 21st century require students to be exposed to different and higher-level skills and knowledge than those previously offered by the South African curricula (Molapo & Pillay, 2018). Secondly, given the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality, the need for a professional cadre of community development practitioners became more critical. Therefore, the government is expected to develop a contemporary curriculum that meets internationally set standards.

Again, South Africa has changed. However, it remained the incisive wish of the Ministry of Education to design a curriculum that does not reproduce the contradictions in society as described in Bush and Glover (2016) but produces a guide to attaining community development. Therefore, the university's curricula required revision to reflect new values and principles. Given the above argument, a community development degree thus became essential. The degree is ultimately fit for purpose as it is supported by a conducive policy and legislative environment and is multidisciplinary in its emphasis. In a posthuman context, a community development curriculum becomes essential as it not only puts communities and their needs at the centre but actively seeks to use community-based knowledge to create sustainable well-being in communities. Sustainable communities are created by a quest for balance in the multiple realms that constitute society: physical, economic, environmental, spiritual, cultural, social, and psychological. Therefore, a community development curriculum needs to emphasise a holistic integration of these realms and how communities collaboratively organise to ensure that transformation occurs in a balanced manner.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the systematic review of the literature to contribute toward understanding pathways for creating and implementing a curriculum on community development. The above approach considered three steps to search and extract the relevant body of knowledge (Brunton, Oliver, & Thomas, 2020), namely: 1.) literature search and screening; 2.) data extraction and analysis; and 3.) write-up. The search approach was widespread globally, using

the following search strings: a.) curriculum enablement, b.) posthumanism, and c.) curriculum development.

Terms such as "community development curriculum" and "developing countries" were excluded to avoid missing relevant articles. To yield peer-reviewed articles, we performed a comprehensive search on global databases, including Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, Web of Science, SCOPUS, and ScienceDirect. We selected the above electronic databases because they advance multidisciplinary studies and offer more active, full-text, peer-reviewed journals for successful research, including many journals indexed in leading citation indexes (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018).

Despite extracting many source articles (303), this study adopted this broad search to maximise the likelihood of capturing all relevant publications (Creswell et al., 2018). Consideration was given to narrowing the search through the publication date and language (English) to extract articles considered valid sources of knowledge with the most recent information. This means articles published before 2012, written in a language other than English, grey literature, books, and thesis chapters were excluded from this study. During our data extraction, 303 articles were initially drawn out from a sample of articles published between 2012 to 2022 (Table 2). Although this represents a limitation since part of the scientific contributions was excluded, the objective was to eliminate studies that are not related to the study. We removed unreferenced articles and articles that did not cover significant literature on posthumanism and curriculum development.

Two forms of deduplication were considered to eliminate overlapping journals. The first form involved the removal of identical data sources from five selected databases (Creswell et al., 2018). The second form stopped multiple articles published from the same data set (Brunton, Oliver, & Thomas, 2020). Bibliographic management software, Zotero, was used for automatic duplication, and the remainder list was checked manually as one method of automatic deduplicating was considered inadequate. This screening stage narrowed the sampled articles, producing twenty-four academic papers (Table 2).

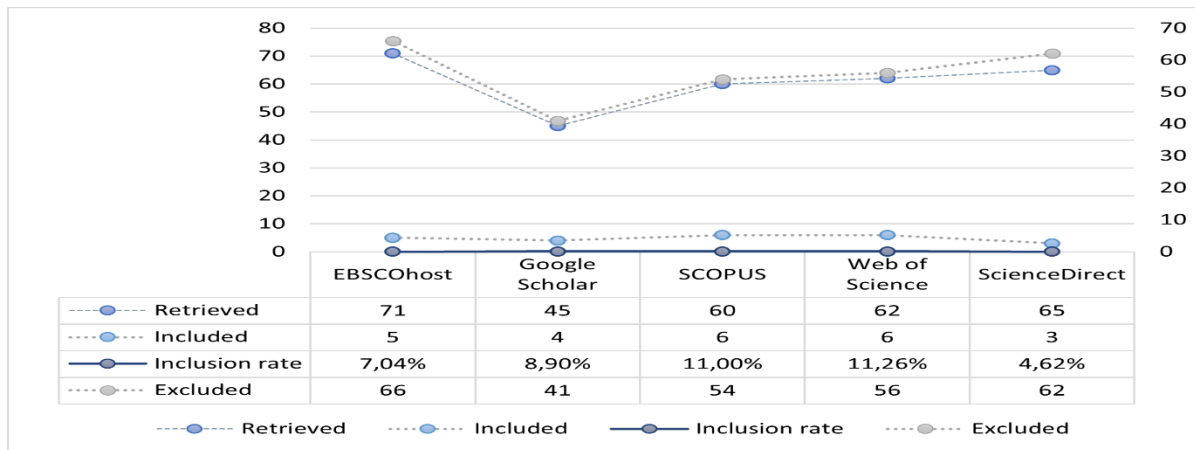
Data querying and analysis

The entire extraction and screening process of journal articles from each electronic database is shown in Table 2. A framework for collecting and evaluating qualitative data on each article was developed, building on Friese's (2014) work. This involved the use of ATLAS.ti22 auto-coding tool to identify data segments that mentioned main concepts of interest. In this paper, we used ATLAS.ti thematic-based analysis to analyse literature on articles. According to (Wild et al. (2016), ATLAS.ti is software that allows the researcher to competently capture the main ideas in literature and produce summarised results from systematically reviewed literature.

The first step involved uploading the selected articles into the software during analysis. We uploaded a total of twenty-four peer-reviewed articles into ATLAS.ti software for coding. Codes such as "curriculum enablement," "curriculum design," "community development," "societal needs," and "student needs" were initially created using the open code tool. In our

second analysis step, we grouped similar codes, merged them into higher-order codes, and continuously compared and revisited our codes. Further data querying removed all irrelevant and dead-end codes. In the final step, we conducted selective coding, which allowed us to reconsider our data and codes to develop themes, theoretical concepts, and relationships between themes.

Table 2: Articles Extracted, Excluded and Included from each Database



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the study's results on pathways for creating and implementing a community development curriculum within the posthuman context. During ATLAS.ti data querying and coding, it became apparent that the results of this study could be put into two categories: 1) challenges to curriculum enablement and 2) opportunities to curriculum enablement. Several critical factors to curriculum design that subsequently thwart enablement were cited by various scholars and are discussed in this section under the following themes.

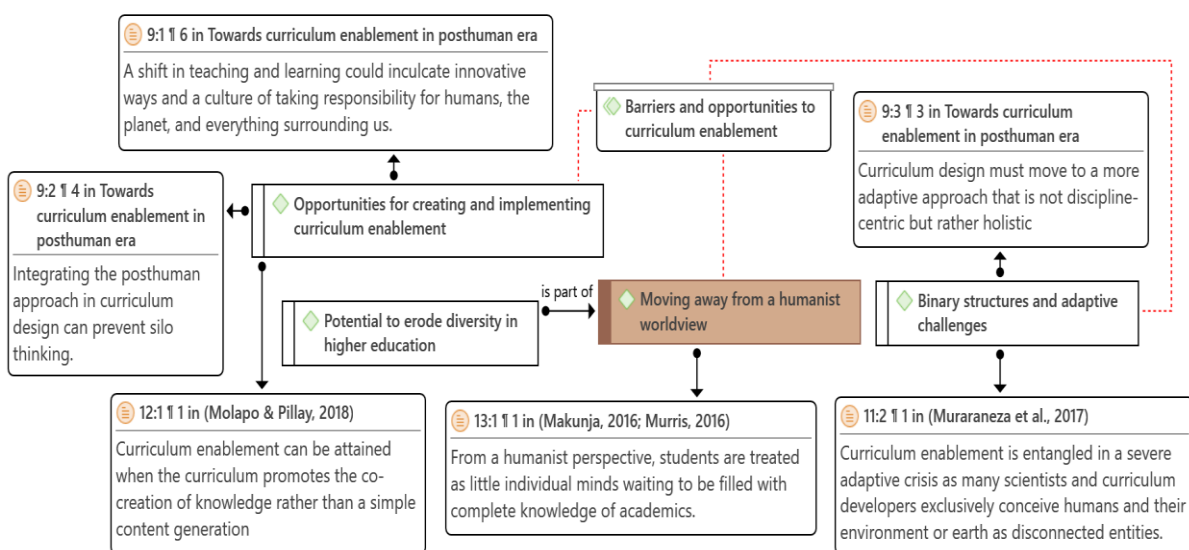


Figure 1: Challenges and opportunities to curriculum enablement as reviewed from literature studies

Changing our thoughts and institutions by moving away from a humanist worldview

The literature review highlighted that the PHA to curriculum design offers tremendous potential for curriculum enablement (Bayley, 2016; Pak et al., 2020). However, applying a post-humanist method to community development requires a change in thoughts about humans and institutions by conceiving humans, including academics and students, as entwined with other beings (Zembylas, 2018; Čepić & Papak, 2021). Similar concerns are reflected by other scholars, such as (Erstad et al., 2021), who argue that faculties and departments are structured as discrete entities with their objects and methods of study. On the contrary, Berge (2017) submitted that a PHA could change how humans value themselves, other species, the planet, and beyond. Community development curriculum needs to be embedded in the socio-economic, environmental and development realities of society. By way of explanation, posthuman perspectives offer much more than merely a concern for new possibilities for human existence. Again, a closer analysis of the above authors' claim indicates that using the PHA in curriculum design remains a significant yet almost consistently challenging task in South Africa.

Students conceived as limited and not yet knowledgeable

In the literature reviewed, many studies in education revealed binary structures that consider learners 'limited,' 'not yet knowledgeable,' or 'fully adult.'. According to Moss (2016), Zembylas (2018) and Erstad et al. (2021), this has posed a severe threat to curriculum enablement, thereby making curricula responsiveness an evasive reality. This is supported by Makunja (2016), who indicated that from a humanist perspective, students are treated as a '*tabula rasa*' waiting to be filled with complete knowledge of academics (Figure 1). This is arguably the case in South Africa, where there have been calls to recalibrate teacher-learner relations, so they are neither hierarchical nor instructor-focused (Bush & Glover, 2016; Zembylas, 2018). The above further represents a need for an essential shift in focus and practice. Therefore, re-evaluating curriculum design is vital to transforming institutions' worldviews to yield the desired results.

In short, post-humanists' literature on curriculum design strongly suggests that curriculum enablement can be attained when the curriculum promotes the co-creation of knowledge rather than a simple content generation (Molapo & Pillay, 2018). Community development curriculum can be crafted in a participatory manner to capture the realities and knowledge of society than can catalyse transformation. The above claims can be considered progressive because they are interested in advancing further and restoring some education practices that have remained marginal and seek to position PHAs at the centre of community development. Broadly, the curriculum design should focus on 'how' to capacitate students of community development rather than on 'what' they need to make a difference when working with communities on development matters.

Adaptive challenges as a barrier to curriculum enablement

The literature reviewed highlighted that many barriers to curriculum enablement represent adaptive challenges. However, most curriculum design strategies documented in the literature tend to exclusively conceive humans and their environment or earth as disconnected entities

(Muraraneza et al., 2017). Thus, curriculum enablement is entangled in a severe adaptive crisis. All the people's efforts are coming up short because the current interventions are biased towards a narrow view of humans (Bayley, 2016; Pak et al., 2020) and lack relationality not only between learners and academics but also concerning the environment or structures in which teaching, and learning take place. While these posthuman-centred curriculum design considerations are necessary, we further suggest that the transition requires a blend of posthumanism and humanism strategies to address specific community needs.

Potential to erode diversity in higher education

Although the literature review acknowledges the relevancy of the PHA, there is little doubt about the approach's applicability. For example, scientists' circles argue that human societies and institutions are traditionally diverse; hence, a critical question is whether the PHA to curriculum development is not reductive (Erstad et al., 2021). As suggested by posthuman advocates, international observers argue that dismantling the binary systems may diminish diversity in higher education (Forlano, 2017; Muraraneza et al., 2017; Zembylas, 2018). A close analysis of the most rational and probable consequence of dismantling the binary system is eroding diversity among universities. Therefore, this article demonstrates how a blended approach to curriculum development can be applied as a pathway for curriculum development. We focus on integrating posthuman design in curriculum design to support the achievement of community needs.

Towards curriculum enablement in the posthuman era

As discussed earlier, while curriculum design is vital, systematically developing it without a clear understanding of context, as in this case, the posthuman context, can potentially generate suboptimal results. Since the binary structures continue to dominate current education systems in South Africa, the gradual integration of posthuman logic in curriculum design is critical. Thus, as suggested by posthuman advocates, curriculum design must move to a more adaptive approach that is not discipline-centric but rather holistic (Figure). This article suggests that global, holistic, and global strategies, as postulated by the post-humanists, are necessary to attain curriculum enablement.

Using the PHA in curriculum development will allow academics, scientists, students, and all key stakeholders in community development to think about the world and its beings, spaces, and places as entangled and interconnected. We further argue that integrating the PHA in curriculum design can prevent silo thinking (Figure 1). Such a shift in teaching and learning could inculcate innovative ways and a culture of taking responsibility for humans, the planet, and everything surrounding us.

Strengths and limitations

This literature-based study provides valuable information for curriculum developers committed to responding to community needs and quality of education. As such, this current study serves as the ground for future research. However, it was limited geographically and in scope as far as

the focus was confined to South Africa, where issues of curriculum change have not been satisfactory.

Implication for practice.

This article adds to the knowledge that shapes curriculum design for community development in South Africa and other countries in Africa and the third world in general.

CONCLUSION

Like many other fields of study in South Africa, approaches to curriculum design in community development are heavily contested and faced with many challenges relating to posthumanism. This paper is rooted in the realisation that posthumanism as an approach to curriculum development is not enough to respond to societal and student needs in community development programs. Together, posthuman and human perspectives can be more effective because they pluriversalise the task of curriculum enablement. Depending on a singular pathway, posthumanism, to responding to community and student needs, run the risk of becoming complicit in the technologies of power through which a reinvented humanism is appropriated in higher education. We argue that if blending posthumanism into curriculum design can facilitate adaptation, scientists and policymakers in higher education need to learn how to make better use of the approach in curriculum enablement. Therefore, this study demonstrated that curriculum enablement depends on how it is framed and how students and communities perceive it during its implementation. Therefore, more effort should take place toward curriculum enablement in learning and teaching. This study argues that, while posthumanism consideration is necessary, a blend of humanist and post-humanist approaches offers the community development curriculum a chance for its enablement. The results of this study demonstrated how a community development curriculum could be enabled to promote learning and teaching that is responsive to community needs.

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