

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Leading higher education transformation: The role of student affairs

Mener la transformation de l'enseignement supérieur : Le rôle des œuvres estudiantines

Chanaaz Charmain January¹

Article history: Received 12 January 2023 | Accepted 27 October 2023 | Published 14 December 2023

ABSTRACT

Student affairs practitioners and researchers are well positioned to contribute holistically to student success and as such could play a strategic role in the transformation of higher education. The aim of this article is to illustrate that a key strategic objective of student affairs is to contribute significantly towards student success. This article reports on a study (January, 2021) entitled 'Towards a qualitative framework for blending equity and excellence in transforming South African higher education transformation to achieve development' in which the promotion of student success is viewed as central to institutional transformation. The purpose of the study was to contribute to a more comprehensive qualitative framework for higher education transformation in South Africa by reconciling notions of 'equity and excellence'. Interviews were conducted with sixteen leaders in the field of higher education in South Africa. Thereafter, interview data were triangulated with strategic documents of various entities concerned with higher education transformation. The theoretical framework encapsulated the human capital and human capability theories and argues further for a reconciliation of these theories to promote social justice and human well-being. The study used grounded theory methods to analyse and present the comprehensive qualitative framework. The study found that student success was the most critical factor driving institutional transformation. In addition, four other interrelated elements were presented as the core elements of a comprehensive framework. Based on these findings, this article explores the implications for student affairs further, using unpublished input gathered by the author through reflective conversations with stakeholders at the University of Cape Town. In this regard the notion of a set of student learning imperatives (graduate attributes) becomes relevant to the discussion when student affairs practitioners and researchers collaborate with faculties and departments on strategic projects.

KEYWORDS

Equity, excellence, graduate attributes, human capital theory, capabilities approach, student success, student affairs practitioners, student affairs researchers, social justice, university transformation

RÉSUMÉ

Les praticiens et chercheurs du secteur des œuvres estudiantines sont bien placés pour contribuer de manière holistique à la réussite des étudiants et, à ce titre, ils pourraient jouer un rôle stratégique dans la transformation de l'enseignement supérieur. L'objectif de cet article est d'illustrer qu'un objectif stratégique clé des œuvres estudiantines est de contribuer de manière significative à la réussite des

1 Dr Chanaaz Charmain January, Manager: Residence Life, Student Housing and Residence Life, Department of Student Affairs, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, South Africa. Email: charmaine.january@uct.ac.za. ORCID: 0009-0008-1263-1105

étudiants. Cet article présente les résultats d'une étude menée en janvier 2021, intitulée «*Vers un cadre qualitatif permettant de combiner équité et excellence dans la transformation de l'enseignement supérieur sud-africain afin de parvenir au développement*», dans laquelle la promotion de la réussite des étudiants est considérée comme centrale à la transformation institutionnelle. L'objectif de l'étude était de contribuer à un cadre qualitatif plus complet pour la transformation de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique du Sud en conciliant les notions d'équité et d'excellence. Des entretiens ont été menés avec seize leaders du secteur de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique du Sud et les données issues de ces entretiens ont ensuite été triangulées avec les documents stratégiques de différentes entités œuvrant à la transformation de l'enseignement supérieur. Le cadre théorique englobe les théories du capital humain et des capacités humaines et plaide en faveur d'une harmonisation de ces théories afin de promouvoir la justice sociale et le bien-être humain. L'étude a utilisé des méthodes de théorie ancrée pour analyser et présenter le cadre qualitatif global. L'étude a révélé que la réussite des étudiants était le facteur le plus important de la transformation institutionnelle. En outre, quatre autres éléments interdépendants ont été présentés comme étant les éléments essentiels d'un cadre global. Sur la base de ces résultats, cet article explore davantage les implications pour les œuvres estudiantines en utilisant des données inédites recueillies par l'auteur lors de conversations réflexives avec des parties prenantes de l'Université du Cap. Dans ce contexte, la notion d'un ensemble d'impératifs d'apprentissage des étudiants (compétences des diplômés) devient pertinente dans la discussion lorsque les praticiens et chercheurs du secteur des œuvres estudiantines collaborent avec le corps enseignant et les départements sur des projets stratégiques.

MOTS-CLÉS

Équité, excellence, compétences des diplômés, théorie du capital humain, approche par les capacités, réussite des étudiants, praticiens en affaires étudiantes, chercheurs en affaires étudiantes, justice sociale, transformation universitaire

Introduction

Student affairs practitioners and researchers typically oversee holistic student support, student development, and governance activities. Further, they are generally responsible for the institutional policies, processes, and systems that ultimately create optimal environmental conditions to encourage student success. These activities are embedded in a culture that promotes the twin imperatives of *excellence* and *equity*. This ethos is derived from the transformation objective in the 1997 South African 'White paper on higher education' (Department of Education [DoE], 1997). The report sought to effect systemic changes to achieve both excellence and equity and put forward arguments for the feasibility of achieving the two simultaneously. In the years since, work has continued to purposefully initiate the dismantling of structures, processes, laws, and policies that were purposefully designed to govern an apartheid state.

At the start of this process, there were intensive debates about the trajectory of the transformation of higher education. I position this debate in a theoretical conceptualisation based in human capital theory (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2013) and human capabilities theory (Nussbaum, 1997; Sen, 1999). The former champions 'education for the market', and the latter 'education for human flourishing'. Both have implications for understanding the role of higher education in society. The study presents five key pillars for institutional transformation, which together make up a framework for transformation that reconciles excellence and equity (Badat, 2016; Wolpe, 1995), opening up the discussion on the role of student

affairs in the broader higher education transformation project. I argue that when there is collaboration between student affairs and other stakeholders, new opportunities arise to reconcile equity and excellence, shedding light on how they are interconnected. Student affairs practitioners and researchers can actively shape a learning environment and can be instrumental in leveraging the five pillars of transformation for student success.

Human capital theory and human capabilities theory

The perspectives and beliefs of student affairs practitioners and researchers about their work directly informs their approaches and choices. Theoretical constructs influence the lenses through which we make such choices about what we teach and learn, and the value we assign to different learning imperatives and the vast array of other responsibilities involved in a student-centred approach.

I used human capital theory (OECD, 2013, 2017) and human capabilities theory (Sen, 1999) as frameworks. Like the views of South African thought leaders, these theories may initially appear oppositional, but examining their underlying meanings and assumptions can reveal more complementarity. When providing an education that promotes high-level market-related skills and competencies, there is a similar emphasis on providing an education that people deem worthwhile, one that impacts not only the formal workspace but also individuals and society. Regarding the latter, social justice ideas feature prominently regarding the broader capabilities that universities should develop in graduates. This is crucial in South Africa, considering the persistence of economic and other inequalities, far beyond the political dismantling of apartheid.

Human capital theory utilises metrics of economic investment to measure the capital invested in the higher education endeavour as a way to measure its worth. Education's worth is measured as the monetary return on investment (Peters & Besley, 2006), in other words, value is measured mainly through productivity rates. Thus, measures of excellence are calculated and embedded predominantly in market-related activities, with the worth of industry and economic growth directly related to education's worth and these measures serving as the primary indicators of what constitutes excellence. Thus, transformation and excellence are considered solely in market-related terms. The emphasis is on quality, as defined by global industry, and this is the dominant mode of thinking in assessing the worth and desired outcomes of investment in higher education. Notably, these views indicate the complexity of dealing with theoretical constructs, which are complex and exist on a continuum.

In contrast, and in some ways consistent with human capital theory, human capabilities theory has a far broader understanding of education, with human well-being and flourishing as its ultimate goals. It views higher education as a vehicle that can promote human well-being (Walker et. al, 2022), with a focus on social justice (Odora Hoppers & Richards, 2012), of which inclusivity and equity are derivatives and desirable, as is market-related skills and competencies only insofar as these are conducted to promote the flourishing of an entire population. Thus, in this perspective, quality and excellence are defined somewhat differently.

Progress toward the objective of human flourishing appears to be harder to measure than the achievement of human well-being, but this may also be changing. There is a trend towards a balance between factors that preface human capabilities theory and human capital theory. In the current globalized world, with its interconnected political, economic, and social systems, it is necessary to recognise both the success of market-related education (capital) as well as the human flourishing and social justice aspects of education (capabilities) as valid and interrelated. Here, this study contributes significantly to the literature. The ways in which education is conceptualised in the literature – relating to human capital theory and human capabilities theory – are often mutually exclusive. That is, as currently conceptualised, human capital theory does not incorporate crucial conceptualisations of human capabilities theory, and vice versa. I will show that aspects of human capital theory and human capabilities theory should be integrated to form a new conceptual framework for student success. To this end, the five core pillars of transformation are founded on the premise that an education system should encapsulate both excellence (human capital theory) and equity (human capabilities theory) if it is to be geared towards sustainability and development.

I sought to understand the qualitative elements of institutional transformation that reconcile excellence and equity in higher education to facilitate development. Five pillars of transformation emerged, providing a comprehensive framework for institutional transformation. I expound on this finding by exploring its direct bearing on how student affairs practitioners and researchers may be further positioned to formulate strategic plans to foster institutional transformation through student success.

Methodology

This is a qualitative research study from an interpretive perspective. The aim was to include an elite sample of 10 to 15 participants (Cresswell, 2009). To avoid repetitiveness and thus depreciation of data collection value, I interviewed 16 participants, in line with Cresswell's saturation point. Qualitative information of the 16 participants' insights and learnings over the past 20 years was gathered systematically using in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which I analysed using grounded theory techniques.

The research design involved the selection of 16 recognised leaders in the transformation of higher education. For a grounded theory sample, I selected a subset of these social actors to be representative of the whole – a purposive sampling method. I selected the participants based on their expert knowledge and strategic experience in the transformation of higher education in South Africa. The questions that emerged early on determined who would be interviewed next. One-on-one personal interviews were conducted in person where possible, or telephonically if participants resided in other parts of the country or were travelling. The study was approved in 2017 by the University of Cape Town (UCT) Research Ethics Review Committee (School of Education, Faculty of Humanities). Interviews were conducted from mid-2017 to late 2018. Follow-up interviews were held with two participants, one for further in-depth exploration of their responses, and the other to complete the interview. Thus, 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted.

The interview data were triangulated using a document data-gathering process (adapted from Adam, 2009, p. 58), using selected strategic documents from organisations such as the OECD, the International Monetary Fund (2017), the Department of Higher Education (1997), and the Department of Labour (2007).

The 16 experts were of diverse background and comprised an elite sample. Collectively, they provided an understanding of the transformation of higher education that spanned decades of leadership, drawing on rich personal perspectives arising from their academic and leadership accomplishments in the field. According to Creswell (2009, p. 182) when dealing with complex notions such as *transformation*, new knowledge is best created using qualitative methods:

Having thus established that a qualitative design would be followed to elicit and explore the knowledge creation process with regard to the participants' thoughts, views, and beliefs about the world, what follows is an assessment of various applicable methods. The research strategy comprises four methods particular to the qualitative knowledge creation process.

In this regard, grounded theory is used to construct knowledge using qualitative data following clear stages that correlate to positivist methodologies through the combination of similar terms. Birks and Mills (2011, p. 90) provide a review of the approaches of key grounded theorists, including Glaser and Strauss (1967) as well as Glaser (1987). They describe a five-stage process: (1) coding, (2) transition from open to axial coding, and (3) selective coding. This progression hinges on the axial coding framework, in which open codes are assigned to certain theoretical aspects, such as conditions, interaction, strategies, tactics, and consequences. The axial coding process seeks to (4) identify key variables that will make up the theoretical framework. Assigning codes in the broad axial framework will lead to (5) further definition of these in relation to variables that emerge through the axial coding process. Thus, a theoretical framework is obtained from this process.

I first analysed the data and categorised them into concepts, each of which bore direct relevance to the research question. I then analysed the concepts in relation to the research question and further categorised these into themes. Creswell (2009, p. 185) guided me to use grounded theory to analyse the raw data that reflect the views, opinions, and beliefs about a complex social phenomenon by coding and subsequently categorising these into themes. Further, and for the purpose of developing a theoretical qualitative framework for the transformation of higher education, Glaser (2002) states that grounded theory emphasises the complexity of the world and the necessity to exercise freedom and autonomy; it allows one to “generate theory that explains what is going on in the world, starting with substantive areas” (Glaser, 2002, p. 2).

I categorised the data via coding and emerging themes to construct a meta-theory or meta-framework (Henning, 2011), using the themes that emerged from the gathered data to formulate concepts on which to base the theoretical or qualitative framework. The development of concepts for analytical purposes is a vital step in the process. Birks and Mills (2011, p. 89) elaborate on this as follows:

[Grounded theory] defines a concept as a descriptive or explanatory idea, its meaning embedded in a word, label or symbol. Differences between how concepts operate in a grounded theory relate to their function in the analytical process and levels of sophistication, both of which are interconnected.

In sum, I used a qualitative approach, deeming the strategy of employing grounded theory as suitable for re-conceptualising how equity and excellence can be coherently represented in an expanded qualitative framework for transformation.

Further, I conducted informal interviews with 16 colleagues at UCT to understand how this principle of alignment could contribute directly to student support.

Findings

The data revealed five core pillars of transformation (Figure 1).

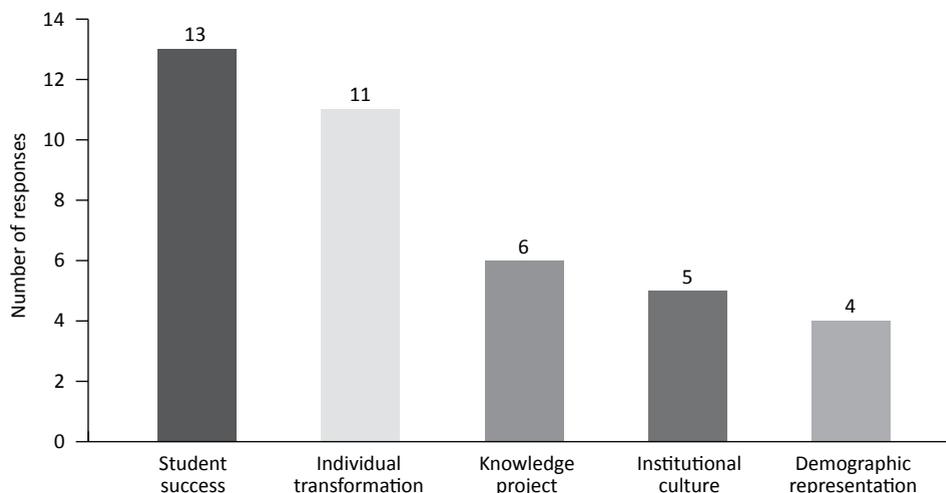


Figure 1: The five core pillars of institutional transformation

Note: The y-axis reflects the total number of respondents who highlighted these areas as crucial to transformation.

As seen in Figure 1, student success was regarded as the most important of the five pillars. The interviewees stated that a key indicator of the success of higher education transformation is the extent to which students have succeeded. To date, student success, measured as the number of students awarded degrees, remains racially skewed. This raises questions around effective teaching and learning strategies for a diverse student body, as well as the viability of the curriculum structure and content. The participants raised concerns about the imbalance between investments in research and in optimising teaching and learning strategies to enhance throughput. Greater in-depth qualitative work is needed to understand a curriculum's impacts and its relationship to effective strategies for teaching, learning, and assessment, since these are fundamental areas of transformation that must be adapted to promote excellence and equity.

Although in the original study (see January, 2021) student success was rated the highest, it should be viewed as one part of a set of core interrelated factors that drive transformation. I focus on the relationship between curriculum change and student success. This raises questions about how institutions can foster student success by examining the knowledge project out of which issues such as decolonising the curriculum arise. In the study, the South African Knowledge Project was also viewed as a key driver for institutional transformation. This relates to the type of knowledge that should be generated by the institution to address local, national, regional, and global imperatives as well as to the co-creation of knowledge and the ownership and beneficiaries of the knowledge-creation process. The purposeful transformation of the institutional culture will remain a key area of collaboration between student affairs and other institutional stakeholders. Demographic representation will also remain vital if collaboration is to be meaningful and inclusive. As transformation progresses, institutions will increasingly need to reflect a country's demographics.

Further analysis is needed of the institutional strategies that must be developed to achieve an optimal learning environment and, therefore, student success (see Figure 2). I outline eight subthemes that contribute to student success. Drawing on change models, 'lessons from business', the study holds that if transformation is to be achieved, indicators must be developed that are unique to the settings and time in which institutional partners collaborate to establish interventions deemed worthwhile for their transformation processes.

Implications

This theoretical framework describes transformation with respect to the university's roles in society and uses this positioning to highlight insights into the ways in which the relationship between excellence and equity are framed. The study reflects that the South African leaders I interviewed were aware of the need to balance the human capital and the human capabilities approaches, noting that the neoliberal market and its democratisation were beyond the control of the developmental state and were driven primarily by global capitalist interests. In this regard, the tensions between global and national interests intersect.

From the perspective of transforming towards nation-building, the system's transformation aspirations place demands on universities to move beyond being instruments for the market, towards being creators and contributors to the knowledge project which seeks to transform society's injustices and inequities. Institutions invested in transformative education and curriculum reform aspire towards providing students greater epistemological access, being uniquely African, and working to benefit society. The assumption is that such reform would enable student success, given appropriate support. In such a transformed system, optimal allocation of funding would result in higher education producing knowledge which, although generated for global consumption, would primarily benefit the communities from which it originates as well as society.



Figure 2: Elements of a comprehensive qualitative framework

Student affairs practitioners would benefit from a conceptual framework for their services, which are located in the institutional strategic framework, by leveraging institutional partnerships for student success. A participant noted: “... the rubric of the 1994 process is what we probably call transformation and I think it is time for us to think quite hard of a new rubric. For me the rubric is really a social justice rubric” (January, 2021, p. 158).

Once the framework is strategically aligned, practitioners can begin to assign resources to realise student success, and institutional indicators could be derived from existing frameworks to assess student affairs’ contributions to a university’s strategy. Coherence between the five pillars of transformation can be achieved when these are aligned to the institution’s vision and mission (see Figure 3).

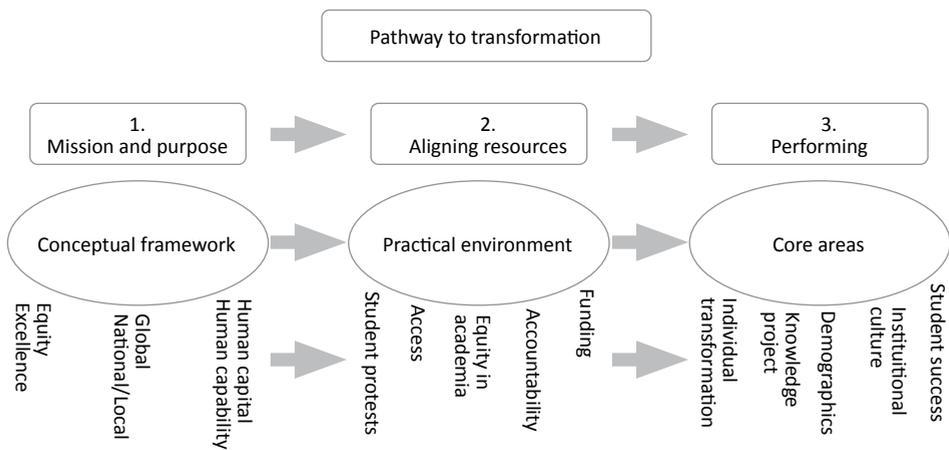


Figure 3: From conceptual framework to core pillars of transformation

In sum, student success hinges on other core pillars of transformation, including the production of knowledge, individual transformation, demographic representativity, and institutional culture. In outside-of-the-classroom learning, student affairs practitioners have crucial roles to play in empowering young people to be of service to social justice, human rights, and other frameworks that promote human well-being while achieving academic success.

Developing a model for holistic transformation

The five pillars of transformation are interrelated. This implies that, when one addresses student success, one must ensure that the curriculum, demographics, and other elements of the framework are addressed simultaneously. Different functions in an institution should contribute in unique ways that are purpose-driven and strategically aligned. As student development seeks to contribute to student success, this element of the transformative framework is critical to student affairs and to faculties in direct and specific ways. I consulted colleagues in the faculty to broadly explore this notion.

I will now return to the study’s implications by exploring how such collaboration can be operationalised. I drew on work done in the UCT Office of Residence Life (UCT: Residence Life, 17 May 2022, unpublished), where 16 internal stakeholders reflected on the power of synergies within the university ecosystem. This approach to the work sought to promote inclusivity, collaboration, and the conversation about student success. The summary of the key themes that emerged from these conversations illustrates the power of collaboration and the nature of the innovative work that lies ahead to strengthen a holistic learning environment at a university. It also invites researchers to formally research students’ needs and how these can be resolved and addressed by aligning resources.

A student affairs practitioner in the residence sector reflected on ways to collaborate and strengthen the learning environment outside the classroom. In Figure 3, I reflected on how the residential environment can be shaped to contribute to the university’s strategic objectives (Figure 4), to understand how synergies could close perceived gaps in student life and student governance and thereby help align student affairs services to the university’s strategic objectives. Thus, we can work toward “unleashing human potential to create a fair and just society” (University of Cape Town, Vision 2030, p. 1), with an expanded notion of student success, as I propose.

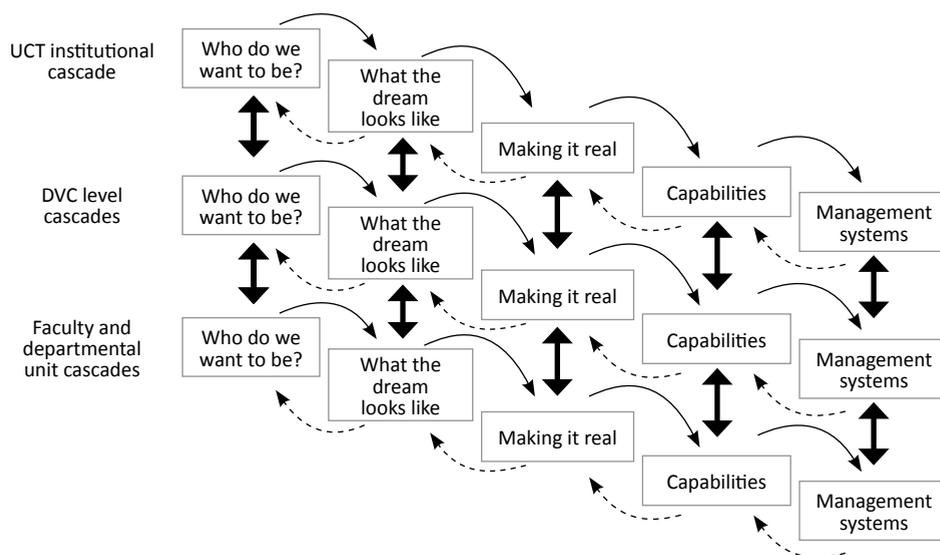


Figure 4: UCT’s cascading model for strategic planning (UCT Vision 2030, p. 6)

In the university ecosystem, reflections on the value of collaboration between faculty and student affairs staff have given rise to creative solutions to streamline, align, and adapt existing services so as to create a seamless learning environment between in-the-classroom and out-of-the-classroom learning. Schreiber et al. (2021, p. vi) describe the learning needs of a massified higher education system as follows:

... there is also increased pressure for efficiency, relevance, and success, to ensure that students are equipped with relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies, develop personally and socio-culturally, and succeed academically, by making successful transitions into and through higher education and into the world of work and livelihoods.

In this example, a stakeholder from the academic sector highlighted the possibility of linking needs to existing activities. For instance, if the mathematics department provides tutors that are paid for as 'hot seats' during the day, this may be extended, so that residence societies do not need to pay for their own tutors in the evening. Other suggestions included extending invitations to day students and faculty members to join initiatives, as well as formalising relationships between the College of Music and Drama Department to promote active participation in these spaces. Academic support services may offer online training for students interested in initiating writing clubs. There are a great many possibilities for collaboration.

While the interviewees' opinions provided valuable insights into the possibilities that may emerge through collaboration, more in-depth research is required to gain a deep and thorough understanding of how to create an optimal learning environment outside the classroom to promote student success. One key area of collaboration is research. The sector is guided by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to promote research in the following aspects of Student Housing and Residence Life (DHET, 2011, pp. xix–xx):

Role of Residences in the Academic Project

- *Research needs to be conducted to explore ways in which the social and cultural milieu in residence systems impacts upon the ability of black working-class students to succeed academically.*
- *Research needs to be conducted to explore the broad and complex relationship between student housing and academic success.*
- *Residences must become an integral part of the academic project and promoted as sites of academic endeavour.*

The insights garnered from collaboration with academic colleagues and the recommended research focus areas outlined above form a basis for collaboration between student affairs and faculty members. Further, the notion of student success must be jointly defined. In relation to holistic learning, student learning imperatives (SLI) is a key concept when designing a university as a learning organisation. This is an approach to student development that centres learning. It seeks to create a seamless learning environment on campuses by establishing a shared language and joint outcomes for learning, based on collaboration between development and academic staff. In this approach, the duality between out-of-the-classroom and in-the-classroom learning is largely overcome as students engage in purposeful learning activities throughout campus. These terms were coined in 1986 by Brown and associates, who led the Tomorrow's Higher Education (THE) Project (Evans, 1998). Proponents of major

reforms in higher education student development in the late 20th century, led by student personnel utilising human development theory, argued that the shared cause for academics and development practitioners is learning. The notion of putting learning first sought to overcome the dichotomy between academic and development staff. A primary assumption that underlies SLI is that,

If learning is the primary measure of institutional productivity by which the quality of undergraduate education is determined, what and how much students learn also must be the criteria by which the value of student affairs is judged. (Calhoun, 1996, p. 115)

According to King and Magolda (1999, p. 1), the SLI framework seeks to develop graduates who possess:

(a) complex cognitive skills such as reflection and critical thinking; (b) an ability to apply knowledge to practical problems encountered in one's vocation, family, or other areas of life; (c) an understanding and appreciation of human differences; (d) practical competence skills (e.g., decision making, conflict resolution); and (e) a coherent integrated sense of identity, self-esteem, confidence, integrity, aesthetic sensibilities, and civic responsibility.

This type of education would result in a new discourse that is consistent with the needs of the time. It is an example of best practice, where education helps to create well-being and peace, and where everyone's rights are respected.

Implementing the SLI is critical to student success (January, 2007, pp. 124–125). This may be achieved by building systems that promote equity and excellence at all levels, and identifying the human capital, human capabilities, and other resources required to enable such change. The elements of this framework enable institutions to take a theoretical position on how human capital theory and human capabilities theory can be integrated so as to achieve harmony between excellence and equity by contributing to:

- A collective vision.
- The recognition of past achievements to promote excellence and equity.
- A re-focus on current key imperatives.
- Creativity and innovation.
- The value of a multiplicity of assessment methods.
- The optimal use of funds.

From the perspective of collaboration between student affairs and faculties, one sees an evolving notion of student success, as reflected on by Nelson Mandela, and cited in Speckman and Mandew (2014, p. 64):

It would be narrow-minded to reduce the 'quality of the graduates' that Scott et al. mention to employability only. A broadened view should include preparing graduates for vibrant careers to enable them to make a meaningful contribution to society as responsible citizens.

When utilised to develop both our human capital (marketable skills) and human capabilities (the ability to live a life we consider worthwhile), these experiences can be blended to promote the well-being of individuals and society. However, the transformation of higher education is founded on the formulation of empirically based models that are developed collectively within the institution. Reflective instruments, based on an agreed upon set of indicators, could guide reflection sessions, such that the outcomes of analyses of the data belong to the university community. Communities of practice could devise tools that help them measure their performance. Participatory research and reflection methods also allow for a rich exploration of the factors that promote student success, with students' voices shaping the conversation.

Conclusion and recommendations

I have explored the interconnected learning and success-driven relationship between institutional transformation and student success. I identified five core pillars that student affairs practitioners can leverage when promoting a transformative learning environment for student success. Student success can be framed broadly to encapsulate human capital/workplace skills and human capabilities/holistic development skills. The four remaining pillars should also benefit from an integrative perspective between human capabilities theory and human capital theory when human flourishing and social justice become the underlying principles. Further research is needed to fully draw out this finding's implications. This approach is based on the notion that a university comprises a variety of ecosystems in which student affairs professionals have key roles in conceptualising and formulating relationship-building based on shared principles and values. Thus, the university would recognise that fostering positive relationships between stakeholders is paramount to student flourishing and well-being. In their roles, various stakeholders will have opportunities to advance both human capital and human capabilities for institutional and societal development. In this regard, I addressed some conceptual limitations in the literature. The capabilities that students develop through active engagement and service enrich an ecosystem and allow for new knowledge to emerge, promoting human well-being and flourishing. Thus, I have re-defined student success regarding how the knowledge acquired by a student in their formal curriculum is applied and enhanced through active engagement and service toward the betterment of society. Exploring notions of decoloniality, humanity, spiritual excellence, and other humanistic themes will significantly enhance market-related skills taught in the classroom.

Notably, much work is necessary to enhance this framework to make it a useful contribution to the monitoring of progress along the transformation journey. While systems and processes are well-established in the sector and much work has gone into creating an enabling environment for transformation, more work is needed in key focus areas to achieve the set equity and excellence objectives.

Ethics statement

Ethical approval was given in 2017 by the University of Cape Town's Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee. Participant confidentiality and anonymity were maintained at all stages of the study.

Potential conflict of interest

The author reports no conflict of interest.

Funding acknowledgement

No funding was acquired for the research.

References

- Adam, F. (2009). *Curriculum reform in higher education: A humanities case study*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand]. Wits Institutional Repository. <https://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/8179>
- Badat, S. (2016). The equity-quality/development paradox and higher education transformation in post-1994 South Africa. [Unpublished].
- Birks, M., & Mills, J. (2011). *Grounded theory – A practical guide*. Sage.
- Calhoun, C. (1996). *The student learning imperative: Implications for student affairs*. 19/07/2006. <http://www.myacapa.org/slilsl.htm>
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design – Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage.
- Department of Education. (1997, July). Education white paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education. *Government Gazette*, 386(18207). Government Notice no. 1196. Government Printers.
- Department of Higher Education and Training. (2011). *Report on the ministerial committee for the review of the provision of student housing at South African universities*. DHET.
- Department of Labour. (2007). *Asgisa and economic growth: Implications for skills development*. Kaiser Associates Economic Development Practice.
- Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., & Guido-Di-Brito, F. (1998). *Student development in college – Theory, research and practice*. Jossey-Bass.
- Glaser, B. (1994). *More grounded theory methodology: A reader*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (2002). Conceptualization: On theory and theorizing using grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), 23–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690200100203>
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (2008). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Transaction Publishers.
- Henning, E., van Rensburg, W., & Smit, B. (2011). *Finding your way in qualitative research*. Unisa Press.
- International Monetary Fund. (2017). *IMF annual report – Promoting inclusive growth*. IMF.
- January, C. C. (2007). *Student development in the University of Cape Town residences – A training needs analysis of house committees*. [Master's dissertation, University of Cape Town]. OpenUCT database. <https://open.uct.ac.za/handle/11427/10415>
- January, C. C. (2021). *Towards a qualitative framework for blending equity and excellence in transforming South African higher education transformation to achieve development* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Cape Town.

- King, P., & Magolda, M. (1999). A developmental perspective on learning. *Journal of College Student Development, 37*(2), 163–174.
- Nussbaum, M. (1997). *Cultivating humanity – A classical *défense* of reform in liberal education*. Harvard University Press.
- Odora Hoppers, C., & Richards, H. (2012). *Rethinking thinking: Modernity’s “other” and the transformation of the university*. Unisa.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2013). *Education today 2013. The OECD perspective*. OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/edu_today-2013-en
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2017). Developments in OECD and selected non-member economies. South Africa. *OECD Economic Outlook, Volume 2017. Issue 2*. OECD Publishing.
- Peters, M. A., & Besley, A. C. (2006). *Building knowledge cultures – Education and development in the age of knowledge and capitalism*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Schreiber, B., Luescher, T. M., & Moja, T. (2021). Developing successful transition support for students in Africa: The role of academic advising. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa, 9*(2), vi–xii. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v9i2.3751.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Speckman, M., & Mandew, M. (2014). *Perspective of student affairs in South Africa*. African Minds.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research. Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Sage.
- UCT Office of Residence Life. (2022, May 17). [Unpublished].
- University of Cape Town. *Vision 2030: Unleashing human potential for a fair and just society*. University of Cape Town.
- Walker, M., McLean, M., Mathubela, M., & Makwambo, P. (2022). *Low-income students, human development and higher education in South Africa – Opportunity, obstacles and outcomes*. African Minds.
- Wolpe, H. (1995). The debate on university transformation in South Africa: The case of the University of the Western Cape. *Comparative Education, 31*(2), 275–292. DOI: 10.1080/03050069529155.

How to cite:

January, C. C. (2023). Leading higher education transformation: The role of student affairs. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa, 11*(2), 103–117. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v11i2.4914.

