RHODES UNIVERSITY

TRANSFORMATION SUMMIT

Envisioning an Institutional Transformed

28-30 July 2017

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Discussion Group: Curriculum

Introduction

Organisation of the group: The group had 30 members that is 28 participants a scribe and a facilitator. The participants were a fair representation of the voices at Rhodes. The student voice was blended with that of junior and senior lecturers as well as professors. The voice of the disability was also present. The discussions started with participants introducing themselves and stating why they perceived curriculum transformation as important. The main issues captured in such an introduction varied as follows: curriculum and language are important in a changing demographic space at Rhodes, epistemic access that is the pedagogy and curriculum to remain closely linked, the transaction from school to university has to be considered in a curriculum debate, a socially relevant curriculum is what people want, that there was need to critically look into absences and not only rely on what was present in the curriculum, issues such as whose voice is to be heard in a curriculum, the issue of indigenous knowledge in a curriculum, the local and global interaction and contemporary global issues like climate change and water shortages and droughts in South Africa and the region and beyond to be considered in a curriculum transformation process, decolonising the curriculum and what that means,

Once an issue was raised, participants who share a similar view were free to move to join or group around the mover of that motion and this was the beginning of identifying convergence and divergence in the participants' views. After this warming up process, each participant was asked to write down at least three key areas of curriculum that one considered important. Participants were then divided into five groups to discuss what they had written down. The deliberations from these 5 groups were later collapsed into 4 main key areas:

1. The demographic profile to inform curriculum

2. Social literacies

3. Local and Global Sustainability

4. Sharing, Implementation and Accountability

1. The demographic profile to inform curriculum

It was discussed that all lecturers should understand the shift in the student demographics from the pre-independent era to the present in order to be responsive to students' needs including those of language. The need for the utilisation of the demographic profile to inform curriculum cannot be under-estimated. There is room for a multiple approaches.

Research to be done in translanguaging. Translanguaging is using more than one language to make meaning. How to do with a class of diverse language. These were supposed to be incorporated into existing CHERTL courses. It was also noted that this process has already started.

2. Social literacies

Various kinds of literacies were discussed. Social literacy requires reflecting in our embeddedness in systems, spaces and practices that are normalised. Social literacies are necessary because of the emergent need that arises from a shift in demographics in higher education. Methodologies and teaching, thus developing familiarity with the academic genre and that is depth and breath, corporation and questioning versus transmission and expectations. The need to explore ways of recognising communities of practice (CoP). Need to reflect in systems spaces and practices. Academic literacies e.g how we understand lectures and how we engage with literature. Social identity related issues, diversity, how we engage with authority, ideas around pedagogy to be focused on, academic skills as a genre, convections of learning, styles of teaching etc. The school of languages to spear head the language issue. Tutoring to take place in multi-African languages. The need to develop the literacies in other subjects other than English was raised.

3. Local and Global Sustainability

The group's discussions were centred on the premise that we have to be mindful that we have ONE PLANET. As such the curriculum needs to be locally and globally intensive. The transformed curriculum needs to take into consideration that it has to prepare learners who can operate and thrive in a rapidly changing and complex world. As such, problem solving skills needs to be embraced in the transformed curriculum, cultivate curiosity, promote flexibility and adaptability and be open to change and new learning pathways. Develop an appreciation that teaching learning comes from multiple sources and happens at different sites. To incorporate the digital landscape and sites for teaching and learning and how the academic relates to the lived reality of students and their context. The North-South debate featured. To incorporate global research and relate it to local context. Research to inform curriculum and so local research has to be incentivised and so the profiles of global south journals have to be raised. There is need to establish local centres of excellence. There is need to tap into indigenous knowledge ecologies and partnering with local communities. Local research and publishing in local and global journals. Local and indigenous knowledges to merge with global knowledge. New knowledge have to be shared through building a local and global community of practice. We have one planet, let's protect it. Teaching and learning, the digital land scape. What do we want the learner to achieve, for lifelong learning? Problem solving skills, cultivate curiosity, exploring more and promote flexibility and adaptability, diversity and entrepreneurial, the way we frame transformative, major

challenges in our water systems, climate change, intensely local and global including the continent and not South Africa alone. Research can transform curriculum. Cutting edge research and teaching. The group also looked at the possibility of debating North-South epistemologies and what are these southern epistemologies?

4. Sharing, Implementation and Accountability

The group noted that a process of curriculum transformation is about adopting a reflexive and responsive change to the changing environment and students, accountability and methods on how complaints can be heard. The group also deliberated on the role of tenure in ensuring accountability, empowering students and young staff to speak up hence the curriculum should create platforms and spaces and processes for that. The role of HODs and their status need to be acknowledged and these could be central to responsiveness to curriculum needs. HODs need to be skilled to do this and that means training. Similarly at the level of Deans such a training might be good so that deans can drive the curriculum review and transformation process. There is need for policies to be put in place that could guide the curriculum transformation process. Create more spaces at department and faculty level for sharing best practices. There is also need for sharing of curriculum review processes and this calls for cross-teaching or inter-disciplinary teaching.

There has to be a shift from individualism to a culture of sharing, the group emphasised. The current student evaluation process was not being fully utilised and such evaluations need to be part of the curriculum review process. Student voices need to be heard. CHERTL's Teaching and Learning, to show case best practices. Shifting from a culture of individualism to a broad university in the department and in the faculties. Create formal spaces for sharing. Such spaces for sharing also need resources. Sharing stories with students on where they come from help in understanding the students. Sharing of curriculum review processing that is already taking place within the university, sharing through inter-disciplinary teaching and how to acknowledge people's academic autonomy. There was also emphasis on empowering students and young staff to speak up. How to engage with students, the academic genre should also be possible in languages other than English. All this calls for a need to develop a peer culture, conversations across departments and faculties through seminars and presentations. The problem solving approach to be used. More stakeholders to be involved in the curriculum debate such as students and the industrial world.

A closer look at the issues discussed

The issues discussed in the group were then categorised under urgent, impactful and quick fix.

Urgent	Impactful	Quick fix
All lecturers to understand the student demographics and be responsive to student needs including language	Local and global intersection for sustainability (sharing knowledge) Theory of change	Identify staff that is already modelling some of this for as an example for others (best practices) Use the demographic profiles from DMS. This includes data on students, lecturers, teaching methods, assessment,
The local and global interactions. Understanding value: the multiple ways of being	Theory of change. Sharing knowledges	Local knowledges Epistemological framing for lectures
Social literacies of all stakeholders (hidden curriculum) Alternative curriculum	Training of staff to be ready or prepared for the issues dealt with in classes. Trans-languaging and this can be part of the teaching portfolio.	The school of languages to include more African languages Tutoring University staff in multiple languages (African languages)
Sharing and implementing what is already happening. Processes under way on issues of accountability		

Recommendations

1. The demographic profile to inform curriculum

- Utilisation of the demographic profile to inform curriculum
- Research to be done in translanguaging. How to do that with a class of diverse language. Incorporate this into existing CHERTL courses. A process is already underway in some faculties.
- To open space for multiple approaches

- School of languages to promote more African languages

2. Social literacies

- Emergent need as a shift in demographics in higher education demands engagement with social literacies.
- Need to reflect in systems spaces and practices.
- Engage with academic literacies such as how lecturers and students today perceive lectures and how they engage with literature as compared to the previous demographics.
- Develop ways to engage with social identity related issues, diversity and how to engage with authority.
- To focus on ideas around pedagogy, academic skills as a genre, convections of learning, styles of teaching etc.
- To make language the key in decolonising the curriculum.
- Lecturers to become learners too as they look for absences in the curricula.
- The curriculum debate should go beyond recommendations but to make transformative practices visible.
- The need to develop literacies in other subjects other than English.
- A clear understanding on decolonisation of the curriculum and what it is supposed to mean with a closure look on absences.
- Train staff in social literacies and in how to deal with students in a changing demographic space.

3. Local and Global Sustainability

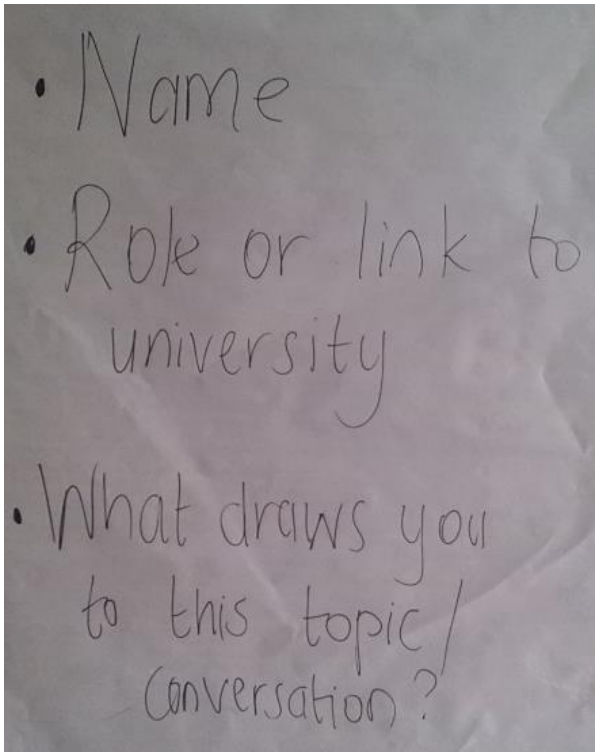
- Curriculum to embrace the notion that, 'We have one planet, let's protect it.
- Create space to debated issues around questioning the dominant or 'normalised' practices and experiences and interrogate absences in the current curriculum.
- Foster epistemic access which includes debates around the free decolonised education, the issue of language and literacies such as social literacies, ways of being, critical tuning disposition and that included debates around, deconstruction and reconstruction-reimagining balance.
- Research to anchor the curriculum debate as the two are inextricably bound as 'knowledge building' mechanisms.
- Create curriculum that is socially responsive and relevant that is social and ecologically inclusive for framing thinking.
- Create a curriculum that is intensely situated and engage local and global issues at the same time.
- Create space for local research and publishing in local and global journals.

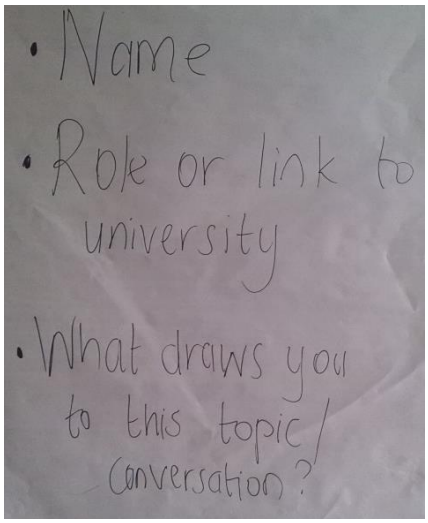
- Local and indigenous knowledges to merge with global knowledge.
- New knowledge have to be shared through building a local and global community of practice.
- To continue debating on teaching and learning and what we aim to achieve for lifelong learning.
- To utilise the digital learning landscape.
- To embrace the problem solving skills, cultivate curiosity, exploring more and promote flexibility and adaptability, diversity and entrepreneurial, the way we frame transformative, major challenges in our water systems, climate change, intensely local and global including the continent and not South Africa alone.
- Research to inform the transformation of the curriculum.
- Cutting edge research and teaching issues to include the Northern and Southern knowledges, North-South epistemologies and redefining what we understand by the southern epistemologies.

4. Sharing, Implementation and Accountability

- There is need to shift from a culture of individualism to a broader university culture within the departments and faculties.
- Create formal spaces for sharing.
- To embark on a process of curriculum transformation that is about adopting a reflexive and responsive change to the changing environment and students, accounting for how students' complaints could be heard.
- Make available resources for teaching and sharing ideas of teaching.
- Collect and utilise the stories of where the students come from in order to inform responses to the new students' needs.
- Encourage the sharing of curriculum review processing that is already happening in departments.
- Encourage inter-disciplinary teaching and mechanisms on how to acknowledge people's academic autonomy.
- Empower students and young staff members to speak up.
- Share best practices on how to engage with students.
- Make the academic genre possible in languages other than English
- Embark on skilling HODs and Deans to increase the leadership the Deans can play in curriculum transformation.

Appendices


• Name
• Role or link to university
• What draws you to this topic/ Conversation?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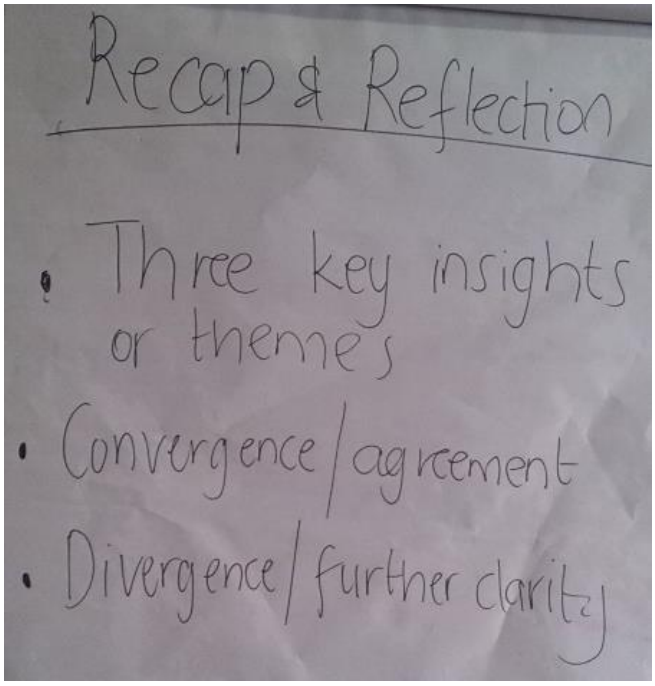
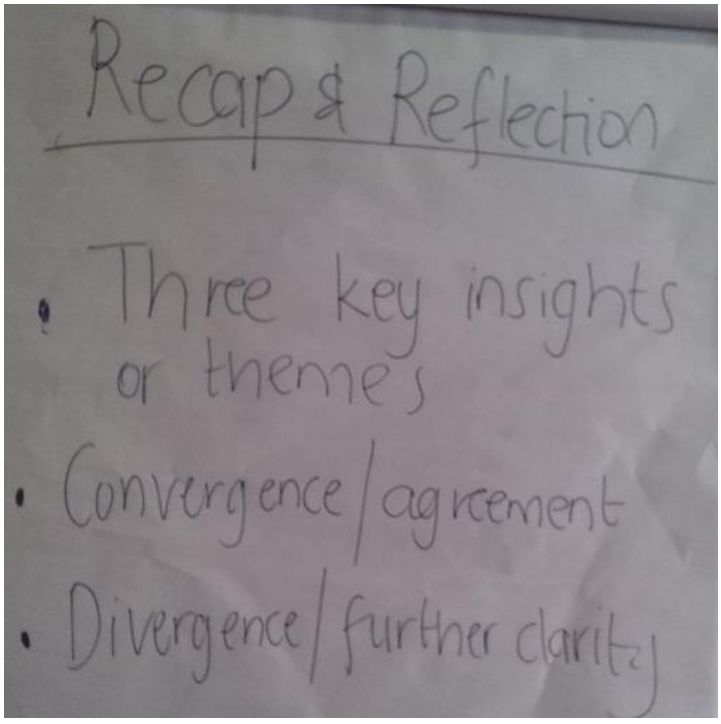

Recap & Reflection
• Three key insights or themes
• Convergence / agreement
• Divergence / further clarity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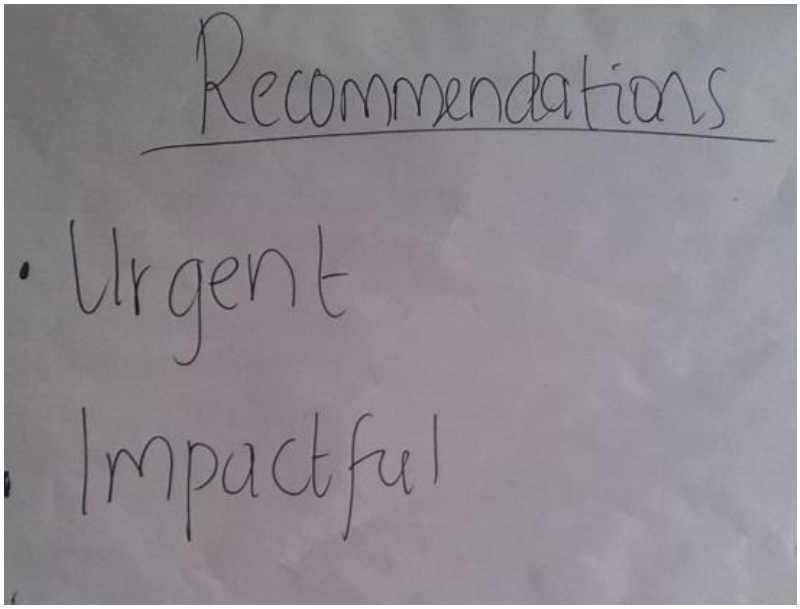
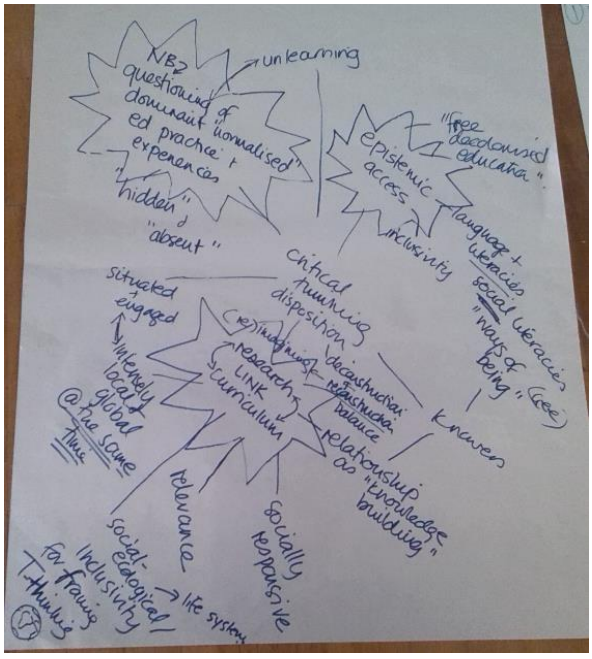

Recommendations
• Urgent
• Impactful


NB2 questioning of dominant "normalised" ed practice + experiences
unlearning
"hidden" + "absent"
epistemic access
"free decolonised education"
language + literacies
social literacies
"ways of being" (free)
inclusivity
critical thinking disposition
situated + engaged
intensely local + global @ the same time
(re)imagining research LINK curriculum
deconstruction reconstruction balance
relationship as "knowledge building"
knowers
relevance
socially responsive
social-ecological inclusivity for framing thinking
life system

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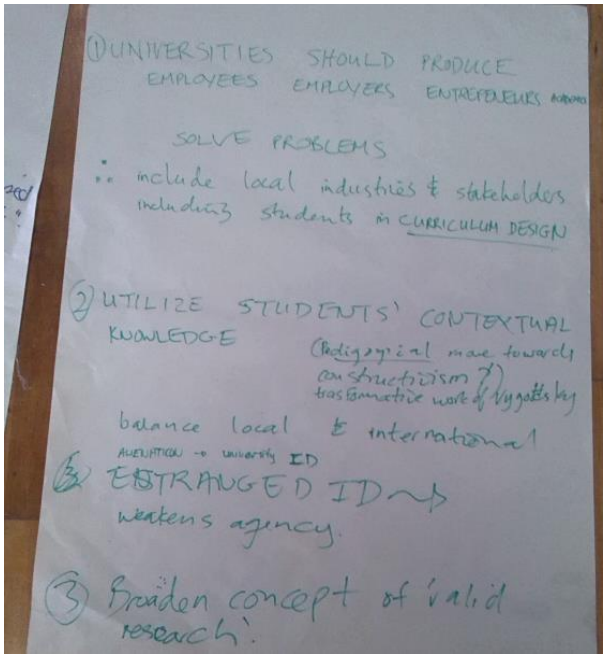
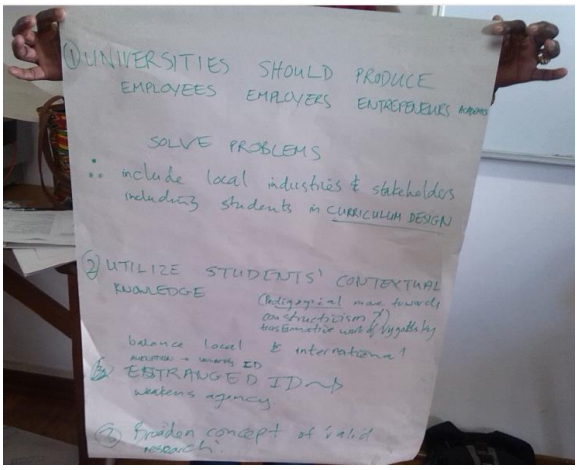
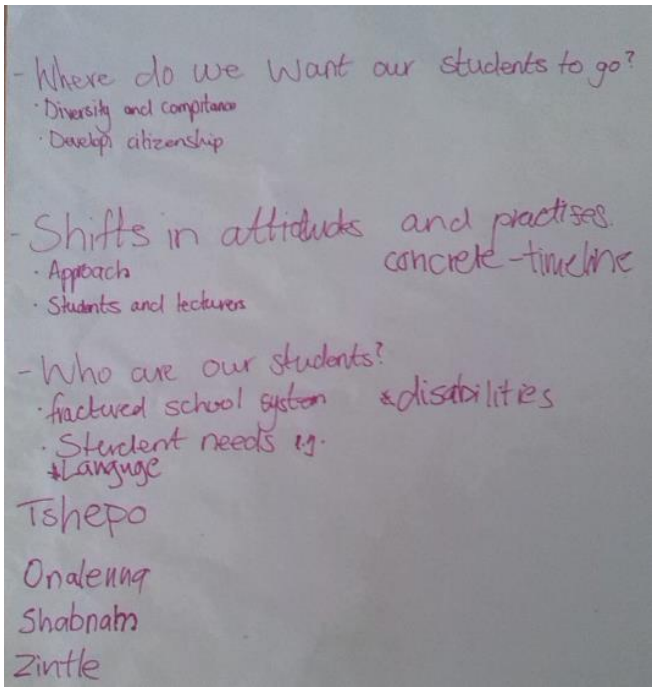
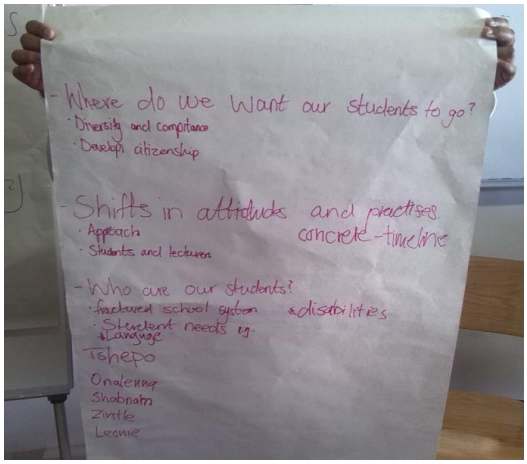
Group 1



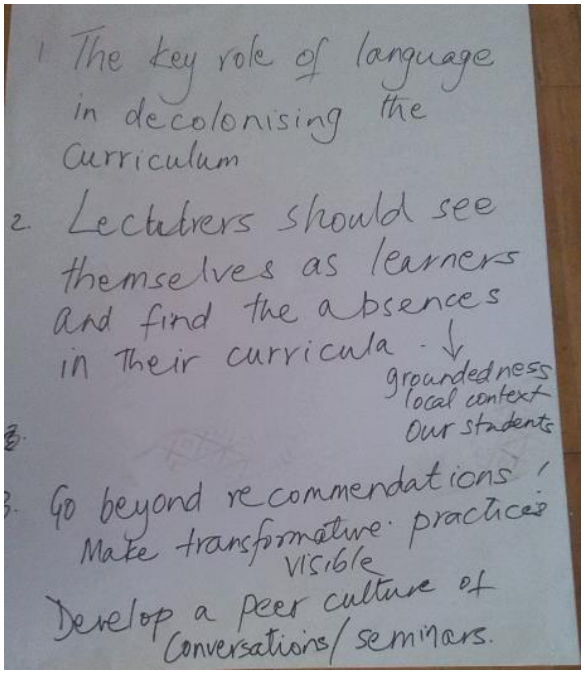


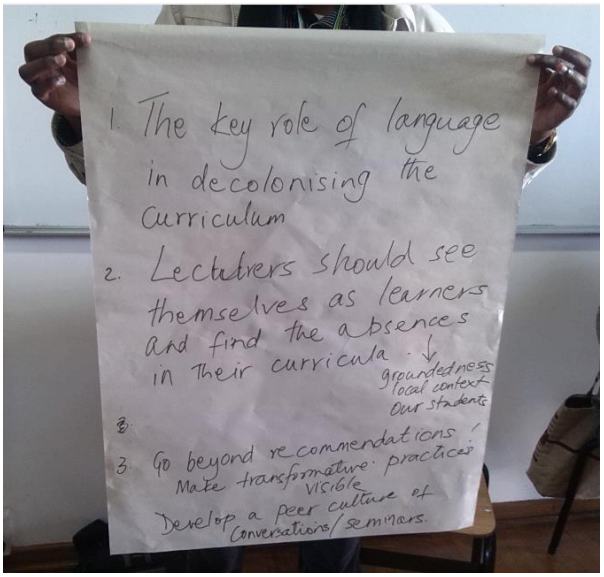
Group 2



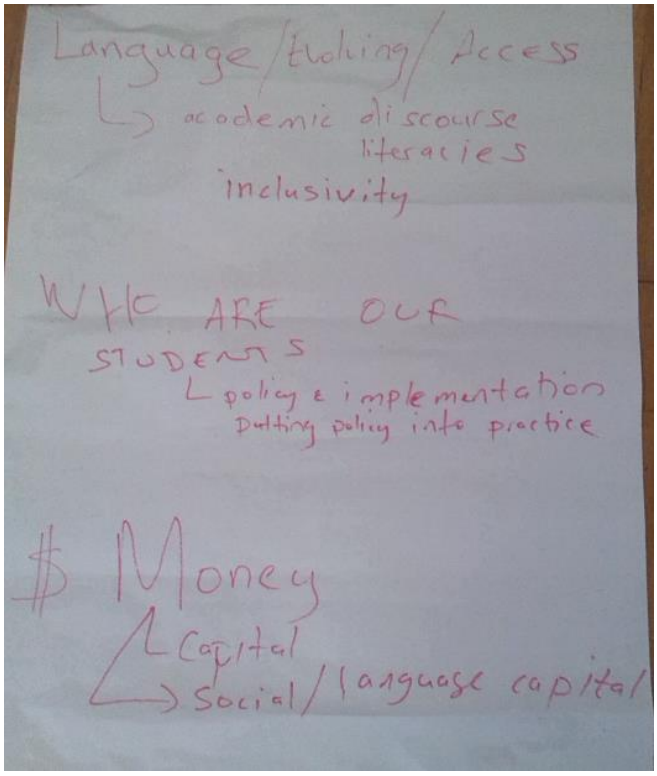


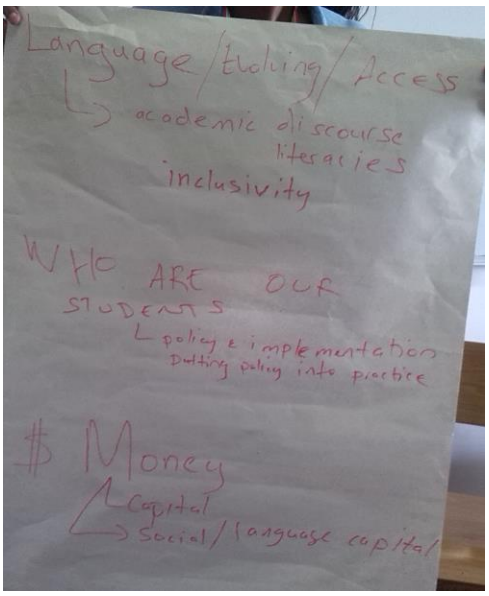
Group 3





Group 4





Group 5