

The Road Less Travelled: Exploring the Planning and Preparation for a Critical Social Justice Module by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa



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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aimed to explore the journey of planning and preparation for the implementation of a Critical Social Justice and Citizenship (CSJ) module at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Despite political democracy in South Africa, racial, sexist, gender, and cultural pathological issues persist. The CSJ module addresses these challenges by focusing on gender-based violence, racism, gender inequality, classism, and other forms of discrimination. The study adopted an interpretive paradigm and a narrative inquiry approach to investigate the experiences of the planning team and the tutors involved in the CSJ module. Data were generated through observations of workshops, which were presented via photo narratives and individual interviews. The analysis was performed using thematic and content analysis methods. A theoretical framework for the study was based on "Education for Liberation," which encompasses human rights, inclusion, and education for social justice. The experiences of the planning team and the tutors highlighted both the challenges and the successes encountered during the planning and preparation phases. The identified themes included the importance of collaborative efforts, the need for ongoing support and training, and the evolving understanding of social justice issues by the tutors. Recommendations for future implementation include improving support structures for tutors, continuous professional development, and improving module content based on feedback and experiences. This study contributes to scholarship by providing a detailed account of the development of a social justice-oriented educational module in a higher education context. The study also offers information on the effectiveness of a multidisciplinary approach in the development of educational interventions aimed at promoting social justice.

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INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA),¹ which emerged after the political emancipation and advent of democracy in South Africa (SA), highlights that SA:

¹ Republic of South Africa, *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1996).

- Emerged as a beacon of hope towards transforming the scope of human possibility for all peoples and social groups in the new South Africa - ideologically abandoning the exclusion and segregation of the past and giving priority to the ideals of democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights.
- Aimed to transcend the divisions of the past by institutionalizing tolerance between different social groups and the rights of individuals, offering an alternative framework of coexistence for the diverse peoples and social groups in South Africa.
- Set a path toward the goal of democracy, social justice, and inclusion.

South Africa has a wonderful progressive legislature and policies. However, policies alone do not change the social landscape of a country. Although the Constitution of 1996 and other inclusive education policies do indeed lay the foundation for SA to transcend the divisions of the past, the development and maintenance of a democracy depends on more than legislation and the verbal affirmation of democratic principles. Developing and maintaining social justice and democracy in South Africa requires a radical restructuring of society, building a landscape of hope for all its members, and developing attitudes, forms of consciousness, and commitments that allow a re-shaping of our world.

Studies like Tikly and Francis et al. suggest that if education is to “play a transformative role in relation to social justice, it needs to be fundamentally reoriented and address processes of economic, cultural and political transformation in the interests of social justice.”² Therefore, it became important for the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN) to develop and offer a module titled The Critical Social Justice and Citizenship module. The focus of this paper, therefore, is to explore the planning and preparation strategies used for the CSJ module at UKZN and to explore how these planning and preparation strategies were implemented.

South Africa is a middle-income country regarded as the most wealth-unequal society in the world; not only has wealth inequality remained high since the end of apartheid, but income and wealth inequality have increased since apartheid in 1994.³ The move towards a metropolitan society has resulted in a denigration of important values and traditions, one of which is ‘Ubuntu’ in various African contexts. There are still those who are socially excluded and dehumanized due to their race, gender, class, nationality, or some other social construction. They remain banished to the “other side” of what Boaventura de Sousa Santos terms the “abyssal line.”⁴ The abyssal line divides historically colonized worlds, parceling out such worlds into a “zone of beings” and a “zone of non-beings,” with dwellers of the latter zone being regarded as not-yet beings. According to Abahlali baseMjondolo (“Abahlali”), translated as “those who dwell in shantytowns,” the quintessential locality of the “other side” – an other-side-being is a being who continues to be pushed below the line of the human, a humanoid whose “life and voice do not count.”⁵ The World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg saw SA place social justice at the heart of its sustainable development efforts.⁶ Therefore, the need to address social justice issues in SA is seen as a relevant and necessary endeavor that requires a multi-faceted approach. The research questions which informed this study were:

- What were the planning and preparation strategies used for the CSJ module at UKZN?
- How were planning and preparation carried out for the CSJ module at UKZN?

The findings are subsequently presented in this paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Buettner-Smith and Lobo defined social justice as full participation in society and the balancing of benefits and burdens by all citizens, resulting in equitable living and a just ordering of society.⁷ The attributes of

² Leon Tikly, “Education for Sustainable Development in Africa: A Critique of Regional Agendas,” *Asia Pacific Education Review* 20 (2019): 223; Becky Francis, Martin Mills, and Ruth Lupton, “Towards Social Justice in Education: Contradictions and Dilemmas,” *Journal of Education Policy* 32, no. 4 (2017): 414–31.

³ Victor Sulla, Precious Zikhali, and Pablo Facundo Cuevas, “Inequality in Southern Africa: An Assessment of the Southern African Customs Union,” 2022.

⁴ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (Routledge, 2015).

⁵ Lindela Figlan, “The Politic of Human Dignity,” *Abahlali BaseMjondolo*, 2012, 20.

⁶ African Union, “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. African Union Commission,” 2015, <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>.

⁷ Kelly Buettner-Schmidt and Marie L Lobo, “Social Justice: A Concept Analysis,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 68, no. 4 (2012): 948–58.

social justice, according to the authors ‘include (1) fairness; (2) equity in the distribution of power, resources, and processes that affect the sufficiency of social determinants of health; (3) just institutions, systems, structures, policies, and processes; (4) equity in human development, rights, and sustainability; and (5) sufficiency of well-being.’⁸ De Sousa Santos highlights that the struggle for global social justice is inseparable from the struggle for cognitive justice.⁹

South Africa's historical social landscape has been marred by prejudice, discrimination, and oppression, perpetuating the marginalization and exclusion of certain social groups. Recognizing the need for societal reconstruction based on principles of equity, non-discrimination, and inclusion.¹⁰ This study seeks to explore the cognitive and planning processes of individuals who seek to participate in educational reforms and innovations.

South Africa's gender-based violence (an aspect addressed by the CSJ module) is historically especially fueled by the ideologies of apartheid (racism) and patriarchy (sexism), which are based symbiotically on systemic humiliation that devalues and debases whole groups of people and makes them inferior.¹¹ Furthermore, it is argued that the current neo-patriarchal backlash in SA fuels and sustains the subjugation of women and casts them as both victims and perpetrators of pervasive patriarchal values.¹² Challenges with gender-based violence and other forms of inequality catalyzed the brainchild, which is the CSJ module at UKZN. The literature surrounding social justice initiatives highlights the diverse ways in which this concept is conceptualized and operationalized. From philosophical stances to research lenses, social justice encompasses a wide range of activities and perspectives, making it challenging to define and measure singularly. Francis et al. state that there have been many arguments about how to achieve social justice in education over the decades.¹³ Recent international neoliberal policy trends, including marketization of education, the increased blurring of the public and private as private sector practices and providers are welcomed into state education provision, and diversification of education offers in efforts to provide choice for ‘consumers’ of education.¹⁴

The University of KwaZulu-Natal's groundbreaking initiative to address prevalent social issues through a compulsory module focused on gender-based violence, racism, gender inequality, classism, and other forms of oppression.¹⁵ This endeavor, spearheaded by a multidisciplinary team of academics, aims to empower students to critically examine societal challenges and their own roles within these contexts. By fostering active participation in social change, the university sought to instill in students a deep understanding of the principles of social justice and their application in real-world settings.¹⁶ The module is aptly called the ‘Critical Social Justice (CSJ) and Citizenship Module’ and aims to challenge students to recognize a bit of themselves in everyone else and to respond with kindness, humility, and humanity; the module will encompass eight online lectures and eight supporting tutorials taught by master and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students familiar with social justice issues.¹⁷ Around 9,000 first-year students will make up the majority of the first cohort to benefit from this module, which will be offered in English or isiZulu and run in the first and second semesters of each year.¹⁸

The CSJ module represents a significant step toward equipping students with the critical understanding and practical tools needed to navigate and transform contemporary social landscapes. Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning at UKZN and task team chair, Professor Thabo Msibi,

⁸ Buettner-Schmidt and Lobo, “Social Justice: A Concept Analysis,” 23.

⁹ de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*.

¹⁰ Duduzile Fortunate Dlamini, *Narratives of Young Black Female Academic on Gender and Race Transformation in Public Universities: An Explorative Study Between the University of Venda and the University of the Witwatersrand* (University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2019).

¹¹ Lyn Snodgrass, “The Sins of the Father: Gender-Based Violence in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” *Commonwealth Youth and Development* 14, no. 2 (2016): 57–70.

¹² Snodgrass, “The Sins of the Father: Gender-Based Violence in Post-Apartheid South Africa.”

¹³ Francis, Mills, and Lupton, “Towards Social Justice in Education: Contradictions and Dilemmas.”

¹⁴ Anna Hogan, “NAPLAN and the Role of Edu-Business: New Governance, New Privatisations and New Partnerships in Australian Education Policy,” *The Australian Educational Researcher* 43 (2016): 93–110; Martin Mills et al., “Differentiated Learning: From Policy to Classroom,” *Oxford Review of Education* 40, no. 3 (2014): 331–48.

¹⁵ The Witness., “UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module,” 2024, <https://witness.co.za/news/2024/01/26/ukzn-launches-groundbreaking-social-justice-module/>.

¹⁶ The Witness., “UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module.”

¹⁷ The Witness., “UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module.”

¹⁸ The Witness., “UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module.”

said that the University is very pleased that through this module, UKZN hopes to produce graduates who are more conscious of their own humanity and that of others and who have a good sense of dealing with injustice in society.¹⁹ All facets of South African society have developed initiatives on how to address social inequality; The CSJ module can be seen as a Higher Education Institution (HEI) approach to addressing social justice issues through education.

Francis et al. argue that research on issues of social justice in education has often lacked constructive engagement with education policymaking and that this can be somewhat attributed to a lack of clarity about what a socially just education system might look like.²⁰ In the context of the CSJ module, policymakers in the HEI fraternity were engaged and agreed that the CSJ module should be incorporated into the curriculum of all programs offered at UKZN. At UKZN, social justice education has been achieved through the offering of a compulsory module. For a degree of Bachelor, a student must successfully pass the approved, non-credit-bearing CSJ module or obtain an exemption from the module competence through prior learning.²¹ The module outline reads as follows:

The module will look critically at a range of social injustices and social issues, including race, culture, gender-based violence, xenophobia, homophobia, disability, and class differences, with the intention of healing the prejudices and divisions of our past and finding a new way forward, where students can learn to accept, respect, and celebrate all people, regardless of their differences. The module uses a blended learning approach of eight online pre-recorded lectures about various topics and the same number of in-person supportive tutorials, which will be 90 minutes long per week. Expert academics have developed the pre-recorded lectures in each subject, and trained tutors facilitate the face-to-face tutorials and who have undergone intensive training and mentoring in facilitating these sometimes difficult conversations.²²

Kirsten et al. state that in a highly unequal society like SA, some individuals overestimate or underestimate their social position compared to their objective class position.²³ The issues of social injustice in its various facets, namely, gender-based violence, racism, culture-ism, classism, xenophobia, sexual abuse, body-shaming, and the like, have infiltrated various contemporary societies of the world.²⁴ A typical example is how Coloreds, Indians/Asians, and whites tend to inflate their social positions more than Africans.²⁵ The democratic mobilization to rid SA of apartheid can be seen as a peculiar case of diminishing returns. The move towards a metropolitan SA society has resulted in a denigration of important values and traditions, one of which is 'Ubuntu' in various African contexts. The link of Ubuntu to this study will be elaborated on in the theoretical considerations section.

Understanding gender norms and power dynamics is imperative for designing effective interventions, yet this aspect remains understudied, particularly in low-resource settings.²⁶ Moreover, recognizing the knowledge and perspectives of marginalized groups, including women, people of color, and colonized communities, is essential to realize social justice.²⁷ Bourey et al. emphasize the challenge of fostering a societal landscape that values diversity and promotes tolerance, requiring informed citizens with virtues conducive to a democratic system.²⁸

Gender-based violence (GBV) represents a significant concern within the university community, with the institution committed to fostering an inclusive and safe workplace environment for all employees, irrespective of race or gender.²⁹ Gender-based violence, rooted in patriarchy and perpetuated by gender

¹⁹ The Witness., "UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module."

²⁰ Francis, Mills, and Lupton, "Towards Social Justice in Education: Contradictions and Dilemmas."

²¹ The Witness., "UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module."

²² The Witness., "UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module."

²³ Frederich Kirsten et al., "Determinants of Bias Perceptions in South Africa: The Case of A Highly Unequal Society," *Sociological Inquiry* 93, no. 4 (2023): 701–22.

²⁴ Dlamini, *Narratives of Young Black Female Academic on Gender and Race Transformation in Public Universities: An Explorative Study Between the University of Venda and the University of the Witwatersrand.*

²⁵ Kirsten et al., "Determinants of Bias Perceptions in South Africa: The Case of A Highly Unequal Society."

²⁶ Christine Bourey et al., "Pile Sorting Innovations: Exploring Gender Norms, Power and Equity in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Global Public Health* 7, no. 9 (2012): 995–1008.

²⁷ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-Continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique—An Introduction," *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, no. 2 (2011).

²⁸ Bourey et al., "Pile Sorting Innovations: Exploring Gender Norms, Power and Equity in Sub-Saharan Africa."

²⁹ The Witness., "UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module."

inequality, power imbalances, and harmful stereotypes, is a global challenge and violates fundamental human rights.³⁰ While GBV can manifest in various forms, disproportionately affecting women and girls, its detrimental impact extends beyond physical harm to encompass psychological and socio-economic repercussions for survivors and their families.³¹ The university condemns all forms of GBV and encourages proactive measures such as challenging gender stereotypes, speaking out against violence, and standing against sexist remarks to combat GBV effectively.³²

Social justice education historically is situated within discourses of oppression and liberation.³³ Social justice, equality, and human dignity issues are worthy of scholarly discussion, especially in the HEI space.³⁴ To end poverty, promote good health and well-being, increase gender equality and women's empowerment, provide access to clean water, and create meaningful and lasting partnerships, it is revealed that a humanistic effort underpins the SDGs.³⁵ Understanding gender norms and power and equity issues is important for developing successful interventions.³⁶ However, little attention has been paid to how to capture the ideals and gender imbalances that inform these relationships in low-resource settings. Innovative applications can facilitate participants' abilities to engage in abstract concepts, reflecting on issues of gender norms, race, power, and equity.

Bourey et al. state that the challenge is to cultivate a social landscape that values diversity and tolerance and an appreciation of differences while joining together widely differing individuals for the greatest mutual benefit within a single society.³⁷ This "requires informed citizens who possess certain virtues" and "habits of heart and mind that are conducive to the healthy functioning of a democratic system."³⁸

The core objective of the CSJ module is to foster awareness among students regarding diversity and 'otherness,' as well as their own situated social identities.³⁹ This includes cultivating a nuanced understanding of human rights, inclusion, and social justice, thereby encouraging students to perceive themselves and others through this lens. Racism and other forms of oppression, as elucidated by Grosfoguel and Fanon, perpetuate global hierarchies of superiority and inferiority, with attributes such as skin color and gender determining one's perceived humanity.⁴⁰

Planning Social Justice Education Innovations

Uitermark and Nicholls argue that "planners can decide to use their status, knowledge, and professional skills effectively promote their view of social justice in the planning process and can assertively represent the interests of marginalized communities to administrators and other influential actors."⁴¹ In the context of the CSJ project, the university project team (made up of academics who have a tangible interest in social justice issues) presented the project and the module to the Senate, policy, and decision-makers for their approval. The project team, as 'organic intellectuals,' serves as the vanguard for the education of social justice in the university. Following Gramsci's lead, Paulo Freire created a method ("pedagogy of the oppressed") for organic intellectuals to "raise the consciousness" ("conscientização") of marginalized communities.⁴² This approach to the pedagogy of the oppressed culminated in the CSJ module, where the teaching of social justice issues through appropriate pedagogies was taught. Uitermark and Nicholls argue

³⁰ Rita A Gardiner and Hayley Finn, "Implementing Gender-Based Violence Policies in the Neoliberal University: Challenges and Contradictions," *Gender in Management: An International Journal* 38, no. 2 (2023): 215–29.

³¹ Gardiner and Finn, "Implementing Gender-Based Violence Policies in the Neoliberal University: Challenges and Contradictions."

³² Gardiner and Finn, "Implementing Gender-Based Violence Policies in the Neoliberal University: Challenges and Contradictions."

³³ R. Hardiman et al., *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, n.d.).

³⁴ Kershee Padayachee, Mapula Matimolane, and Rita Ganas, "Addressing Curriculum Decolonisation and Education for Sustainable Development through Epistemically Diverse Curricula," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 32, no. 6 (2018): 288–304.

³⁵ United Nations, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," . . . *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, A/RES/70/1*. (UN General Assembly: New York., 2015).

³⁶ Bourey et al., "Pile Sorting Innovations: Exploring Gender Norms, Power and Equity in Sub-Saharan Africa."

³⁷ Bourey et al., "Pile Sorting Innovations: Exploring Gender Norms, Power and Equity in Sub-Saharan Africa."

³⁸ Bourey et al., "Pile Sorting Innovations: Exploring Gender Norms, Power and Equity in Sub-Saharan Africa."

³⁹ The Witness., "UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module."

⁴⁰ Ramón Grosfoguel, "Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality," *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, no. 1 (2011); F. Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1967).

⁴¹ Justus Uitermark and Walter Nicholls, "Planning for Social Justice: Strategies, Dilemmas, Tradeoffs," *Planning Theory* 16, no. 1 (2017): 32–50, 33.

⁴² Paulo Freire, "2000, Pedagogy of the Oppressed," *Continuum, New York*, 1970.

that the lack of substantive definitions of social justice or the privileging of intellectuals comes at a cost.⁴³ In contrast, power differences between different stakeholders are left implicit or covered in such clinical terms as “competing logic.” In recognizing that the project team has privileged access to scarce resources (knowledge, skills, credentials) that make them powerful, they should also work to make these resources available to more marginalized forces. Recruitment of tutors of different genders, races, religions, sexualities, cultures, and languages, and their subsequent training using the Learn2024 platform, where various readings, presentations, articles, and resource materials were uploaded for their use. Some members of the project team also developed resources and directly trained tutors to be able to tutor the CSJ module.

Woods et al., when discussing planning and reform for school-based literacy and social justice education activities, assembled a team of university teacher educators/researchers who partnered with school leadership and staff to build community relationships.⁴⁴ The authors engaged in planning and preparations by engaging with “new digital arts and multimodal literacies through a focus on professional conversations and partnerships in curriculum and instruction – rather than the top-down implementation of a predetermined pedagogical scheme, package, or approach.” Woods et al. especially informed our planning and preparation processes, especially when training the tutors in the project.⁴⁵ The researcher used various art-based training approaches, which will be presented in the data presentation section. The use of Learn 2024 (Moodle), the official online learning platform of UKZN, was the main communication and resource center site for the CSJ module.

Bieler presented a model on important considerations with regard to planning for social justice initiatives, which is presented in Figure 1.⁴⁶

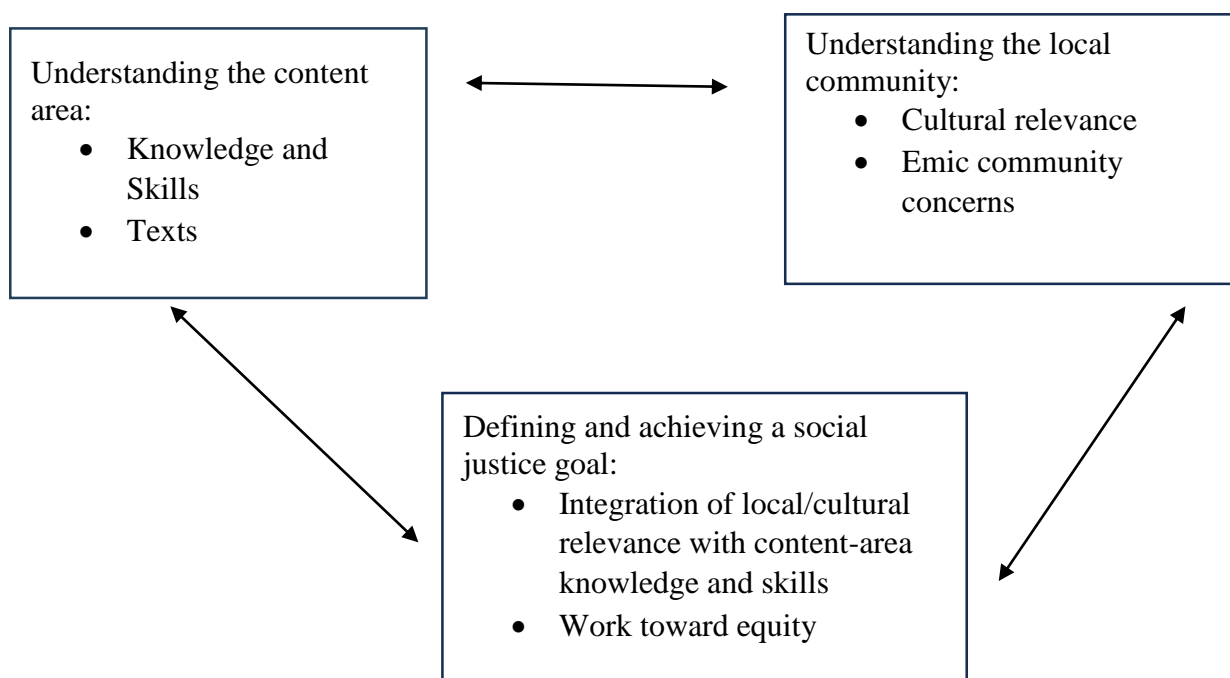


Figure 1: The relationship of three Characteristics of Social Justice Planning (Bieler, 2012)

The author believes that the three interlinking components of social justice planning shown in the boxes are important considerations when planning a process. *Understanding the content area* by considering the knowledge and skills facilitators wish to inculcate, and the texts that will be used serve as

⁴³ Uitermark and Nicholls, “Planning for Social Justice: Strategies, Dilemmas, Tradeoffs.”

⁴⁴ Annette Woods et al., “School Leadership, Literacy and Social Justice: The Place of Local School Curriculum Planning and Reform,” in *International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Social (in) Justice* (Springer, 2013), 509–20.

⁴⁵ Woods et al., “School Leadership, Literacy and Social Justice: The Place of Local School Curriculum Planning and Reform.”

⁴⁶ Deborah Bieler, “Possibilities for Achieving Social Justice Ends through Standardized Means,” *Teacher Education Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (2012): 85–102.

the starting point.⁴⁷ The next component linked to *Understanding the content area is Understanding the local community*. A good understanding of the community in which the social justice initiative takes place is important by considering the ‘cultural relevance’ of the knowledge, skills, and texts used, as well as the ‘Emic community concerns’. Emic refers to the goal of grasping the world according to particular points of view of interlocutors. The final planning component was *defining and achieving a social justice goal*. Here, Bieler believes that the integration of local/cultural relevance with content-area knowledge and skills needs to be considered while working toward equity, which thus will inform the *understanding of the content area*.⁴⁸ These components informed the planning and preparation for the CSJ module.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Education for Liberation

The overall aim of the CSJ module is to educate students about difference and ‘otherness’, their own placed social identities, and then, very importantly, to learn to see themselves and others differently from an understanding of human rights, inclusion, and social justice. For this reason, this study adopted the model of “Education for Liberation,” as discussed by Freire, Fanon, and Hooks within a human right, inclusive education for social justice understanding; the CSJ module strives to raise awareness of these entrenched inequalities among first-year students.⁴⁹ Embracing a decolonized educational perspective advocated by Fanon and Freire, the module prioritizes conscientization, wherein individuals critically engage with their socio-cultural realities and strive for self-liberation.⁵⁰ This approach contrasts with traditional education paradigms, characterized by ‘banking concepts’, emphasizing rote memorization over the critical inquiry. Instead, the module promotes an “engaged pedagogy,” as conceptualized by Bell Hooks, which prioritizes empowerment, holistic learning, and the challenging of dominant cultural norms.⁵¹ The module aims to unravel the mechanisms of oppression, delineate the roles of individuals within oppressive systems, and foster a collective understanding of social justice. As posited by Hardiman et al., oppression is not merely ideological but is entrenched within social structures, perpetuating systemic inequalities.⁵² Through narrative inquiry and critical reflection, the module aims to equip participants with the tools to challenge and dismantle these oppressive structures, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and just society.

Although democracy has been achieved in SA on the political front, there were still racial, sexist, gender, and cultural inferiority and superiority pathologies at work in South Africa. People classified above the line dividing superior from inferior human beings are recognized socially as human beings and enjoy rights and social recognition of their identities, epistemologies, and spiritualities.⁵³ Those classified below the line are considered subhuman/non-human, and their humanity is questioned and negated.⁵⁴ Racism (for example), according to Grosfoguel, is a global hierarchy of human superiority and inferiority produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the colonial world system.⁵⁵ Fanon identifies that some identities depict superiority over others; the ‘lighter’ one’s skin (for example), the closer to full humanity one is, and vice-versa.⁵⁶ This is also true for gender (if one identifies as a male) or identifies with the dominant culture or identity codes. Heleta, Christie and McKinney concur by stating that dominant worldviews remain alive in books, pedagogies, and educational practices.⁵⁷ The CSJ module

⁴⁷ Bieler, “Possibilities for Achieving Social Justice Ends through Standardized Means.”

⁴⁸ Bieler, “Possibilities for Achieving Social Justice Ends through Standardized Means.”

⁴⁹ B. Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* (Routledge, 2014); P. Freire, *Education: The Practice of Freedom*. (London: Writers and Readers, 1976); Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks*..

⁵⁰ Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks*; Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

⁵¹ Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

⁵² Hardiman et al., *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*.

⁵³ Ramon Grosfoguel, Laura Oso, and Anastasia Christou, “‘Racism’, Intersectionality and Migration Studies: Framing Some Theoretical Reflections,” in *Interrogating Intersectionalities, Gendering Mobilities, Racializing Transnationalism* (Routledge, 2018), 1–18.

⁵⁴ Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks*.

⁵⁵ Grosfoguel, “Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality.”

⁵⁶ Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks*.

⁵⁷ Savo Heleta, “Decolonisation of Higher Education: Dismantling Epistemic Violence and Eurocentrism in South Africa,” *Transformation in Higher Education* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–8; Pam Christie and Carolyn McKinney, “Decoloniality and” Model C” Schools: Ethos, Language and the Protests of 2016,” *Education as Change* 21, no. 3 (2017): 1–21.

seeks to create awareness and conscientiousness among first-year students at UKZN about these issues and more.

The world is made up of multiple realities and a decolonized education would mean a more informed view of the world.⁵⁸ Fanon argues for the reclamation of self and being. Freire uses the term 'conscientisation' to describe a process whereby students as 'knowing subjects' become aware of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives, and their capacity to transform it.⁵⁹ In the context of this research, those subjects are students and tutors operating in the CSJ module. Freire offered people how they could supersede their naive perception and adopt a critical attitude - to exchange their partial 'doxa' (meaning to accept a 'common belief') for the full 'logos' (principle) of reality.⁶⁰ Freire states that education should have liberation as its aim. 'Education for freedom' as opposed to the 'banking concept' affirms the capacity of people to decide for themselves.⁶¹ Good education should offer people the opportunity to 'tell their own stories'.⁶²

Author, theorist, educator, and social critic Bell Hooks proposes a pedagogy toward freedom, self-actualization, and students'/teachers' empowerment.⁶³ This she calls "engaged pedagogy". Hooks engaged pedagogy stands in opposition to that perpetrated by the dominant culture. Freire refers to this dominant system as "the banking system of education," where "memorizing information and regurgitating it represented gaining knowledge that could be deposited, stored and used at a later date" following set agendas.⁶⁴

Hooks envisions an engaged pedagogy as more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy.⁶⁵ She asserts that engaged pedagogy emphasizes wholeness, a union of mind, body, and spirit. Emphasizing the place of the experience of oppression, which can be either victimization or resistance, in the learning process, Hooks argues that experience can be a way to know and can inform how we know what we know.⁶⁶

According to Hooks, learning is most powerful when it liberates.⁶⁷ Learning in the classroom extends beyond learning content knowledge to a process of deliberately nurturing affective inclinations, emotions, and passions that surface during intense dialogues.⁶⁸ The classroom that Hooks advocates is that which challenges patriarchy and transcends the bourgeois biases of class, color, and gender and thus moves toward the humanization of individuals equally and collectively.⁶⁹ In such a classroom, monocultural instruction will be transformed into more inquiry-based exploratory experiences delineating trajectories of ethnic growth, asserting a mentality of equity and opening up spaces for participation and inclusiveness.

The thinking on these issues was informed by the work of Fanon, Freire, Memmi and Goldenberg.⁷⁰ The research goal became one of understanding, recognizing, and describing the generic characteristics of oppression. The starting point is that once systems of oppression are in place, they are self-perpetuating. The study will explore the structures of self-perpetuation, the roles people play in the system of oppression, and how these roles interact. According to the model, social oppression exists when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another social group for its own benefit. Oppression is neither an ideology (or set of beliefs) that asserts the superiority of one group over another,

⁵⁸ Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks*.

⁵⁹ Freire, *Education: The Practice of Freedom*.

⁶⁰ Freire, *Education: The Practice of Freedom*.

⁶¹ Freire, *Education: The Practice of Freedom*.

⁶² Eileen Bellett, "Religious Education for Liberation: A Perspective from Paulo Freire," *British Journal of Religious Education* 20, no. 3 (1998): 133–43.

⁶³ Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

⁶⁴ Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 14.

⁶⁵ Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

⁶⁶ Iman C Chahine, "Towards an Engaged Pedagogy: Bell Hooks Manifesto and the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics," *Global Journal of Human Social Science Linguistics and Education* 13, no. 10 (2013): 23–27; Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

⁶⁷ Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

⁶⁸ Chahine, "Towards an Engaged Pedagogy: Bell Hooks Manifesto and the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics."

⁶⁹ Chahine, "Towards an Engaged Pedagogy: Bell Hooks Manifesto and the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics."

⁷⁰ Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks*; Freire, "2000, Pedagogy of the Oppressed"; Lucia Memmi, "Sur Quelques Ammonites Du Valanginien de l'Oued Guelta (Tunisie)," *Bulletin de La Société Géologique de France* 7, no. 5 (1965): 833–38; Claude Goldenberg, "Instructional Conversations: Promoting Comprehension through Discussion," *The Reading Teacher* 46, no. 4 (1992): 316–26.

nor is it random violence, harassment, or discrimination.⁷¹ A more local assertion in opposition to social oppression can be found in the African notion of ‘Ubuntu’.

Ubuntu

Ubuntu has been proposed as a useful alternative to current (Western) ethical frameworks.⁷² Authors such as Metz, Komparic, and Breems contend that Ubuntu is an African moral system that has been influential in a wide geographical area and is principally a normative ethical system among the people in southern Africa.⁷³ *Ubuntu*, according to Molefe, is an African term that promotes togetherness and unity.⁷⁴ This study qualifies *ubuntu* within this study through the way in which this module was developed and conceptualized in a HEI, where learning within a global South context needs to consider African and socio-cultural issues of the disenfranchised occupants of the global South.⁷⁵

The tutors in the module are made up of all representative genders, sexualities, and races. Reflecting the inclusive nature of the module. Students studying the module have the option to engage in the learning material, lectures, and tutorials in either English or isiZulu. The module challenges students to recognize a bit of themselves in everyone else and to respond with kindness, humility, and humanity.⁷⁶

Social justice in education can be achieved through epistemic justice.⁷⁷ Catala believes that epistemic justice is based on the democratic requirements of epistemic equality, legitimacy, and accountability.⁷⁸ Adams et al. elucidate the concept of teaching social justice as both a process and a goal.⁷⁹ Social justice involves the aspiration for full and equal participation of all social groups, with the aim of shaping a society to meet their needs. This process is advocated to be democratic, participatory, and affirming of human agency, fostering collaborative efforts for change.⁸⁰ Within the context of higher education, social justice education has historically been intertwined with discourses of oppression and liberation.⁸¹ The issues of social justice, equality, and human dignity have garnered scholarly attention, particularly within Higher Education Institutions.⁸² In particular, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underscore the humanistic effort to address poverty, health disparities, gender inequality, and other social injustices.⁸³

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study was located within the interpretive paradigm. A narrative inquiry design was adopted. Three tutors from the 40-person population and two of the seven academics who make up the UKZN CSJ project team were purposively selected to participate in this study. Narrative inquiry was used to generate knowledge through lived experiences. Gonsalves argues that narrative-based research allows a study to look at lived experiences that are self-reflexive, making sense of experiences to understand the phenomena at hand.⁸⁴ Narrative inquiry lends itself to the exploration of complex areas of social identity development.⁸⁵ Narrative inquiry employs narrative ways to generate field text (data). This includes,

⁷¹ Hardiman et al., *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*.

⁷² Johan Cilliers, “In Search of Meaning between Ubuntu and Into: Perspectives on Preaching in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” *Societas Homiletica*, 2008, 1–20.

⁷³ Thaddeus Metz, “Higher Education, Knowledge for Its Own Sake, and an African Moral Theory,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 28, no. 6 (2009): 517–36; Ana Komparic, “The Ethics of Introducing GMOs into Sub-Saharan Africa: Considerations from the Sub-Saharan African Theory of Ubuntu,” *Bioethics* 29, no. 9 (2015): 604–12; Brad Breems, “Relational Being as Icon or Communal Freedom: Southern Africa’s Ubuntu,” *Journal of Sociology and Christianity* 6, no. 2 (2016).

⁷⁴ T. O. Molefe, “Oppression Must Fall: South Africa’s Revolution in Theory,” *World Policy Journal* 33, no. 1 (2016): 32.

⁷⁵ de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*.

⁷⁶ The Witness., “UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module.”

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Anderson, “Epistemic Justice as a Virtue of Social Institutions,” *Social Epistemology* 26, no. 2 (2012): 163–73.

⁷⁸ Amandine Catala, “Democracy, Trust, and Epistemic Justice,” *The Monist* 98, no. 4 (2015): 424–40.

⁷⁹ William M Adams et al., “Biodiversity Conservation and the Eradication of Poverty,” *Science* 306, no. 5699 (2004): 1146–49.

⁸⁰ Adams et al., “Biodiversity Conservation and the Eradication of Poverty.”

⁸¹ Hardiman et al., *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*.

⁸² Padayachee, Matimolane, and Ganas, “Addressing Curriculum Decolonisation and Education for Sustainable Development through Epistemically Diverse Curricula.”

⁸³ United Nations, “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

⁸⁴ Allison J Gonsalves et al., “Using Story-Based Methodologies to Explore Physics Identities: How Do Moments Add up to a Life in Physics?,” *Physical Review Physics Education Research* 19, no. 2 (2023): 020106.

⁸⁵ Gonsalves et al., “Using Story-Based Methodologies to Explore Physics Identities: How Do Moments Add up to a Life in Physics?”

among others, a Narrative interview (unstructured), which was a pertinent field text-generation method.⁸⁶ In the case of this study, this was based on interviewing the participants about their lived experiences of planning and preparation for the CSJ module. The researcher also observed planning workshops with the tutors and presented this through photo-voice. Photovoice, according to Ilagan et al., is an image-based research method that seeks to examine and understand issues through the everyday experiences of people whose voices are often unheard, forgotten, or silenced.⁸⁷ Participant reflections were also conducted. Participants in a photovoice project were asked to represent their point of view or opinion by photographing scenes relevant to what was presented.⁸⁸

Pseudonyms were used for all participants, and the collected data are securely stored and managed in the supervisor's office, adhering to ethical guidelines; the protocol reference number is HSSREC/00006574/2023. All relevant permissions were obtained, and full ethical clearance from UKZN was granted. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants (who granted permission for their photos to be used in the study) are maintained throughout the study.

Data generation

Data were generated from tutors and the members of the CSJ project team on the planning and preparation for the implementation of the module. These were analyzed using content and thematic analysis. Denzin and Lincoln argue that content analysis in a study is one of the aspects that create time structures for participants' lives and experiences.⁸⁹ Following Gray, the researcher subsequently used thematic analysis to recognize and analyze patterns of meaning in the data.⁹⁰ Data were coded and grouped into categories and themes, adding meaning to this study in the form of findings.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This paper sought to explore the following research objectives as they related to the relevant research questions.

- To explore the planning and preparation strategies used for the CSJ module at UKZN.
- To explore how the planning and preparation for the CSJ module at UKZN.

Interviews with the academics who form part of the project team were conducted at the end of 2023. Tutor interviews were conducted in April and May of 2024.

The following codes were used to present the data:

CSJ TI- CSJ Tutor Interview

PTMI-Project Team Member interview

O-Observation (Photo-voice)

R-Reflections

Pseudonyms were as follows:

T1: Tutor 1

T2: Tutor 2

T3: Tutor 3

PTM1: Project Team Member 1

PTM2: Project Team Member 2

For the first research question, 'What were the planning and preparation strategies used for the CSJ module at UKZN?' the following themes emerged:

- *Collaborative Engagement*
- *Adoption of Policy and South African Social Justice Agenda*

⁸⁶ Vera Caine, Andrew Estefan, and D Jean Clandinin, "A Return to Methodological Commitment: Reflections on Narrative Inquiry," in *Journeys in Narrative Inquiry* (Routledge, 2019), 265–77.

⁸⁷ Chloe Ilagan et al., "Use of Photovoice Methods in Research on Informal Caring: A Scoping Review of the Literature," *Journal of Human Health Research* 1, no. 3 (2020): 1–14.

⁸⁸ S Jongeling et al., "PhotoVoice Facilitator's Guide," *Rutgers, International Department, Youth Empowerment Alliance; Rutgers: Utrecht, The Netherlands*, 2016.

⁸⁹ Denzin K. Norman and Yvonna S Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Chicago: SAGE Publications, 2017).

⁹⁰ D. E. Gray, *Doing Research in the Real World* (Sage, 2016).

Theme One: Collaborative Engagement

Social interactions are a catalyst for reinvention and critical thinking⁹¹ and form the basis for the African *Ubuntu* paradigm,⁹² which was adopted in the CSJ projects. One strategy for planning and preparation of the CSJ module was the collaborative engagement between academics who form the core planning team, as well as collaboration between the project team and tutors and tutor-to-tutor collaboration. PTM1, when asked to “describe the planning process of the CSJ Module” during a PTMI, had the following to say,

In the early stages, an email went out to invite interested academics to be part of a task team to develop this module. A number of workshops were held where the overall structure and content of 8 lectures and 8 tutorials were decided on (PTM1-30/11/2023).

PTM1 highlighted workshops as the driving force behind the planning process. Ørngreen and Levinsen argue that workshops provide a platform that can aid academics in identifying and exploring relevant factors in each domain by providing a means for understanding complex work and knowledge processes through collaboration.⁹³

The CSJ module, which was piloted in the College of Humanities in 2023 before university-wide adoption, was presented to the university community for input. PTM2 had the following to say when describing the planning and preparation process of the module,

First-year students and their parents were introduced to the Critical Social Justice and Citizenship module during the university’s Parents’ Day on Saturday. The event was held so that they had the chance to engage with key academic and support staff members in a range of areas. This was to ensure that our most crucial stakeholders, the parents and guardians, are well-informed and understand their roles in supporting their children’s academic journeys (PTM2-02/11/2023).

During a CSJ Tutor Interview, T1 expressed experiences of the planning and preparation process for the CSJ module:

From the outset, it was clear that we had to work together with peers and academic staff to share and learn about social justice from each other. This collaboration really made the preparation process much easier as I was not alone (CSJ TI -15/05/2024)

Figure 2 shows a photo-voice from a workshop/collaborative engagement during the planning of the module for the 2024 Academic year.



Figure 2: Project Team Members at a CSJ Planning and Preparation Meeting.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Andrew Bernier, “How Matching Systems Thinking with Critical Pedagogy May Help Resist the Industrialization of Sustainability Education,” *Journal of Sustainability Education* 18, no. 1 (2018): 22–36.

⁹² Emefa J Takyi-Amoako and N’Dri Thérèse Assié-Lumumba, “Conclusion: Towards an Ubuntu-Inspired Continental Partnership on Education for Sustainable Development in Africa—African Union Commission Agenda 2063 Education Strategy,” *Re-Visioning Education in Africa: Ubuntu-Inspired Education for Humanity*, 2018, 229–46.

⁹³ Rikke Ørngreen and Karin Tweddell Levinsen, “Workshops as a Research Methodology,” *Electronic Journal of E-Learning* 15, no. 1 (2017): 70–81.

⁹⁴ University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, “THE UKZN TRANSFORMATION CHARTER. University of Kwa-Zulu Natal,” 2022, <https://www.ukzn.ac.za/wp-content/miscFiles/docs/general-docs/the-ukzn-transformation-charter.pdf>.

PTM2, narrating her experience in the photo above, had the following to say,

A diverse group of project team members in terms of gender and ethnicity were involved in robust engagements on the CSJ module. This signifies UKZN's commitment to educating students on social justice issues, aiming to foster a more inclusive and equitable academic environment. We proposed ideas for the tutorials, spoke about the challenges and successes from the piloting process of 2023, and used these to project future implementation of the module (O-23/11/2024).

The engagements between all stakeholders in the CSJ module contributed to its establishment and subsequent implementation. Hlatshwayo et al. argue that “curricula can be thought of as an active conceptual tool that is dialectical, inclusive, and democratic in its very constitution, capable of enabling varied voices such as those from students, lecturers, policymakers, community stakeholder and others.”⁹⁵ Takyi-Amoako and Assié-Lumumba posit that the practical enactment of the African *ubuntu* paradigm focuses on collective engagement.⁹⁶ This is in line with the notion of ‘Education as Liberation’ in line with what Hooks calls ‘engaged pedagogy.’⁹⁷ Collaborative engagement contributes to eliciting the concept of ‘Understanding the local community’, focusing on the ‘Cultural relevance’ and ‘Emic community concerns’ as discussed by Bieler.⁹⁸

Theme Two: Adoption of Policy and South African Social Justice Agenda

The second strategy that was adopted during the planning and preparation process for the CSJ module was the notion of adopting national SA priorities at the HEI and local levels. The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, like all of South Africa's 26 public universities, is grappling with sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).⁹⁹ According to Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande, 10% of all reported rape cases in the country occurred in higher education institutions.¹⁰⁰ In March, UKZN announced the establishment of a GBV hub that will be located within the office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor Nana Poku. At the time, Poku said that the hub would ensure an improved response to incidents of GBV within the university community.¹⁰¹

When asked about the important considerations for the CSJ module, PTM2 stated that in establishing the CSJ module,

The project team had to review the existing SGBV-related policies and manage systems for the monitoring, evaluation, and tracking of reported cases. The CSJ module would need to fulfill the SGBV policy and contribute to implementing this at a university level (PTM2-12/11/2023).

In responding to important considerations for the module, T3 had the following to say,

Through our training, we were to understand how negative attitudes towards “otherness” develop and how they could be challenged to disrupt old ways of thinking and learn new ways to study, live, and work together with people who are different. We want to spark transformation in keeping with the UKZN Transformation Charter (CSJ TI -10/05/2024).

The UKZN Transformation Charter highlights some of the following aspirations:

- Heals the divisions of our nation’s past, bridges racial and cultural divides, and lays the foundations for a university that is united in its diversity.
- Is free of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, gender, class, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, and disability.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo and Lester Brian Shawa, “Towards a Critical Re-Conceptualization of the Purpose of Higher Education: The Role of Ubuntu-Currere in Re-Imagining Teaching and Learning in South African Higher Education,” *Higher Education Research & Development* 39, no. 1 (2020): 26–38.

⁹⁶ Takyi-Amoako and Assié-Lumumba, “Conclusion: Towards an Ubuntu-Inspired Continental Partnership on Education for Sustainable Development in Africa—African Union Commission Agenda 2063 Education Strategy.”

⁹⁷ Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

⁹⁸ Bieler, “Possibilities for Achieving Social Justice Ends through Standardized Means.”

⁹⁹ The Witness., “UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module.”

¹⁰⁰ News24., “UKZN Announces Compulsory Module on GBV, Racism, Gender Inequality and Classism,” News24, 2024, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/ukzn-announces-compulsory-module-on-gbv-racism-gender-inequality-and-classism-20230902>.

¹⁰¹ The Witness., “UKZN Launches Ground Breaking Social Justice Module.”

¹⁰² University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, “The UKZN Transformation Charter. University of Kwa-Zulu Natal .”

PTM1, when asked about the objectives of developing the CSJ module, had the following to say,

When developing the module, we wanted to develop better human beings who are socially responsive and who have a deeper consciousness, not only about themselves and how they are positioned in society but about how they perceive others located in society (PTM1-11/11/2023).

The CSJ module, in essence, allows for an education in which the aspirations mentioned above can be realized. Knight notes that decolonization and transformation in the academy are important topics under debate; however, they also speak to other issues, such as education access, funding, employment equity, diversity, and language policy, which are of relevance to national political debates.¹⁰³ Knudsen and Andersen posit that the transformation agenda is premised on equality, which is steeped in sustainable development and underpinned by a decolonial agenda.¹⁰⁴

The planning and preparation strategies used for the CSJ module at UKZN were mainly based on ‘Collaborative Engagement’ and the process of the ‘Adoption of Policy and South African Social Justice Agenda’. There were various other considerations during the planning and preparation processes, which could have been research, innovation, and based on access to finance. The project team, with their vast influence and access to resources, both financial and human, brought their dearth of skills and knowledge to the CSJ module for its implementation.

The second research question presented in this article was, *How were planning and preparation carried out for the CSJ module at UKZN?* the following themes emerged through engagement with this question:

- *Trainer facilitated Workshops*
- *Lecture and Tutorial Development*

Theme One: Trainer-facilitated Workshops

The planning and preparation carried out for the CSJ module in UKZN was mainly through the trainer (who was one of the members of the CSJ project team) who provided training workshops for the 40 CSJ tutors.

Tutors participated in a series of training workshops and collaborative activities, along with presentations facilitated by the tutor trainer. Observation data from these workshops were then gathered and analyzed. The trainer was asked to narrate what was taking place in the photograph. This is presented in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Trainer-facilitated CSJ Tutor Workshop (19/02/2024)

¹⁰³ Jasper Knight, “Decolonizing and Transforming the Geography Undergraduate Curriculum in South Africa,” *South African Geographical Journal= Suid-Afrikaanse Geografiese Tydskrif* 100, no. 3 (2018): 271.

¹⁰⁴ Britta Timm Knudsen and Casper Andersen, “Affective Politics and Colonial Heritage, Rhodes Must Fall at UCT and Oxford,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25, no. 3 (2019): 239–58.

The trainer, who was also PTM1, had the following to say about the figure above:

Figure 3 depicts tutors engaging in a workshop that consisted of a group discussion about power and oppression, which is linked to the CSJ module curriculum. This workshop took place after the participants had been an audience to the presentation by the tutor-trainer about power and oppression. In the picture is a small group of tutors sitting around a table while another tutor facilitates the discussion. Tutors were engaged in a conversation or discussion about power and oppression. Sharing their ideas on the topics but also engaging in ways they would engage students on the topic during their tutorial sessions. Tutors were interacting, sharing insight and experience, and challenging one another's views on important social justice issues. These collaborative workshops allowed tutors to learn from the trainer as well as from each other on issues related to CSJ. This was a way we prepared for the CSJ module (O-19/02/2024).

The tutor trainer was also able to recruit external stakeholders who were experts in the field of CSJ and tutor training. Figure 4 presented one such expert and a session on 'Gender and Sexuality'.



Figure 4: A GBV Coordinator Workshop presentation

T2 was able to narrate what was taking place in the photograph in the figure above:

In the photo, a Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Coordinator is presenting a workshop to a group of tutors. The coordinator stands at the front of the room, passionately explaining key concepts and strategies to combat and address GBV. The audience of tutors listens attentively, some taking notes while others engage with the visual aids displayed. The coordinator used a combination of slides, real-life examples, and interactive activities to ensure the tutors fully understand the importance of their role in identifying and responding to instances of GBV within their educational settings. The atmosphere is one of serious engagement and mutual respect, as the tutors recognize the significance of the training in creating a safe and supportive environment for all students (O-24/02/2024).

The mix of presentation and group, workshop-style engagements reflected the collaborative and consultative nature of the CSJ module from its inception. The workshop approach was informative and also allowed the tutors to implement practically and discuss in smaller groups what was presented in trainer-facilitated sessions. The workshops were mediated on using various video clips, PowerPoint presentations, pictures, online learning platforms, and social media platforms. Information technology was an important tool that made trainer-facilitated workshops more fruitful.

An important session was the use of a pile-sorting session. Conducting pile sorting within focus group discussions (with tutors) enabled comparative analyses of gender, race, culture, etc., norms while enriching data by focusing discussions and encouraging consensus building. Derived from cognitive

anthropology, pile sorting is a qualitative methodology designed to elicit how participants evaluate their social experiences.¹⁰⁵ Practically, pile sorting includes a range of variations. The facilitator may provide participants with labelled cards or ask participants to label blank cards.¹⁰⁶ Pile sorting may be constrained, in which participants organize cards according to categories determined by the facilitator, or unconstrained, in which participants organize cards according to categories that they determine.¹⁰⁷ Figures 5a and 5b show two piles that were sorted by one of the groups of tutors who attended the training workshop on the 10th of February 2024.



Figure 5a: Tutor Group One – on their understanding of masculinity and femininity using pile sorting



Figure 5b: Tutor Group Two– on their understanding of masculinity and femininity using pile sorting

Tutor Group One, in Figure 5a, organized the pictures which were given to them into main groupings, mainly what they believed to be linked to feminism (they put pink, rape, speaking English, and money, to name a few). In contrast, they associated masculinity with blue, guns, muscles, and soccer, to name a few.

¹⁰⁵ Lydia R Horne et al., “Using Pile Sorts to Understand Perceptions of Climate Change,” *WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment* 227 (2018): 175–83.

¹⁰⁶ S. Borgatti, “Elicitation Techniques for Cultural Domain Analysis,” 1998, <http://steveborgatti.com/papers/bhetk.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ Borgatti, “Elicitation Techniques for Cultural Domain Analysis.”

Tutor Group Two, presented in Figure 5b, organized the given pictures into the two groupings offered. It also placed some pictures in the middle area to show that those aspects presented by the pictures can relate to what they believed as both masculinity and femininity alike. Pictures related to alcohol, meat, soccer, money, and speaking English were attributed to both masculinity and femininity (O-PTM2-23/02/2024).

Through workshops, tutors were able to exercise their agency and freedom from imposed knowledge by taking ownership of their own learning.¹⁰⁸ Through exposure to these CSJ workshops, which can be seen as transformational professional development processes, tutors were allowed to understand the possibilities of transcending familiar social and epistemological boundaries as this relates to CSJ issues.

Clarence believes that tutors can learn to tutor effectively by participating in workshop-style engagements.¹⁰⁹ The author further stated that through workshops, tutors get to know the peers they are tutoring alongside, they receive valuable materials and information that can inform their in-tutorial activities, and the facilitator can grasp a valuable opportunity to model successful or useful tutorial activities or practices.

Theme Two: Lecture and Tutorial Development

The planning and preparation carried out for the CSJ module at UKZN were also administered through the processes of proactive development of lectures and tutorials. The module used blended learning delivery: pre-recorded online lectures and in-person small-group tutorials. Each member of the project team was responsible for each of the eight topics that were presented in the CSJ module. When asked about how the planning and preparation processes were carried out, PTM2 had the following to say:

In response to the urgent need for comprehensive social justice education, our team has focused on Lecture and Tutorial Development to ensure that the critical components of this module are effectively communicated and understood. By designing lectures that provide a robust theoretical foundation and developing interactive tutorials that facilitate deep engagement and practical application, we aim to create an educational experience that empowers students to analyze and address social justice issues critically. This approach not only enhances their academic knowledge but also equips them with the skills necessary to become proactive advocates for equity and inclusion in their communities (PTM2-12/01/2024).

The CSJ tutors were also recruited to narrate some of the lectures and explanations related to the CSJ module. When asked about the preparation processes in the module, T2 stated that,

When planning for the module, I was asked to narrate the planned lecture on the topic of race and racism, recognizing it as a crucial component of both planning and preparation. This narrative approach allows for a deeper engagement with the subject matter, ensuring that the complex and sensitive issues surrounding race and racism are addressed thoughtfully and comprehensively (CSJ TI -15/02/2024).

PTM1 also stated that she would send planned tutorial plans to the tutor before each tutorial session. When asked about how other planning and preparation processes took place, she said,

The process for receiving and accessing the detailed plans for our weekly tutorials was that I would plan each tutorial and develop key notes and points to guide tutors during their tutorials. Each week, tutors receive a comprehensive tutorial plan via email from the module coordinator. This has pictures, activities, terminology, and information about the week's topic. The tutorial plan, which was planned using research and articles, outlined all the necessary details and steps for each tutorial session. To ensure everyone has easy access to these plans, I posted them on an online learning site. Tutors are able to regularly follow the tutorial plans and stay updated on any changes or additional instructions (PTM1-25/02/2024).

¹⁰⁸ Tshepo Madlingozi, "Social Justice in a Time of Neo-Apartheid Constitutionalism: Critiquing the Anti-Black Economy of Recognition, Incorporation and Distribution," *Stellenbosch Law Review* 28, no. 1 (2017): 123–47.

¹⁰⁹ Sherran Clarence, "Towards Inclusive, Participatory Peer Tutor Development in Higher Education," *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning (CriStaL)* 6, no. 1 (2018): 58–74.

PTM1 highlighted that she would develop tutorial plans, especially for tutors, as a strategy for planning and preparation for the module. Logistical planning and information dissemination also form a part of the activities required to ensure that the CSJ module is implemented effectively. Freire compelled educators to engage in “praxis: reflection and action on the world to transform it.”¹¹⁰ Critical reflection involves “reading the world” in ways that illuminate the structural constraints of injustice and inequality that shape our communities and schools. The development of lectures and tutorial plans forms part of the praxis that informed the CSJ module. Bondy et al., in their work on dispositions for critical social justice teaching and learning, believe that praxis is in a perpetual state of becoming as we strive to unlearn the lessons taught about who we are and how education programs should be.¹¹¹ Bondy et al. herald the importance of identifying and planning to resolve the structural and philosophical constraints that limit teaching for social justice within institutions.¹¹² These sentiments informed the way the CSJ module was planned and prepared.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The CSJ module at UKZN is, but the beginning of education focused on the social justice issues that are experienced daily. This study therefore recommends that first, HEIs must serve as the vanguard for the protection of the rights and identities of all people, and, more especially, HEIs must serve as an active force for change, as identified by Le Grange.¹¹³

Thorough planning and preparation processes are required to implement CSJ initiatives successfully. These, as per the research presented in this article, should be based on collaborative engagements that are promoted by academics, students, and other interested members of society. Ideally, it is recommended that all members of society, black and white, of all genders, creeds, cultures, and sexualities, should be responsible for educating and creating a culture of tolerance and acceptance of people of all identities.

This student further recommends that facilitated training workshops and well-developed lectures and tutorials be created, funded, organized, and implemented in institutional settings and, we hope, one day, through public dialogue, be addressed through policy and governmental structures.

CONCLUSION

In a society that seeks equity, inclusion, and social justice, the critical examination of the planning and preparation of initiatives and projects becomes paramount. The CSJ module at UKZN presents a pioneering endeavor towards fostering a generation of empowered individuals capable of effecting societal change. Through an exploration of the planning and preparation of tutors for critical social justice, this research embarks on a journey to illuminate the transformative potential of education in reshaping societal attitudes and structures.

Based on the principles of Education for Liberation espoused by scholars such as Freire, Fanon, and Hooks, the CSJ module transcends traditional pedagogical boundaries to engage students in a holistic process of self-discovery and societal critique. Challenging dominant narratives and fostering critical consciousness equips students with the conceptual and practical tools needed to navigate and transform an inherently unequal world. At its core, this research underscores the imperative to cultivate informed citizens committed to the ideals of democracy, social justice, and inclusion. It echoes the sentiment that true liberation lies not only in legislative reform but also in the collective awakening of individual agency and empathy. Through narrative inquiry data generation methods, it sought to amplify the voices of academics and tutors, recognizing their lived experiences as invaluable sources of knowledge and insight for future planning.

The most observable planning and preparation strategies used for the CSJ module at UKZN were first, ‘Collaborative Engagement’ as well as an effort to adopt the ‘Policy and South African Social Justice

¹¹⁰ Freire, “2000, Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” 51.

¹¹¹ Elizabeth Bondy et al., “Dispositions for Critical Social Justice Teaching and Learning,” *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis* 6, no. 3 (2017).

¹¹² Bondy et al., “Dispositions for Critical Social Justice Teaching and Learning.”

¹¹³ Lesley Le Grange, “Decolonising, Africanising, Indigenising, and Internationalising Curriculum Studies: Opportunities to (Re) Imagine the Field,” *Journal of Education (University of KwaZulu-Natal)*, no. 74 (2018): 4–18.

Agenda' into the CSJ module. The planning and preparation carried out for the CSJ module at UKZN were to engage tutors in 'trainer facilitated workshops' as well as through 'lecture and tutorial development' processes.

As South Africa continues its journey toward a more just and equitable society, the CSJ module stands as a beacon of hope and possibility. It reaffirms the transformative power of education in the dismantling of oppressive structures and in the nurturing of a culture of dialogue, empathy, and solidarity. By embracing diversity, challenging prejudice, and fostering a sense of shared humanity, we pave the way for a future where every individual is empowered to realize their full potential and contribute to the collective pursuit of social justice. The success of the CSJ module hinges not only on its curriculum or delivery methods but also on the collective commitment of students, tutors, and stakeholders to uphold the principles of equity, inclusion, and human dignity. As we embark on this journey of exploration and introspection, let us remain steadfast in our resolve to create a world where every voice is heard, every identity respected, and every individual empowered to shape their own destiny.

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