

**A transformative curriculum to prepare undergraduate tourism  
students for postgraduate study**

**by**

**Uwe Peter Hermann**

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**in the Faculty of Education**

**at the**

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

**Supervisor: Prof PH Du Toit**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree PhD Curriculum and Instructional Design and Development at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.



Signature

08 December 2023

Date

# ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**  
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<b>CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE</b>	<b>CLEARANCE NUMBER:</b> <b>EDU133/20</b>
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Fakulteit Opvoedkunde  
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## ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that he has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research*.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to Anka. We met while I pursued my initial PhD over a decade ago and we have been entwined in a research-themed friendship ever since. We started our PhD journeys together and you provided me with constant wisdom, critical discourse and mutual reflection during our separate but parallel research journeys. You left our mortal world weeks before we both would have submitted our theses together. I am forever grateful and blessed to have walked a long friendship path with you.

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## ABSTRACT

Tourism is an emerging field of study worldwide and in South Africa there are a number of higher education institutions (HEIs) that now offer a variety of programmes in this regard. Although these programmes are a primarily vocationally-driven, HEIs are increasingly developing vertically articulated programmes on NQF7 and NQF8 in order to prepare students for further postgraduate study. In addition, students today seeking higher education may be considered part of the so-called Generation Z cohort. This generation is associated with unique social characteristics for which current curricula may not be effectively designed. In addition, the curricula designed to cater for further study in tourism may be considered highly content-based and delivered in a teacher-led learning environment that does not provide an effective platform for authentic learning.

Curricula should be designed to promote authentic learning in which the learning environment is developed with the student in mind, where the student takes ownership of the learning process and a lecturer provides a facilitation role and does not direct learning. This, coupled with a constructive Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> aligned curriculum should promote amongst others; critical thinking, critical reflection, active engagement, experience-based learning and cooperative learning. A curriculum that is designed to promote authentic learning among students may also provide the platform for students to be better prepared and to develop graduate attributes required for the real world of work. Although there has been much discourse in the field of vocational tourism curricula and undergraduate curricula there is a relatively unexplored opportunity to transform the curricula in order to better prepare these undergraduate students for further study as this field is relatively underexplored.

In this study a constructivist-action research lens is used through a convergent mixed method design to gather empirical evidence from document analysis, a survey among tourism students, a focus group with faculty colleagues, interviews with colleagues at

other HEIs in South Africa and from a panel of international experts by means of a Delphi study.

The study reveals that constructivism is a learning theory that suggests learners actively construct their understanding of the world through their experiences and interactions. In the context of research methodology as a subject, applying constructivist principles can enhance authentic learning in several ways. This study presents innovative solutions to transform the tourism research methodology curricula at TUT in order to better prepare undergraduate students for postgraduate study. Specific recommendations for transformation are presented and discussed.

Key words: Action research, constructivism, curriculum development, tourism research methodology



## LANGUAGE EDITOR



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# Language and Copy-editing Services - J M Botha -

9 November 2023

To whom it may concern

### **Confirmation of language editing of PhD thesis:**

*A transformative curriculum to prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study as submitted by Dr U P Hermann*

This is to confirm that I substantively edited the above-mentioned document. The document was returned to the author with various tracked changes, intended to correct errors and clarify meaning. It was the author's responsibility to affect the indicated changes.

Yours faithfully

Mrs JM Botha  
[(B.Ed. English major (UP) and qualified copy-  
editor/proofreader(UCT)]

[hantiembotha@gmail.com](mailto:hantiembotha@gmail.com)



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADTM	Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management
BTech	Baccalaureus Technologiae
CHE	Council on Higher Education
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DTech	Doctor Technologiae
HBDI	Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument
HEI	Higher education institution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
HEQSF	Higher education qualifications sub framework
LMS	Learner management software
MTech	Magister Technologiae
MCQ	Multiple choice questions
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PDTM	Postgraduate Diploma in Tourism Management
PPE	Philosophic practitioner education
PQM	Programme Qualification Mix
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
TEFI	Tourism Educations Futures Initiative
TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
UP	University of Pretoria

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## CHAPTER 1

### PLANNING THE JOURNEY AND DEPARTURE

#### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

"In spite of the great advances which have been made in our knowledge, some fundamental gaps remain. Matter, life, and mind still remain utterly disparate phenomena, yet the concepts of all three arise in experience; and in the human, all three meet and intermingle" (Smuts, 1926).

Almost a century ago, Jan Smuts, former prime minister of South Africa (1939-1948) recognised the fundamental need to align what is known (matter), our lives, and the learning (mind) to advance our understanding of the world we live in. This is still true in the world we live in today. The world around us is in constant flux and we as humans, the superior species, the custodians of the planet, are on a perpetual journey that requires of us to be proactive and engaged to deal with the challenges created by humanity such as climate change and environmental degradation, socio-political disorder, and the achievement of human liberty, democracy and human rights. All these desirable outcomes require a transformation in the way we as humanity engage with the world around us for which effective education is a vital component, as Nelson Mandela once said "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Blackburn-Dwyer, 2012:1).

The South African higher education landscape has seen momentous changes over the past three decades. These changes have been perceived as both positive and negative and brought forth opportunities and challenges. If South African universities want to address the unrealised aspects of institutional transformation that have been raised then it is necessary to explore more carefully the relationship between curriculum, knowledge and identity (Lange, 2017).

In my view these challenges provide opportunities for reflection and action and with this in mind this study makes use of a constructivist action research approach to the transformation of a curriculum to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study.

## 1.2. BACKGROUND

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a major role in furthering education, in that they are to provide environments which nurture learning. I quote from the South African Council for Higher Education (CHE, 2013a:v) document entitled *The Aims of Higher Education*; here the purpose for higher education is alluded to as follows:

“To meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes throughout their lives. To address the development needs of society and provide the labour market, in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society, with the ever-changing high-level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern society. Contribute to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens. To contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge.”

The role of HEIs is evidently multifaceted; nevertheless, the core theme that pertains to the purpose of these institutions aligns with the development of students' cognitive knowledge and skills to meet economic, social and environmental needs. Additionally, HEIs are also tasked with knowledge creation, for which research is a fundamental component. Research principles may be incorporated into curricula in various disciplines, and it may also present itself as essential stand-alone modules in qualifications, especially in those articulating to further study (Griffioen, Groen & Nak, 2019).

Universities of technology formerly known as technikons, first came into existence in South Africa in the late 1970s as facilities providing primarily vocational qualifications (Carruthers, n.d.; Du Pré, 2010). With the implementation of legislated mergers among a number of tertiary institutions in 2004, these technikons became universities of technology, and although these institutions now also award degrees and postgraduate qualifications, their mandate of providing vocational qualifications is still at their core (Carruthers, n.d.; Du Pré, 2010).

One such University of technology is the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). This institution, the largest residential university in the country, offered a number of qualifications, including National Diplomas, Baccalaureus Technologiae (BTech), Magister Technologiae (MTech), and Doctor Technologiae (DTech) qualifications. With the new Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) (Council on Higher Education [CHE], 2013b) being implemented at TUT from 2019 onwards, there has been a dramatic change in the programme and qualification mix (PQM) on offer. As is the case within the Department of Tourism Management at TUT, this new PQM brought forth a total of eight (8) new qualifications on offer, including four diplomas, one advanced diploma, one postgraduate diploma, as well as new Masters and Doctoral qualifications (TUT, 2019).

The new postgraduate programmes on offer at the Department of Tourism Management have provided an opportunity to develop a curriculum that allows for authentic learning as proposed by Slabbert, De Kock, and Hattingh (2009). A new curriculum should meet the needs of society, and it should capacitate graduates with the required learned knowledge to pursue possible further postgraduate education. Moreover, apart from the learned knowledge, students should become adept in terms of new meaning-making as suggested by advocates of a constructivist approach to learning, such as Biggs (2003) and Brandon and All (2010).

As university of technologies were not initially developed as research-intensive institutions, their curricula did not place a high emphasis on equipping graduates with academic research skills and knowledge. With the implementation of the new HEQSF aligned advanced and postgraduate diplomas, this has changed. In the Faculty of Management Sciences at TUT, all these new programmes include two new research modules (subjects), namely: Research Methodology (at advanced diploma level) and Advanced Research Methodology (at postgraduate diploma level) (South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA], 2018). Both the advanced diploma and postgraduate diploma effectively replace the phased-out Baccalaureus Technologiae (BTech) qualifications, which no longer appear on the HEQSF.



In the DTM, the new Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management (ADTM) on NQF level 7 and the Postgraduate Diploma in Tourism Management (PDTM), on NQF level 8, are designed to be natural articulations to master's and doctoral qualifications, which are located on NQF levels 9 and 10, respectively (CHE, 2019). The purpose statement of the ADTM, according to SAQA (2019a), is to develop graduates for further postgraduate study by deepening their knowledge and understanding of theories, skills, methodologies, and practices in tourism management. Whereas the PDTM is designed to strengthen and extend a graduate's knowledge in tourism management. The qualification places emphasis on developing a student's ability to develop their academic theoretical thinking and to immerse themselves in the realm of research preparation. This qualification includes conducting and reporting research under supervision with a research proposal as an outcome (SAQA, 2019b). The PDTM essentially provides the graduate with access to the Master's of Management Sciences degree through the development of a full research proposal, the foundation of which is provided in the modules completed on both ADTM and PDTM levels.

Inui, Wheeler and Lankford (2006) and Wilson and Von der Heide (2013) caution that it would be unproductive to just continue with the status quo offering new programmes utilising the same curriculum that served as the basis of the phased out BTech qualifications. Belhassen and Caton (2011) propose a debate to enhance the critical andragogy of tourism education. They propose that scholars should not accept the current status quo of tourism curricula, but that scholars should continuously question the status quo in order to provide these tourism programmes with what they refer to as "vital rejuvenation". This may result in academia (lecturers, among an array of responsibilities, e.g. facilitating learning) to move away from the traditional teaching methodologies which have become unproductive to professional practice whereby a more critical andragogy may encourage more diverse potential solutions to challenges and a philosophical depth to such education programmes (Belhassen & Caton, 2011). In the case of postgraduate programmes, these often incorporate modules such as Research Methodology, that aim to prepare students for postgraduate study (Yan, 2013). However, these modules are mostly unpopular with students (Humphreys, 2006) as students often find these modules boring, challenging and difficult to relate

to (Schultze, 2009). This may make students negative and disengaged from learning leading to poor pass rates (Schultze, 2009).

Although most tourism programmes globally have been primarily vocationally focussed with a business or management foundation (Fidgeon, 2010), there are those that argue whether graduates have been adequately exposed to reflective, critical and philosophical perspectives required in practice (Inui et al., 2006; Wilson & Von der Heidt, 2013). Inui et al. (2006) indicate that content of tourism education, professionals in practice and educators may be relying too heavily on traditional views of a tourism curriculum, which may result in the overlooking of questionable practices in the tourism industry and, subsequently, the quality of tourism education as a whole. These authors state that learning opportunities in tourism curricula should be more than merely developing employable graduates. These graduates should also master the philosophical foundations of tourism (such as tourism development, management and practice) which would provide them with the foundation to address epistemological issues by thinking more critically about their practice. “Such knowledge would be valuable to practitioners in articulating existing social issues related to tourism, and foreseeing potential consequences of their practices” (Inui et al., 2006). Additionally, opportunities should provide students with professional self-development while learning.

As a facilitator of learning, I play a crucial role in providing opportunities for students to realise their potential for self-development. Fulfilling such a role will require of me to actively engage with the curriculum being offered. Botterhill and Tribe (2000) provide a basic definition of a curriculum as the whole programme of educational experiences, which form part of a learning programme. As such, this curriculum may include a number of courses or modules, each possessing its own specific exit level outcomes, skills requirements, andragogical approaches and assessment. It essentially encompasses the total learning a journey a student embarks on during their study.

There is a debate related to tourism curriculum development and how the preferred tourism graduate should look like. On one hand, there are those that promote the

development of graduates that merely possess the necessary skills and knowledge needed by industry (Dredge, Benckendorff, Day, Gross, Walo, Weeks & Whitelaw, 2012). Although the terms ‘production’ and to need to ‘produce’ graduates is habitually used in academic discourse, this incorrectly assumes that students are products and that learning is produced as opposed to internally developed. In addition to the aforementioned, there are those that believe graduates should also learn to become global citizens, develop stewardship, tolerance and an ethical stance towards development (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006), thus becoming global citizens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The latter implies a movement away from a business content-based curriculum to a more authentic learning-based approach as proposed by Slabbert et al. (2009). Such a curriculum should endeavour to cater to the domains of knowing, acting and being as proposed by Barnett and Coate (2005). With reference to Barnett and Coate’s (2005) proposal curricula should be developed for students to master outcomes (knowing), applying knowledge (acting) and enhancing one’s professional being through lived experiences (being).

Dredge et al. (2012) indicates that tourism curricula were, and in many cases are still overly theory-based, the ‘knowing’ sphere represents this paradigm. However, due to vocational pressure, these curricula are increasingly incorporating acting or vocational learning. The sphere, ‘being’ is the one that is often omitted or insufficiently engaged with in current tourism curricula (Millmow, 2009). One reason for this may be that curricula are primarily developed by academics and industry professionals and do not focus on the interests of students and other stakeholders (Dredge, 2009; Carey, 2013; Brooman, Darwent & Pimor, 2015). It is this sphere of learning which leans towards developing well-rounded graduates who are ethical and professional and who embrace lifelong learning.

Augmenting the needs of curricula are the desire to develop students that attain 21<sup>st</sup> century graduate attributes. The CHE identifies graduate attributes as being adapted towards different disciplines and fields “but also encompass values, attitudes, critical thinking, ethical and professional behaviour, and the capacity of a graduate to take what has been learnt beyond the site of learning” (CHE, 2013a:1). The Edinburgh model provides a list of 21<sup>st</sup> century graduate attributes, which are amongst others:

- Informed respect for the principles, methods, standards, values and boundaries of their discipline(s) and the capacity to question these;
- Being open to new ideas, methods and ways of thinking;
- Intellectual inquisitiveness and the ability to sustain intellectual interest;
- The ability to respond effectively to unfamiliar problems in unfamiliar contexts;
- Recognising the benefits of communication with those beyond their immediate environments;
- Being able to amenablely transfer their knowledge, learning, skills and abilities from one setting to another, utilising their understanding of the issues pertinent to each situation (Kreber, 2010).

Graduate attributes have often been criticised for being too narrowly focussed on employability and that education for the future, needs greater emphasis on an agenda of personal responsibility and on individual and social attributes. Graduate attributes need to address levels of concern that rise through internally-driven self-reflection and the needs of society toward the welfare of the whole planet (Haig & Clifford, 2011; Slabbert et al., 2009). Discourse often suggests that lecturers often generally regard graduate attributes initiatives with apathy or even resistance as they often do not proactively engage the development in this regard (Holmes, 2000).

It is pivotal that curricula are holistically developed to embrace innovation and creativity, which is required to deliver efficient and effective curricula (Dredge, et al., 2012). Slabbert et al.'s (2009) approach to authentic learning echoes the notion by Dredge et al. (2012). As a facilitator of learning and curriculum developer, I am responsible for guaranteeing an authentic quality-learning environment for my students. Slabbert et al. (2009) describe the aim of education as the self-empowerment of students to develop and fully maximise their human potential “through the facilitation of lifelong authentic learning in order to create a safe, sustainable, and prosperous future for all”.

For the development of appropriate curricula, Biggs (2003) proposes the concept of constructive alignment. This concept supports the notion that students construct their

own learning through relevant learning activities. The role of the facilitator would be to provide a learning environment that supports the learning activities suitable for achieving the anticipated learning outcomes. The key is that all components in the teaching system (the curriculum and the intended outcomes, the methods of facilitating learning, the assessment tasks) are aligned with each other.

In the learning environment, there are a number of approaches a facilitator and curriculum researchers may investigate in the achievement of constructive alignment. Some of these approaches may include the utilisation of Whole Brain® learning as proposed by Herrmann (1991), action learning (World Institute of Action Learning, 2018), constructivism and cooperative learning as described by Brandon and All (2010), and action research as described by Zuber-Skerritt (2012) and McNiff (2014). These approaches will be unpacked comprehensively in Chapter 2 and 3.

Whole brain learning, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, proposes the enhancement of learning through the incorporation of the four thinking quadrants of the human brain. With this model, it is prescribed that each person has a preferred thinking preference, which rests within the four cognitive domains. This preferred thinking preference may change, either growing greater in the same quadrant or moving into another quadrant under stressful situations (De Boer, Du Toit, Scheepers & Bothma, 2013).



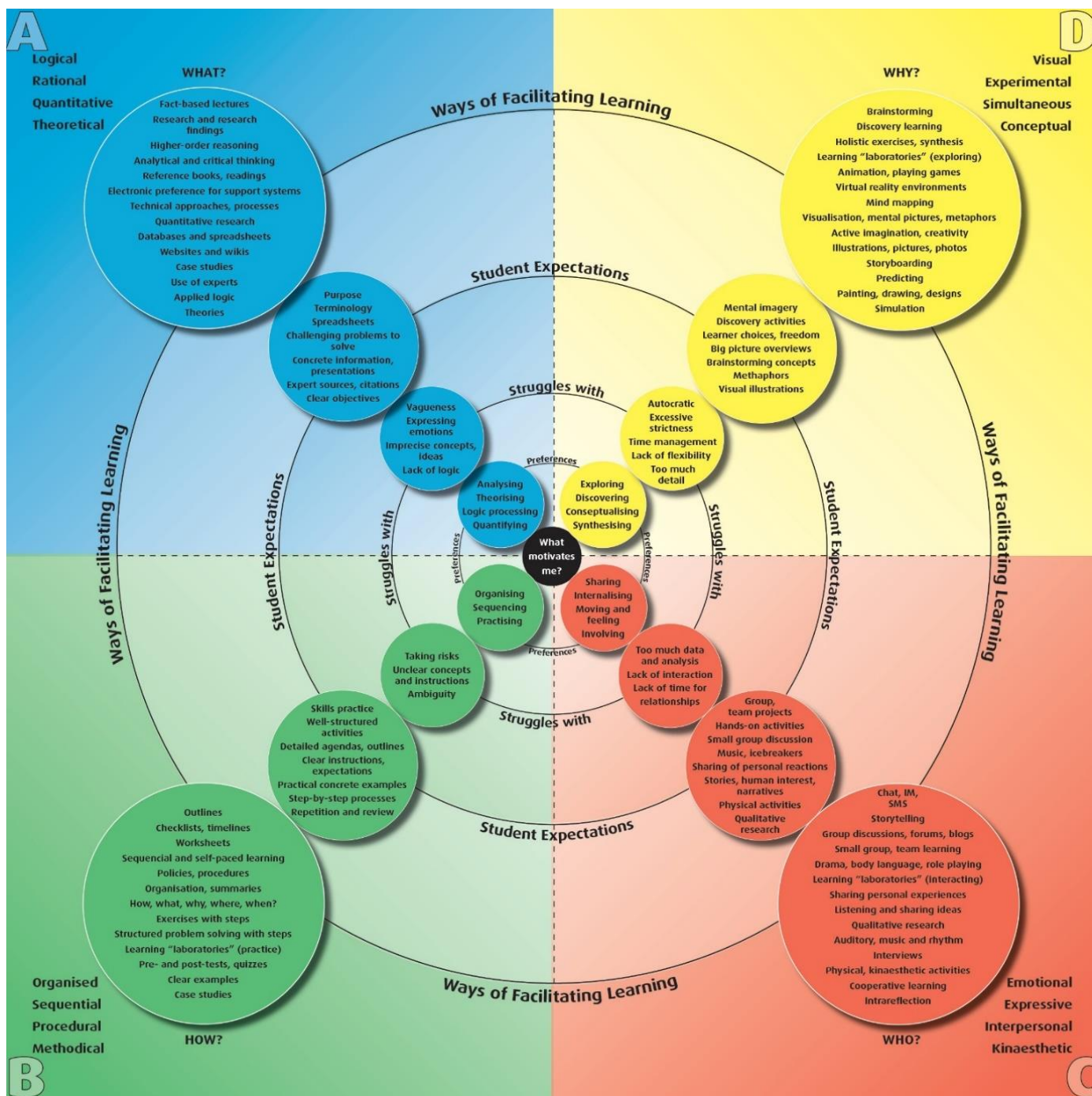


Figure 1.1: The Comprehensive Whole Brain® model (De Boer et al., 2013)

The Comprehensive Whole Brain® model, as indicated above, proposes four thinking preferences of the human brain. Quadrant A, which forms part of the left hemisphere of the brain, bases itself on logical, analytical, fact-based, and quantitative thinking. Quadrant B, also part of the left hemisphere, deals with organised, sequential, planned, and detailed thinking. Quadrant C, which forms part of the right creative hemisphere of the brain, deals with holistic, intuitive, integrative, and synthesised

thinking. Quadrant D deals with thinking preferences associated with interpersonal, feeling-based, kinaesthetic, and emotional thinking (De Boer et al., 2013). As a facilitator of learning and curriculum developer, it would be essential to interrogate each of these thinking preferences for both my students and myself. This should assist in generating a foundational understanding of the thinking preferences of the whole group and my own in order to develop learning opportunities, which may allow for the creation of an authentic quality-learning environment for students.

Collaborative learning tasks have been proposed by Denton (2012) with constructivism and cooperative learning at the core. The concept of constructivism proposes that students learn by means of an active and constructive process where the student is the information constructor or constructor of meaning. These approaches to learning are achieved collaboratively, when the results of which are influenced by time and place (Richardson, 2003). Currently, learning opportunities for the students (within the target group) are primarily engaged with self-regulated learning which includes limited or no group engagement in class situations. This may hamper the achievement of effective constructive alignment (Loughlin, Lygo-Baker & Lindberg-Sand, 2021).

With the development of the new curricula of the ADTM and PDTM, it is not only imperative to analyse innovative ways of ensuring constructive alignment but also to investigate the effective appropriation of such curriculum by colleagues. Although not in the context of tourism, Hordern (2016) describes the important role of recontextualising the curriculum by some role players such as lecturers.

The concept of recontextualisation refers to the process by which knowledge is taken from one context and 'relocated' in another (Bernstein, 2000; Hordern, 2021) or selected, appropriated, and transformed as it moves between contexts. It is the process by which new disciplinary forms are generated (Bernstein, 2000; 2021) and from which curricula are constructed. The process of recontextualisation may be quite specific to the discipline and the context in which the stakeholders are operating (Hordern, 2016). It is important to distinguish between disciplinary knowledge production and the development and enactment of a curriculum (Bernstein, 2000;

Luckett, 2009). To change the “composition of a structure/to change the outward form or appearance of/to change in character or condition” is also referred to as transformation (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2024:1). Merely making one change in the condition of a state would therefore be deemed transformative. Thus, if I were to transform the core modules of the qualifications in question then I have indeed transformed the curriculum, perhaps not fully, but in part. Thus, a new curriculum that has been developed may or may not be appropriated correctly by all academic colleagues (fellow lecturers), thus effective learning is not generated, and constructive alignment may not be successful.

As a facilitator of learning, I see myself as a fundamental cog in the machine of learning that provides the learning environment for my students. This cog needs to provide a constructively aligned curriculum and a means to facilitate the learning that takes place so that the learning opportunities run effectively, and that the desired outcome (authentic quality learning) is achieved. In order to do so, I need to constantly develop not only my students but equally vital, my own professional development through the achievement of lifelong learning by means of action research.

### **1.3. INNOVATIVE RESEARCH CONSTRUCT**

The new ADTM and PDTM at TUT have been designed to incorporate a number of new modules. Two of these modules are Research Methodology (RTM107V) and Advanced Research Methodology (RTM108G) offered in these two qualifications, respectively. Through their respective purpose statements, these modules are focused on developing research knowledge among students to prepare them for postgraduate study. However, students often show apathy towards these modules, effectively reducing active engagement and, therefore, authentic learning. Some students aspire to pursue further postgraduate study, the success of which would rely on the authentic learning of research methodology.

I have played a role in the development of these curricula (as the principal designer) and I facilitate a number of these modules. As these are effectively new curricula, opportunities exist for innovation. In line with constructive alignment, there are innovative opportunities in terms of curriculum construction, creating opportunities for



learning, and assessment. The final area for innovation lies with me in my professional capacity as both a curriculum developer and a facilitator of learning. My professional practice, just as with a curriculum, should not remain stagnant. I need to be agile in my profession and through active learning improve the quality of my practice. Within my practice, there are central areas where innovative opportunities may be found, those being the use of approaches such as self-regulated learning, cooperative learning, constructivism, and constructive alignment in the curriculum. These approaches, in turn, rest on a cohort of students whose Whole Brain® thinking preferences need to be determined and developed so that curricula may be appropriately developed to engage students for the promotion of authentic learning. In addition, learning opportunities need to be developed to cater to all thinking preferences. As the lead investigator in this participatory action research process, I, together with my collaborators, will then use action research to develop our professional practice to develop a transformed curriculum to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study.

#### **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study was guided by a primary and secondary research questions. The primary research question was as follows;

In the context of a constructivist action research process, what would a transformed curriculum look like that better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study?

To answer this main research question, the following secondary questions will be pursued:

- What are the learning preferences of selected students?
- What are the learning experiences of selected students?
- What are the further study ambitions of sampled students?
- Which graduate attributes are deemed essential for postgraduate students as perceived by peers, domestic colleagues and international experts?

- What are the lived experiences of faculty colleagues in relation to transforming the tourism research methodology curriculum to better prepare undergraduate students for postgraduate study?
- What are the perspectives of international colleagues in relation to transforming a curriculum to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study?
- What are the perspectives of South African colleagues in relation to transforming a curriculum to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study?
- What is my lived experience in relation to my professional practice to transform the ADTM and PDTM curriculum?

## **1.5. RESEARCH DESIGN**

Chapter 5 provides a broad discussion of the research methodology utilised in the study. The following section, however, provides a brief overview of the research design followed.

### **1.5.1. Research approach**

Constructivism, more specifically social constructivism is an educational theory whereby the learner, constructs their own knowledge through meaning-making from the world around them. A learner would construct this new knowledge through engagement with experiences, attitudes and beliefs (Clark, 2018). Constructivism forms the theoretical departure point for this study, and as it is a reflective and personal process it is generally written in first-person. This theory will not stand alone and will be applied by means of action research.

According to Zuber-Skerritt (2012), action research is a research design with the primary aim of improving the understanding of one's practice. This form of social science investigation differs from other alternative methodologies in that it is practical, participative, collaborative, emancipatory, egalitarian, interpretive, and critical towards developing transformative change agents in one's practice and community (Zuber-Skerritt, 2012). McNiff (2014) promotes this form of research in an academic

environment, as it is a process of transforming one's practice, with an emphasis on improving the social context within which the practice is located. For the purposes of this study, this design was deemed the best suited as it is designed around enhancing one's professional development within a social context, thus inclusive of all stakeholders such as colleagues and students.

This action research approach was implemented using a convergent parallel designed mixed-methods approach. This design focuses on collecting, analysing, and merging both quantitative and qualitative data into a single study. The main principle is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). More information on the latter is provided in the subsequent section.

### **1.5.2. Population and sampling**

This study utilised four primary populations for the purpose of primary data collection, namely: students (N=31), faculty colleagues (N=8), South African colleagues (N=6), and international colleagues (N=10). The student population was drawn from all students registered for ADTM and PDTM for 2023. Faculty colleagues emanated from the 8 departments in the Faculty of Management Sciences at TUT. South African colleagues included lecturers at other South African universities responsible for the design and offering of tourism research methodology curricula. International colleagues included 10 colleagues involved in the implementation of tourism research methodology curricula at international universities.

A non-random sampling strategy was incorporated for all target populations. By means of a census sample, all registered students were invited to participate. Purposive sampling was used to recruit faculty colleagues and South African colleagues. Convenience sampling was used to recruit international colleagues.

### **1.5.3. Data collection and analysis**

Cresswell (2015) states that for a convergent parallel mixed methods approach to work effectively both qualitative and quantitative data needs to be collected simultaneously.

Qualitative data collection included a focus group interview with faculty colleagues, a Delphi study with international colleagues and semi-structured interviews with South African colleagues. Text analysis included the analysis of prospectus, study guides and the analysis of my Whole Brain® profile report. Empirical evidence gathered by means of the focus group, interviews and Delphi study were analysed using thematic analysis.

Quantitative data was obtained from students in the form of a survey. An electronic survey was developed based on a theoretical underpinning related to motivations for further study, work elements, learning technology, thinking preferences, multiple intelligences, and how students perceived the learning environment around them. The electronic survey was then distributed among all registered ADTM and PDTM students through email. Quantitative data analysis involved descriptive statistics in the form of frequency analysis, means and standard deviations. Group clustering through means was conducted to develop the Whole Brain® profiles per cohort.

## 1.6. ETHICS

Research in the field of education inevitably involves human participants. These participants and other stakeholders, such as the universities involved, the academic profession, and the researcher (myself), have rights and responsibilities. In order to respect these rights and act responsibly, it is imperative that the research undertaken is performed ethically. In this study, the following ethical considerations were upheld:

- **Respect for confidentiality and anonymity:** Participants' confidentiality was respected, and anonymity was promoted where possible. Anonymity was maintained by delinking survey results from student identifiers (names and email addresses) prior to data analysis. The identities of colleagues, both at the faculty level and domestically and internationally, were held in confidence. Pseudonyms in the form of participant numbers were used during reporting.
- **Avoiding harm:** Efforts were made to ensure that participants and stakeholders did not experience harm. Students may have experienced

stress or confusion during the research process, especially when exposed to techniques used for innovative facilitating and assessing of learning. However, the eventual outcome of the learning tasks yielded authentic learning opportunities, providing greater benefits to students than the initial discomfort perceived.

- **Promotion of beneficence:** The purpose of this study is to develop my own professional development and enhance the facilitation of learning and the overall curriculum to better prepare students for postgraduate study. Students have benefited from learning interventions, aiding in their personal development. The results and contributions of this study will be disseminated through various channels such as conferences, articles, and a published thesis, providing learning opportunities for other potential action researchers and higher education practitioners to enhance their practice.
- **Informed consent and voluntary participation:** All participants were provided with an information leaflet outlining the purpose of the study, participant requirements, and information regarding voluntary participation. Participants were informed of their freedom to decline participation or leave the study at any time. No coercion was applied, and participants engaged in the study willingly.

## 1.7. CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis consists of 7 chapters, each focussing on a specific aspect of my research journey.

- **Chapter 1:** Planning the journey and departure

In this introductory chapter I have provided a brief background, the rationale, objectives and methodology of the study. The position and scope of the study are established and the structure of the document is provided.

- **Chapter 2:** The landscape of tourism research methodology

This chapter provides a theoretical overview of my professional landscape as a lecturer in the realm of tourism. An overview of tourism higher

education is provided, followed by an analysis of the curriculum design process. Thereafter tourism as a field of undergraduate study is analysed leading to a discussion on the status quo of tourism as a postgraduate field of study.

- **Chapter 3:** Curriculum and instructional development of the learning landscape

This chapter delves a little deeper into the realm of curriculum, specifically the theoretical foundations for curriculum design and how that related to tourism higher education. The learning theory of constructivism and constructive alignment of curricula are presented followed by a description of various approaches to facilitation of learning.

- **Chapter 4:** My personal landscape

As this study makes use of a constructivist action research-based approach, it is paramount that I present my own position regarding this project. In this chapter I present my professional and cognitive perspective related to professional development and Whole Brain® thinking.

- **Chapter 5:** Research epistemology and methods

No travel is possible without an itinerary, nor is any research possible without a research plan. In this chapter I provide a concise description of the research methods followed in this study. The point of departure of this chapter revolves around a description of the research paradigm and research approach of the study. The research design is then described, followed by a description of the population and sampling strategy, the secondary data collection process, research ethics and quality assurance.

- **Chapter 6:** My empirical landscape

Chapter 6 is an extensive chapter that provides a description of the empirical results obtained to answer the research questions established for

this study. The chapter starts with a description of the quantitative results obtained from the student survey, thereafter the empirical evidence associated with the qualitative data is presented. The chapter concludes with a critical reflection of my own professional practice.

- **Chapter 7: Consolidating the landscape**

At the end of every journey there is an opportunity for reflection, to look back at the learning opportunity and to make recommendations for potential future voyages. As the concluding chapter of this study, Chapter 7 serves as the platform on which I consolidate the action learning landscape associated with this study. Here the theory covered in the literature review chapters is consolidated, followed by that of the empirical results generated. Meta-reflection-based on the aforementioned allow me to present a holistic overview of the results of this study and to make informed recommendations for the transformation of the curriculum. Recommendations are also made for possible future research both for my own professional practice and for peripheral research.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE LANDSCAPE OF TOURISM RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1. OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE

The landscapes of the world; mountains, rivers, continents, cities, and the people, plants, and creatures that inhabit them, have intrigued me since childhood. Family excursions and the annual two-week Hermann family holiday were anticipated highlights. Books, encyclopaedias, discussions with people (including those with travel stories), and my yearning to explore the world served as tools to paint the global landscape on the blank canvas of my imagination. With this passion, I enthusiastically pursued studies in travel and tourism after high school, embarking on a career in the industry during my undergraduate years.

My professional journey in the industry exposed me to individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds, hailing from the vibrant, exotic countries and fantasy landscapes that once existed only in my mind. Motivated to deepen my understanding, I pursued further studies, eventually securing a part-time lecturing position at my current workplace. Immersed in my new academic role and driven by a passion for achievement, I chose this path over a continued career in the industry. Today, I hold the title of associate professor in tourism management, specialising in research methodology and ethics. I have been fortunate to explore numerous exotic landscapes, engaging all my senses, and to share my enthusiasm for travel and tourism research, particularly with my students.

In presenting this chapter, I offer a conceptual and theoretical overview of my professional landscape. Given its significant connection to tourism as a field of specialisation, I also provide an overview of the higher education landscape in tourism.



## 2.2. LEARNING ABOUT TOURISM AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2023), tourism refers to the movement of people away from their place of residence to a destination where they will spend at least one night. The word 'tourism' is often used as an overarching theme for all actions related to travel. However, a distinction must be made between a tourist (one that travels for longer than 24 hours) and a traveller or excursionist that also may partake in touristic activities but travels for a shorter period of time.

Although tourism has existed for millennia, dating back to ancient pilgrimages, the academic study thereof is relatively new. Consequently, the provision of tourism education at higher education level (to develop graduates for the industry) and education on tourism (to learn about the industry) research is a contemporary phenomenon. While the landscape of tourism education is relatively recent, advancing knowledge in this field is crucial for the industry's future success. A deeper understanding of the dynamic and multisectoral phenomenon of tourism education is essential for industry sustainability and human capital development. The industry consists of various sectors and sub sectors which often align to other disciplines such as management, logistics, and marketing. The discipline of tourism may therefore be seen as multidisciplinary or even interdisciplinary where learning and application may be transferred within the industry itself and among industries. With this study, I aim to contribute to the discourse on tourism educational development, aiding institutions such as TUT in improving their effective function as teaching and learning "communities" (Felten, Kalish, Pingree & Plank, 2007) and promoting institutional quality and change (Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy & Beach, 2005) through "professional learning communities" (Harion, Goh, Chua & Wong, 2017). The learning attained in this study may thus be transdisciplinary and may be beneficial in other disciplinary contexts.

Jennings, Cater, Hales, Kensbock and Hornby (2015), in their study on the sustainability of tourism education, divide their theoretical framework into two

elements; “education for and education of”. In this chapter, I adopt a similar approach by focusing on elements such as the tourism higher education landscape (as a background for learning for tourism) and tourism research methodology andragogy (teaching adults as learners) (Jennings et al., 2015).

To facilitate a clearer discussion of the curriculum landscape and the integration of a curriculum for tourism research methodology, I describe constructive alignment, as presented by Biggs (2014). This approach to curriculum development has the potential to design quality learning opportunities that promote student engagement with the competencies to be mastered and how they should be mastered. This section provides an overview of the landscape in which education about tourism research methodology in the higher education landscape exists, with a specific focus on a university of technology, and emphasises the development of these landscapes, particularly in the context of South Africa.

### **2.2.1. The tourism higher education landscape**

Compared to other fields of study and professions, tourism may be considered a relatively new field of academic specialisation. The first formal tourism qualification appeared in the form of a course in hotel management in 1922 at the Cornell School of Hotel Administration in the USA (Scotland, 2006). In 1969, the first four-year programme with travel and tourism as a major was established, also in the USA (Scotland, 2006). Initially, these programmes focused primarily on the management of tourism recreation (Airey, 2014). It was not until the early 1990s that tourism education gained recognition as a viable field of specialisation, and during this period, it began to emerge in the South African education landscape.

In South Africa, tourism was first offered as a module in the high school curriculum in 1996, and formal higher education qualifications in tourism also emerged at that time (Dube, 2014). Geldenhuys (2000) suggests that initially, the tourism curriculum at higher education institutions might have been seen as an extension of the school

curriculum. Therefore, students who studied tourism in school gained an advantage for further studies (Airey, 2014). Today, South Africa offers tourism qualifications at various institutions, including:

- TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) colleges;
- Private colleges (private higher education institutions);
- Universities of technology (Higher education institutions specialising in vocational education);
- Traditional universities (primarily research-based institutions); and
- Comprehensive universities (universities providing both research-based and vocational education).

Tourism is a dynamic, multisectoral, and ever-changing industry. As the industry undergoes constant change, employers' requirements also fluctuate, with new jobs emerging, such as online retail positions, while others seem to become obsolete, such as traditional leisure travel agents. Unforeseen circumstances, like the COVID-19 pandemic, its associated global lockdowns, and travel restrictions, have had a significant impact on the industry, altering the way people perceive the need to travel in the future (Toubes, Araújo-Vila & Fraiz-Brea, 2021; Orden-Mejía, Carvache-Franco, Huertas, Carvache-Franco, Landeta-Bejarano & Carvache-Franco, 2022). We must now move beyond the normal that existed before the COVID-19 pandemic (Benjamin, Dillette & Alderman, 2020).

To address the challenges of the industry, educational institutions (both schools and higher education) must transform their programme offerings and approaches to facilitating and assessing learning. In the traditional 'teaching' process, the 'old way' of doing things must be actively and consistently reviewed and questioned to renew and transform learning opportunities (Sheldon et al., 2011). In the post-COVID-19 landscape, there is a greater need for curriculum transformation with an increased emphasis on technology (artificial intelligence, virtual reality, or big data), marketing, culture/diversity, safety/crisis management, and entrepreneurship. There is also an increased need for soft competencies focusing on creativity, self-confidence/positivity,

self-care/wellness, critical thinking, leadership, teamwork, and an increased need for stakeholder involvement (Xu, Tavitiyaman, Kim & Lo, 2022).

In the current tourism higher education landscape, there is a growing competition among institutions, both public and private (Airey, 2014). A gap is emerging in the provision of authentic curricula, making it essential for institutions, despite competition, to strive towards curriculum transformation. This transformation is crucial to equip students with the skills needed in the real world of work at the highest possible level, while also ensuring they acquire the required attributes of a 21<sup>st</sup> century graduate (Airey, 2014; Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018). It is pivotal that higher education graduates pursuing careers in this industry are provided with opportunities for optimal self-development. This places significant responsibility on higher education institutions to offer appropriate learning opportunities required by a 21<sup>st</sup> century graduate.

The Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI), initiated in 2007 by tourism educators and industry representatives, aims to bring about fundamental change in tourism education (Sheldon, Fesenmaier & Tribe, 2011). TEFI outlines five values embedded in the real world of work for 21<sup>st</sup> century graduates: ethics, stewardship, knowledge, professionalism, and mutuality. This raises the question: What are the attributes of a 21<sup>st</sup> century tourism graduate? More details on this are provided in the following section.

### **2.2.2. Attributes of a 21<sup>st</sup> century tourism graduate**

Some institutions refer to graduate attributes as graduate “outcomes” (Hill, Walkington & France, 2016), denoting the learning that students need to achieve. The term “outcomes” generally aligns with predetermined achievements that students must master to graduate successfully and secure employment. Thus, an “outcome” may be considered part of the curriculum that can be actively assessed, such as outcomes, skills and competencies. On the other hand, the term “graduate attributes” is broader

and more encompassing than “employability”, aiding in the development of academic, citizenship, and career competencies (Hill et al., 2016).

These attributes extend beyond the development of employable graduates prepared for the workplace, contributing more broadly to national prosperity (Hill et al., 2016). Other connotations for these attributes include competencies, qualities, outcomes, generic attributes, transferable capabilities, employability/soft skills, core capabilities (Barrie, 2006), and pervasive skills (Viviers, Fouché & Reisema, 2016). Now that a conceptual definition has been provided, it is important to broaden the exploration of these attributes to enrich the curriculum in question.

From a policy perspective, the South African CHE identifies graduate attributes as being adapted towards different disciplines and fields, “but [they] also encompass values, attitudes, critical thinking, ethical and professional behaviour, and the capacity of a graduate to take what has been learnt beyond the site of learning” (CHE, 2013a:33). Australia’s 2015 Higher Education Standards Framework further explains that “on completion of a course of study, students must have demonstrated the learning outcomes specified for the course of study, whether assessed at unit level, course level, or in combination, and the learning outcomes for a course (degree) must include generic skills important to employment and further study, and independent and critical thinking skills suitable for lifelong learning” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015).

Additionally, the Edinburgh model provides a list of 21<sup>st</sup> century generic (pervasive) graduate attributes. These attributes include:

- Informed respect for the principles, methods, standards, values, and boundaries of their discipline(s), and the capacity to question these;
- Being open to new ideas, methods, and ways of thinking;
- Intellectual inquisitiveness and the ability to sustain intellectual interest;
- The ability to respond effectively to unfamiliar problems in unfamiliar contexts;

- Recognising the benefits of communication with those beyond their immediate environments;
- The ability to amenable transfer their knowledge, learning, skills, and abilities from one setting to another, utilising their understanding of the issues pertinent to each situation (Kreber, 2010).

Graduate attributes often sought by HEIs include critical thinking skills (such as intellectual curiosity, problem-solving ability, and reflective judgment, analytical thinking), effective communication, leadership and teamwork skills, research and inquiry skills, information literacy, digital literacy, personal attributes (self-awareness, self-confidence, personal autonomy, creativity, and flexibility), and personal values (ethical, moral, and social responsibility, cross-cultural awareness, and integrity) (Hill et al., 2016).

Communication skills, as alluded to above by Hill et al. (2016), are deemed vital for the tourism industry, as the industry is a socially dynamic environment. Tourism service providers, through their employees, are required to have expressive communication skills to provide improved tourism products and services and to create a pleasant tourist experience. There is a need for a critical focus on written, oral, listening, digital, and non-verbal communication skills within tourism curricula (Tankovic, Kapeš & Benazić, 2023).

The discourse on graduate attributes in academic literature and in policies provides a seemingly generic overview of attributes. Those mentioned in the preceding sections are often not industry- or discipline-specific, as they are deemed vital for all graduates regardless of the discipline they study. However, some studies focus more specifically on tourism education. Hsu (2018) contends that while the general module outcomes in tourism curricula associated with modules such as management, marketing, and development are of fundamental importance, there is a need for higher-level soft skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, and innovation, supported

by Ntshangase and Ezeuduij (2023) and lifelong learning as vital attributes in a tourism curriculum. Hsu (2018) mentions that although these skills have been previously identified and are generally included as graduate attributes of various curricula, the current dynamic socio-economic, technological, natural, and political environments, and the constantly evolving context, make these competencies important for all levels of tourism professionals. This is opposed to becoming important only as graduates move up the career ladder. These attributes could, therefore, be seen as transferrable from undergraduate learning to vocational environments and beyond, extending to postgraduate study.

Due to the complex nature of the tourism industry and the tendency of increased career movement and turnover between its sectors and other industries, it has also become essential for graduates to master the transferrable skills incorporating the ability to be analytical, work with big data, understand legal systems, and tackle challenges brought by climate change (Hsu, 2018). This includes adapting to the move to online teaching and learning (Agyeiwaah, Baiden, Gamor & Hsu, 2022) that requires digital literacy not only for learning but also for professionalism (Adeyinka-Ojo, Lee, Abdullah & Teo, 2020). According to Rowe and Zegwaard (2017), personal and professional graduate attributes that should be developed during work-integrated learning opportunities are required to prepare tourism students effectively for the world of work. This aligns predominantly with work readiness and not just postgraduate study. Additionally, the disruptions caused by unplanned events and natural disasters also require graduates in the industry to master critical thinking skills to mitigate the effects of these events on the tourism industry (Scarpino & Gretzel, 2014).

Graduate attributes have also often been criticised in academic discourse for being too narrowly focused on employability. Some researchers contend that more emphasis should be placed on lifelong learning, based on personal responsibility and individual and social attributes. Graduate attributes also need to address the levels of concern that arise through the need for self- and social awareness regarding the welfare of the whole planet (Haig & Clifford, 2011; Slabbert et al., 2009). Barkathunnisha, Lee, Price



and Wilson (2019) propose that tourism education should also support discussions about spiritual development to foster global citizenship who can understand their potential as social, cultural, and environmental stewards. Thus, students should not only develop in such a manner that they are suitably prepared for the industry, but also for the macro-tourism environment in which the graduates will find themselves in the real world of work should also be considered.

The inclusion of values education as graduate attributes has been acknowledged as pivotal elements of a post-modern curriculum. Values are essentially an overarching theme that incorporates several education movements, including character, moral, personal and social, and civic as well as citizenship education (Bouwer, Geldenhuys, Hermann & Taylor, 2022). TEFI has proposed a values-aligned tourism curriculum. These TEFI values are aligned with ethics, stewardship, knowledge, professionalism, and mutuality (Sheldon, Fesenmaier & Tribe, 2011). The TEFI initiative strives to attain responsible and sustainable tourism by aligning tourism education with these core values. Although these values are not attributes *per se*, the actions aligned to achieving them could be embedded as graduate attributes. HEIs often promote their purpose by communicating the desired values they wish their graduates to master, but the correlation between these desired values and achievable graduate attributes is not clear. While Wong, Chiu, Copsey-Blake and Nikolopoulou (2022) identify the attributes of self-awareness and lifelong learning; employability and professional development; global citizenship and community engagement; and academic and research literacy as fundamental attributes required to achieve the desired values stated by HEIs. They also indicate that much more has to be done to identify the ideal graduate.

Recently, there have been major shifts in and beyond higher education (Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018) that might influence the higher education landscape and, therefore, graduate attributes. For instance, the demand-driven funding system has increased the number and diversity of students accessing higher education in Australia (Norton, 2013) and in South Africa. In the latter case, there appears to be a precipice, promoting quantity over quality education due to economic and social pressures (Mlambo,



Mlambo & Adetiba, 2021). This could make it more difficult for students to develop the sought-after attributes. In addition, the number and diversity of HEIs have increased, especially in terms of non-university providers (Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018). At the same time, the formalisation of the inclusion of graduate attributes in public policy is increasingly evident. As an example, the revised Australian Higher Education Standards Framework has tightened requirements, mandating that all HEIs must provide evidence that learning outcomes, including skills important for employment and lifelong learning, have been achieved (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015). Moreover, technological developments have also accelerated the disruption of learning in higher education (Ng'ambi, Brown, Bozalek, Gachago & Wood, 2016), and the multifaceted dynamics of the Generation Z cohort of students in modern-day HEIs make the attainment of graduate attributes even more challenging (Cilliers, 2017).

Hill et al. (2016) allude to potential difficulties encountered when attempting to facilitate learning to ensure the inclusion of graduate attributes. The literature suggests that lecturers generally regard graduate attribute initiatives with apathy or even resistance, often not proactively encouraging students' development in this regard (Holmes, 2000). Moreover, graduate attributes may not have been embedded in university curricula, and, as a result, academic staff do not actively pursue the mastering of these outcomes (Holmes, 2000; Trevealen & Voola, 2008). Within curricula, assessments are generally aligned with exit level outcomes, specifying what a student should be able to do upon completion of the course. In contrast, attributes describe the qualities, attitudes, behaviours, values, and ethics built into the learning process (Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2021). These affective learning domains are often not assessed in a curriculum because they are challenging to measure (Haigh & Clifford, 2011).

In contrast, to the omission of these attributes in a curriculum, these attributes may be embedded in curricula through a process of curriculum transformation (Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2021) and these attributes may be assessed via an inclusive authentic assessment strategy. Many staff members however may not be willing or confident in their ability to teach and assess these attributes (De la Harpe & David, 2012). Such

academic staff need to be empowered with enhanced insight into the crucial role they play in fostering these skills by providing appropriate learning opportunities (Trevealen & Voola, 2008). Barrie (2007) and Kemp (2012) argue for a shift from teacher-focused to student-focused learning opportunities and from passive to participatory learning (Hill, 2013). In this more learning-centred approach, De Boer, Du Toit and Bothma (2015) propose improved opportunities for reciprocal learning between students and lecturers.

Although the above discussion provides an overview of the landscape of graduate attributes and the challenges faced by HEIs in this regard, it can be argued that these attributes seem to align primarily with the attributes desired for undergraduate students, as they are intertwined with the vocational needs of the workplace. Moreover, it is not clear how or when graduate attributes develop or how they are applied in professional practice after graduation (Aitken, Jones, Fawns, Sutherland & Henderson, 2019). This aspect has seldom been investigated in the field of tourism research, creating a deficiency in the discourse on graduate attributes required in the postgraduate education landscape of tourism. Attaining graduate attributes is a desired state, coupled with problems and challenges. The following section elaborates on other challenges faced by higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **2.2.3. Challenges facing tourism higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

It is often forgotten that the student is the most imperative stakeholder in any curriculum. It is the year 2023, and evidently, the cohort of students constituting today's higher education landscape are inherently different from previous cohorts from a few years or decades ago. The consideration of the learning environment is crucial, especially as generations evolve, bringing forth unique characteristics that distinguish them from their predecessors, and as such, higher education environments need to cater to the distinctive needs of the new generation – Generation Z (Jaleniauskiene & Juceviciene, 2015).

Generation Z, essentially comprises students born between 1995 and 2012; these students offer a unique set of attitudes, societal norms, and behaviours (Levin, 2019). This generation brings forth a suitcase of challenges for HEIs. This cohort, also known as 'digital natives', has grown up in a globally connected world. They are accustomed to technology, especially those around information technology and communication (Dauksevicuite, 2016). This generation is resolute that they have a voice, and they are not fearful to demonstrate their opinions (Browne & Foss, 2023), which in some cases have been violent, such as in South Africa. Browne and Foss (2023) found that this generation reportedly felt cheated and let down by the higher education sector. They felt that higher education is not inspirational, not worthwhile nor academically challenging.

Some students were openly questioning the role and purpose of higher education. Browne and Foss (2023:53) warn that the Generation Z cohort in higher education does not adhere to the norm of complacency:

“They have a voice and they are prepared to use it. They are expecting a different cultural experience today, and they want more from the university courses for which they registered. They expect an awareness by university faculty of the fragility of this world and the ability to provide them with answers. They want their qualifications to be worthwhile and to help them make a difference”.

From this, it is evident that universities and lecturers need to break out of the current complacent comfort zone and adapt teaching and learning to accommodate the needs of Generation Z students, improving quality without losing it.

HEIs need to actively engage with Generation Z students, providing them with the necessary constructive learning opportunities and tools in a language that they are able to relate to in order to shape a new agenda for the world. It calls for a commitment to the sustainability agenda, hands-on problem-solving experiences, teamwork with

stakeholders, and increased involvement of research students in disseminating transformative research. Higher education curriculum developers need to be proactive in collaborating with the next generation to contribute to positive societal transformation. Not adapting may, in effect, jeopardise the future of higher education (Browne & Foss, 2023).

With a challenging cohort of students, it is vital that higher education practitioners, such as myself in my position as a facilitator of learning in the field of tourism research methodology, move away from the traditional teacher-led method of teaching to a more holistic student-based teaching andragogy through which active learning takes place by both facilitators and students. Although this is the desired state for higher education, there are often challenges such as the point raised by Sheldon et al. (2011) who outlines the main challenges that faced tourism higher education a decade ago and which may still be relevant today. Firstly, there is passive reproduction of learning opportunities, which Roberts (2019:63) refers to as “passive education”. This implies that educators repetitively reproduce a set of learning opportunities that are not updated for the needs of the real world, thus developing graduates who are ill-prepared for the workplace (Sheldon et al., 2011). These lecturers may be aware of the educational rhetoric on the issue and the social need for more authentic knowledge construction as opposed to knowledge absorption by students, however, there are very few proactive strategies implemented to move away from this convenience (Roberts, 2019).

Secondly, the concentration on the theoretical end objective instead of the means may thwart authentic learning. This exists when tourism education does not adequately provide opportunities for students to develop and master problem-solving skills and other critical skills required for the industry. In such a case, curricula focus predominantly on achieving set content driven outcomes as opposed to competency-based outcomes (Echols, Neely & Dusick, 2018). The tourism industry is constantly faced with workplace-specific problems and many curricula today still focusses predominantly on theoretical methods of solving problems and not the actual outcome

of the problem implying a need for associated critical thinking skills (Sheldon et al., 2011). Thus, the learning may be considered static and not authentic (Slabbert et al., 2009) as they may not assist in the self-development of students to face real-life problems in the real-life world of work.

Universities have also been criticised for developing graduates that do not possess the required leadership skills, resulting in a lack of development of future leaders (Sheldon et al., 2011). Curricula should provide students with opportunities to take ownership of their own learning, engage in a desire for lifelong learning, and make valued contributions to the society around them. Tourism is seen as a catalyst in the transformation, utilisation, and provision of socio-economic opportunities for communities to take control of their own self-regulated development, contributing to the overall sustainability of the industry (Ateljevic, 2020). Almost a decade ago, there was a call for the need for learning that embraces leadership practice to deal with rapid and somewhat unpredictable economic and social upheaval (Trudeau-Poskus & Messer, 2015). Today, with global pandemics, natural disasters, climate change, and socio-political dynamics, it is imperative that tourism curricula also target the self-development of graduates as leaders to effectively manage these challenges.

Fidgeon (2010) and Airey (2014) highlight another area of concern in tourism higher education, which pertains to the quality of research outputs and research-focused graduates. The challenge arises from the recruitment of underprepared students and the subsequent production of inferior research (Airey et al., 2015). Bridging the gap between research and research education is crucial to address the neoliberal landscape in which tourism higher education operates (Airey, 2014). This landscape is characterised by the modern tourist's increasing awareness of their role in ethical behaviour, covering environmental, social, and economic aspects, as noted by Erickson (2021). In the post-COVID-19 world, there is a heightened need for astute awareness of the role of tourism and the development and implementation of associated mechanisms to manage tourism for sustainability (Palacios-Florencio, Santos-Roldán, Berbel-Pineda & Castillo-Canalejo, 2021).

In today's neoliberal landscape, there is a quest for tourism higher education that endeavours to break away from its existing stagnant and obsolete curriculum design. This involves a shift from a content-focused approach to one that is adaptable to change, fostering "learning that provides deep, intimate connections between the creation and development of new knowledge and daily life, and the capacity to develop critical, mindful, and reflexive practice" (Dredge, Airey & Gross, 2015:14). Practitioners in higher education, such as myself, thus face the task of providing fostering curricula that promote the constructive self-development of graduates, not just for the present but for an uncertain future, grounded in realism and offering authentic learning opportunities, as proposed by Slabbert et al. (2009).

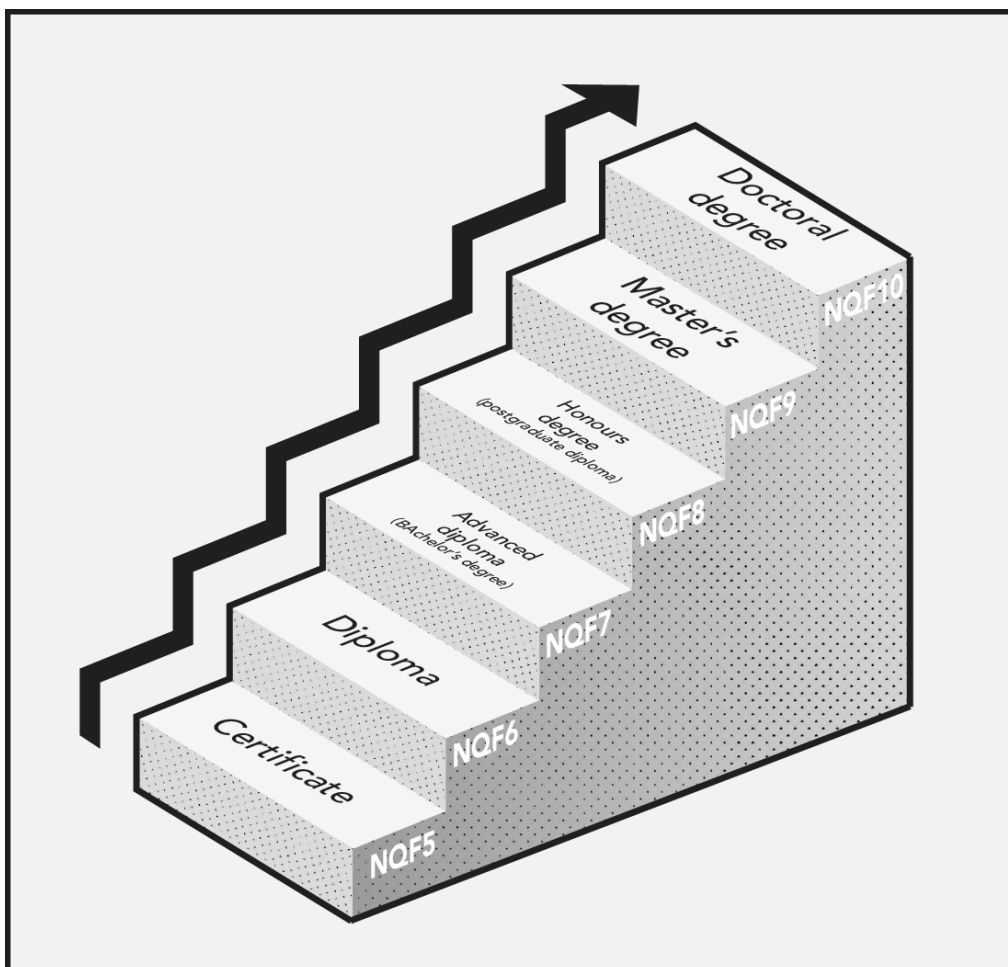
#### **2.2.4. Curriculum development and the South African Higher Education Qualification Framework**

The governance of higher education in South Africa is overseen by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), operating under the purview of the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation. While DHET plays a crucial role in governance, it also serves a significant support function for public higher education by providing financial support (DHET, 2022). However, the functional development, administration, and quality assurance of higher education are managed by supporting organisations.

All registered qualifications in South Africa operate within the framework of the national Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), forming part of the broader National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (SAQA, 2023). The NQF serves as a unified system for the alignment and homogenisation of higher education qualifications in the country. It features a hierarchy ranging from NQF level 1 to level 10. Levels 1 to 4 fall within the domain of basic education under the jurisdiction of the Department of Basic Education, while levels 5 and above fall under DHET (South African Government [SA], 2014).

The implementation of the HEQSF, gazetted in 2008, required modifications to existing national diplomas and the creation of new qualifications, such as postgraduate diplomas, to ensure a vertical articulation trajectory leading to the Master's qualification at universities of technology and thereafter Doctoral qualifications. As of January 2020, Advanced Diplomas have replaced the Bachelor of Technology (BTech) at NQF level 7, and Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) have been introduced at NQF level 8 which articulates into the Master's qualification at NQF level 9 (Scholtz, 2020).

Figure 2.1 provides a visual representation of these NQF levels and how one may vertically articulate into another. As this study focusses on higher education, only NQF level 5 and higher are included.



**Figure 2.1: The higher education NQF levels (Own creation, adapted from South African Government (2014))**



The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), as illustrated in Figure 2.1, is overseen by the Council on Higher Education (CHE). The CHE plays a pivotal role by offering advisory support to the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, specifically on matters related to the HEQSF. Additionally, the CHE ensures quality assurance in higher education through its permanent subcommittee, the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC). Furthermore, the CHE is involved in setting standards for higher education qualifications, which includes the development of naming conventions for qualifications (SA, 2014). Table 2.1 provides a concise overview of some of the general HEQSF qualification nomenclatures.

**Table 2.1: Higher education nomenclatures of CHE (2013:31)**

<b>NEQSF Nomenclature</b>	<b>Description</b>
Certificate	A 120-credit qualification which may either be an advanced or higher certificate. It may be either vocational or industry-focused and emphasise knowledge and skills for a professional workplace.
Diploma	A 240 or 360-credit vocational qualification that aims to embed knowledge and skills in graduates in order to make them workplace ready.
Bachelor's degree	A 360-credit qualification that is predominantly theoretical and prepares a student for general employment or postgraduate study.
Advanced Diploma	A 120-credit qualification that strives to develop students for career advancement. However the CHE (2013:31) also specifies that "this qualification may also be designed to prepare students for postgraduate study through the deepening of their knowledge and understanding of theories, methodologies and practices in specific academic disciplines and fields, as well as the development of their ability to formulate, undertake and resolve more complex theoretical and practice-related problems and tasks through the selection and use of appropriate methods and techniques".
Postgraduate Diploma	A 120-credit qualification that may be multi- or interdisciplinary that strengthens a student's knowledge in a specific discipline. It may incorporate the conducting and reporting of research.
Honours degree	A 120-credit qualification that prepares a student for postgraduate study.
Master's degree	A qualification with at least 120 credits which aims to educate and train researchers in order to contribute to the development of knowledge at an advanced level.



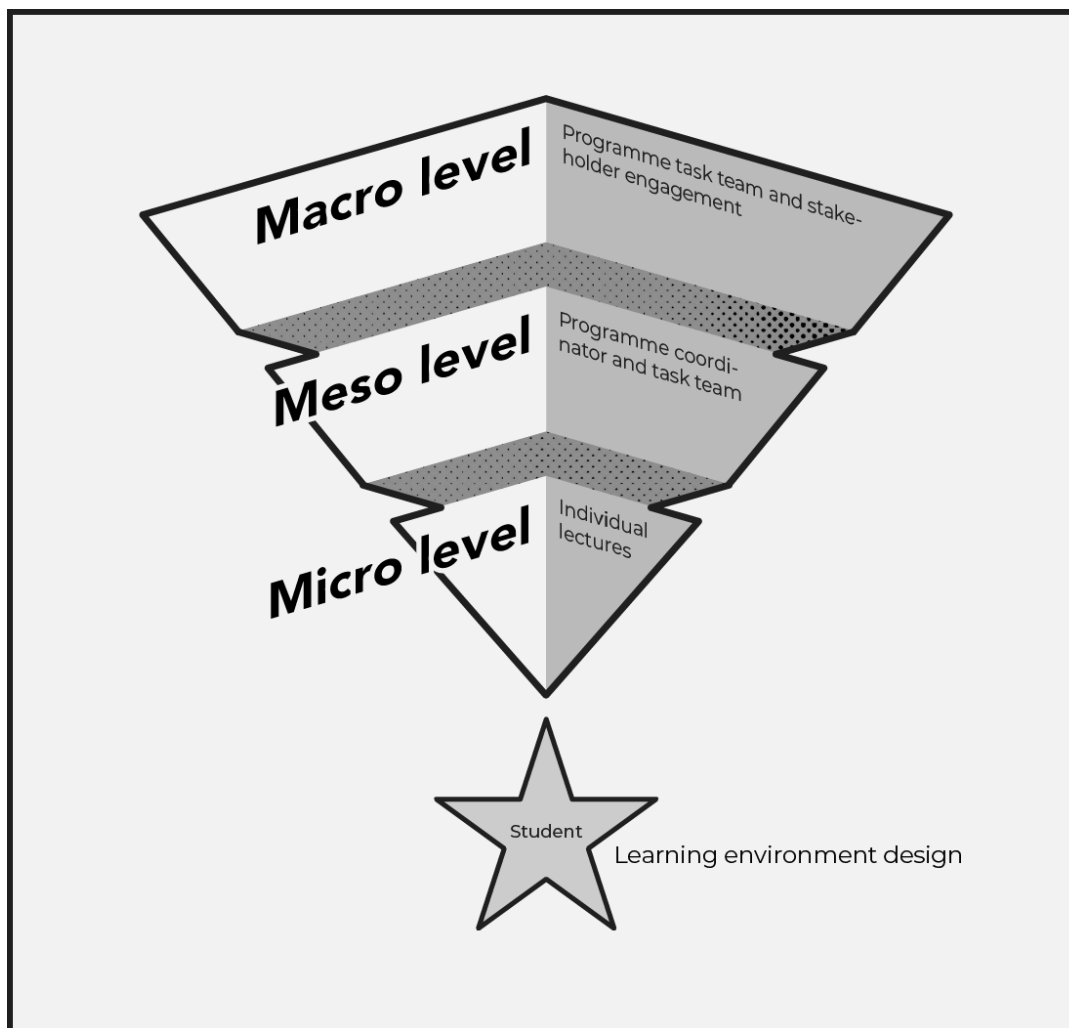
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Doctoral degree	A 360-credit qualification that prepares students for an academic career. It incorporates the undertaking of research at a high level.
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SAQA is tasked with developing the policy and criteria for registering standards and qualifications on the NQF-based on the recommendations of the CHE (SA, 2014). SAQA, functioning as an institution, primarily serves an oversight role concerning the NQF, encompassing various responsibilities related to curriculum development. In this capacity, SAQA advises quality councils (such as the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations) and registers both full qualifications (like degrees) and part-qualifications (such as credit-bearing short courses) on the NQF. Consequently, all qualifications offered by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa should be registered with SAQA (SAQA, 2014).

The various organisations introduced in the previous sections provide a public management framework for higher education in South Africa. Apart from this, each HEI, public and private, have internal processes aligned to the development, quality control and management of qualifications within their own institutions. In the case of TUT this function is coordinated by the Directorate of Curriculum Development and Support (CDS) which falls within the Directorate Higher Education Development and Support (TUT, 2022). Although each institution follows a set of internal processes, they largely follow a similar structure. In their seminal work related to this structure, Malan, Du Toit and Van Oostrum (1996), illustrate the so-called cone model, which in turn rests on a three-stage process. Figure 2.2 provides an adapted visual presentation of this model.



**Figure 2.2: Three-phase curriculum development model (Own creation, adapted from Malan, Du Toit and Van Oostrum (1996))**

With reference to the cone model, macro level curriculum development includes the formation of a curriculum task team that acts as the programme committee. This task team, along with relevant stakeholders, designs the HEQSF NQF-aligned level descriptors. Stakeholder engagement at this stage of curriculum design is pivotal, involving not only the aforementioned public organisations but also industry professionals (including industry organisations) and academic colleagues. To promote co-creation, student input is also essential (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2018). Fung (2017) refers to the many ecosystems to which curricula and universities need to respond to in order to remain progressive in producing knowledge, such as the economy, knowledge, social institutions, persons, learning, the natural environment, and even culture. Inadequate stakeholder engagement may lead to the development of curricula

poorly aligned with the needs of the industry, society, and the environment (Fu, Sultana & Lei, 2016).

Benchmarking in curriculum development is vital as it ensures that the curriculum under development is relevant and contemporary (Szende, Catalfamo & Upneja, 2019), allowing the programme task team to learn from best practices at other HEIs. This benchmarking should encompass both domestic and international perspectives. However, published research in the field of curriculum development in the management sciences in South Africa, such as mentioned by Scholtz (2020) who indicates that there is a deficit in the clarity of integration of international benchmarking for quality assurance. Additionally, the increasing call for the 'decolonisation' of the higher education landscape, in which students demand a greater focus on indigenous (African) knowledge to be incorporated into the curriculum. This brings forth the opposite challenge of diverging from current international movements, where local curriculum development may deviate from international or even global standards (Van Jaarsveldt, De Vries & Kroukamp, 2019).

The task team at the macro level completes and submits relevant documentation (after engagement with stakeholders at micro and meso levels) related to obtaining qualification approval, such as those prescribed by SAQA, CHE, and DHET. The team then executes a learning needs analysis, determines the purpose of the qualification, exit-level outcomes, determines the assumed learning, establishes the duration of the learning, aligns the programme to CHE criteria, sets academic entry requirements, and evaluates the overall programme design (Malan, Du Toit & Van Oostrum, 1996; CHE, 2004). As Hordern (2018) proposes, there needs to be a fine balance between industry professional knowledge value and public policy. A curriculum that relies too heavily on the value of professional knowledge may lean excessively on a few dominant voices. In contrast, relying too heavily on public policy may generate what Hordern (2018) refers to as “fake” knowledge.

This information is then submitted to the HEQC of the CHE for accreditation. Table 2.2 provides an overview of the scope of information required for CHE accreditation.

**Table 2.2: HEQC accreditation requirements according to CHE (2023)**

<b>Programme information</b>
Mode of Delivery
Programme Type
Qualification Type
Qualification Designation
CESM Classification
Total number of credits and duration
<b>Evaluation of the extent to which the proposed programme fulfils the HEQC accreditation criteria.</b>
<b>1. Programme design</b>
1.1 Alignment of the programme with the mission and plan of the institution.
1.2 Provision of a rationale for this programme, considering the envisaged student intake and stakeholder needs.
1.3 Description of articulation possibilities of this programme.
1.4 Names of the modules/courses which constitute the programme - and for each course, which specify:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module name</li> <li>• NQF Level of the module</li> <li>• Credits per module</li> <li>• Compulsory/optional/electives</li> <li>• Year (1, 2, 3, 4)</li> <li>• Total credits per year</li> </ul>
1.5 Learning activities.
1.6 Specification of the programme purpose and how the proposed curriculum will contribute towards the intended outcomes.
1.7 Specification of the rules of combination for the constituent modules/courses and, where applicable, progression rules from one year to the next.
1.8 A brief explanation of how competences developed in the programme are aligned with the appropriate NQF level.
1.9 If the proposed programme is a professional degree, information regarding approval been applied for from the relevant professional body.
1.10 Work placement for experimental learning if applicable.
<b>2. Student recruitment, admission and selection</b>
2.1 Indication of the admission requirements of the programme.
2.2 Specification of the selection criteria for the programme.
2.3 Description of the enrolment plan for the programme.
2.4 Description of how the objective of widening access to higher education will be promoted.
2.5 Details of how RPL will be applied (if applicable).
<b>3. Staff qualifications</b>
<b>4. Staff size and seniority</b>
<b>5. Teaching and learning strategy</b>
5.1 Description of how the teaching and learning strategy reflects the institution's mission.

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5.2 Explanation of the teaching methods, mode of delivery and the materials development for the achievement of the stated outcomes of the qualification.

5.3 An overview of academic support programmes or assistance provided to students on the programme per site.

5.4 Description of the mechanisms in place to monitor student progress, evaluate programme impact and effect improvement.

5.5 If the institution offers the programme at different sites or modes of delivery, an account should be provided on how the quality of teaching and learning is maintained.

5.6 Description of the processes in place to identify and support inactive and/or underperforming students.

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## **6. Assessment**

6.1 Description of the assessment policy of the institution in relation to the programme, covering the following areas.

6.2 Description of processes to provide feedback to students on assessment tasks.

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## **7. Infrastructure and library resources**

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### **8. Programme administration services**

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### **9. Postgraduate policies, procedures and regulations**

9.1 A description of the process for approval of student research proposals and completed dissertations/theses.

9.2 Outline of the criteria for the selection and appointment of supervisors.

9.3 A description of how supervision is built into workload models.

9.4 A summary of the guidelines governing the roles and responsibilities of students and supervisors.

9.5 Description of policies and procedures in place to deal with student complaints, grievances, plagiarism, re-marking, etc.

9.6 Detail of the assessment procedures for long essays, dissertations and theses.

9.7 Existing postgraduate institutions.

9.8 A description of what plans are in place to mentor academic staff into research activities?

9.9 A description of how the programme enables students to undertake independent research and other scholarly activities.

9.10 Provide a budget for research.

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From Table 2.2, it is evident that the CHE requires significant information and accompanying evidence for the quality assurance of new programme development. This information does not only relate to the programme itself but also to all supporting structures, including institutional infrastructure and policies, staff capacity and quality, teaching and learning strategy, as well as assessment.

At the meso level, the team takes the HEQSF level descriptors, as designed in partnership with the members at the macro level, and breaks them down into individual module learning outcomes. At this level, the task team develops learning programme documents such as module descriptors, which define module scope and purpose, learning outcomes, module credits, allocation of modules, and an evaluation of

modules within the programme (Malan, Du Toit & Van Oostrum, 1996). In addition to the aforementioned, at TUT, this also includes a description of infrastructure requirements, availability, and quality of facilitators, and enrolment planning (TUT, 2018a).

At the micro level, curriculum design rests within the realm of the lecturers. Here the lecturers formulate a study guide for each individual module (subject), which encapsulates elements including defining and formulating learning outcomes, compiling a module plan, organising study units, selecting or designing learning material, planning learning and assessment opportunities, and constant evaluation with regard to all the aforementioned. The lecturer is the designer of the learning environment and thus has the responsibility to facilitate learning in this regard (Malan, Du Toit & Van Oostrum, 1996). As a facilitator of learning in a student-centred approach, the curriculum should be designed to allow for learning freedom (reduced direction, increased autonomy), thus transferring the responsibility of learning from the facilitator to the student as they take control of their own learning. However, student perceptions of the learning opportunities ultimately have an impact on the success of learning. Student feedback is thus essential to successful curriculum design at the micro level.

With the push for a greater decolonised curriculum, as alluded to by Higgs (2016), which he views more holistically and rather refers to as a “transformative education discourse”, and the caution by Van Jaarsveldt et al. (2019) regarding the potential disregard for international benchmarking, it is evident that international standards need to be incorporated, but this should be done in collaboration with student input. In South Africa, with the 'fees must fall' movement and the resultant greater provisions in the national fiscus to aid student finance, there has also been improved access to education for students who may not have had such opportunities previously. These previously marginalised students now have access to education but face additional challenges in garnering academic success. It has been noted that higher education students in South Africa sometimes perceive feelings of marginalisation, a lack of

recognition of the importance of knowledge and skills developed in their communities, and their relevance to higher education, along with challenges faced accessing and engaging with the curriculum (Naidoo, Trahar, Lucas, Muhuro & Wisker, 2020). There is a seemingly increasing gap between curricula and their relatability to students, thus requiring student input into the curriculum development process, achieving the transformational discourse of Higgs (2016).

A critical and reflexive relationship is thus required between the curriculum developers and students (McCabe & O'Connor, 2014). As a facilitator of learning and curriculum I serve as the direct link between the curriculum and the student, it is crucial to constantly reflect on one's own professional practice in a scholarly way, and action research serves as a constructive tool in this regard, as described by Du Toit (2012). As seen in Table 2.2, there is no clear requirement for student input in the programme accreditation process, especially at the macro and meso levels. However, it is at the micro level where I see a direct link between the lecturer and the student, and it is here that a constructive portal exists for the transformation of the curriculum, which the lecturer could then align with meso and macro levels.

As an associate professor and section head in my department, I position myself as a role player in all three of the above-mentioned qualification and curriculum development phases. I am part of several task teams developing new qualifications; I am a team member at the meso level, and finally, I am a facilitator of learning at the micro level. I am not a solo traveller in this regard but have numerous stakeholders joining me on this journey, including colleagues, academic experts both local and international, and students, all of whom should be co-creators of this learning journey.

### **2.2.5. Tourism as a field of study in South Africa**

Compared to other fields of study such as the natural sciences, medicine, or engineering, tourism is relatively new. Tourism, as part of the social sciences, is additionally complex due to its interdisciplinary and multisectoral nature. Moreover,

tourism is not only a contemporary field of study, but so too is higher education provision in this field. This is particularly relevant to the South African context, and this section provides more insight into it.

#### 2.2.5.1. Undergraduate tourism education

Tourism is a multisectoral industry, and qualifications in this field exist in several sectors, including, but not limited to, general tourism, adventure tourism management, ecotourism management, event management, leisure and recreation, and accommodation (hospitality) management to name a few (Hermann, 2016). These fields have emerged as distinct areas of study, and sector-specific qualifications are offered at both private and public HEIs, ranging from certificates to diplomas and degrees ranging from NQF levels 5 to 7 on the South African HEQSF.

Tourism have been considered by some scholars, such as Tribe (2001) and Geirsdottir (2008), as primarily a vocational field of study, as curricula in this field were initially driven by industry needs. Due to the nature of the industry, it requires vocational and applied competencies (Gangotia & Bhatt, 2023), such as practical customer-oriented professionalism and practice, including food preparation, reservation and administrative software applications (such as Opera, Amadeus, and Galileo), guiding, and event planning. Although tourism higher education is primarily vocational, Inui et al. (2006) caution against a purely one-sided application and promote the notion that tourism education should be both vocational and academic. The latter serves as a precursor to the further development of the field and for the effective development of research capacity. Formerly, these programmes were only offered at diploma levels with a strong vocational emphasis, and there are now also pure academic programmes in this regard. Although subtle differences exist in the content of vocational and academic offerings, they are largely indistinguishable (Oktadiana & Chon, 2017).



As a result, most tourism qualifications are offered at vocational higher education institutions as well as universities of technology, including TUT, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Central University of Technology, and Durban University of Technology. Comprehensive universities, such as the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and Nelson Mandela University (NMU), also offer these qualifications. Notably, North-West University is the only traditional university that offers tourism qualifications as a purely academic field of study.

López-Bonilla and López-Bonilla (2014) conducted an exploratory study on the competencies required of tourism graduates. They identified key competencies applicable to research within tourism higher education:

- Insight into qualitative and quantitative tourism research methods;
- Understanding of the design and structure of the tourism market;
- Familiarity with statistical tools used in tourism research;
- Ability to access various sources of information in tourism research;
- Proficiency in analysing and interpreting data and results from tourism research;
- Capability to prepare and report tourism research results;
- Competence in using information technology in tourism research;
- Awareness of the importance of research in the field of tourism;
- Recognition of the significance of information in decision-making within a tourism organisation; and
- Understanding of the importance of market research in tourism (López-Bonilla & López-Bonilla, 2014).

The above key competence areas, according to López-Bonilla and López-Bonilla (2014) are applicable specifically to first degree graduates. In the South African case, that would be equivalent to an NQF 6/7 qualification. These competencies should be embedded into curricula in order to enable a student to progress vertically into a postgraduate qualification. Although the aforementioned sounds desirable there seems to be a dearth of focus on the actual preparation of graduates for postgraduate study. The learning focus areas as identified by López-Bonilla and López-Bonilla

(2014) appear to concentrate primarily on providing an overview of research and then apply learning to a vocational setting (such as real-life work situations) as opposed to also allowing the development of competencies aligned towards a potential future as a researcher.

#### 2.2.5.2. Tourism as field of study at postgraduate level

The achievement of the minimum outcomes or competence at one NQF level should enable the graduate to progress to the next higher level on the NQF. According to Brockmann, Clarke and Winch (2009), competence refers to the performance of a set of tasks to a predetermined standard, and it is bound to and reflected by appropriate outputs to meet that set performance level. Brockmann, Clarke and Winch (2009) also emphasise that competence is a multi-dimensional concept, relying on the integration of a graduate's occupational knowledge, practical skills, and social and personal qualities (see Section 2.2.2). At TUT, when a student achieves their highest undergraduate tourism qualification (such as an Advanced Diploma), they are provided access to apply for admission to a first-level postgraduate qualification (such as a Postgraduate Diploma), as shown in Figure 2.1.

Currently, there are several postgraduate tourism qualifications on offer in South Africa. Table 2.3 provides an overview of these qualifications currently registered with SAQA. Thus, this represents a list of qualifications that may be offered by an accredited provider (higher education institution).

**Table 2.3: Registered postgraduate tourism qualifications offered in South Africa according to SAQA (2022)**

Name of qualification	NQF Level	Provider
Bachelor of Arts Honours in Recreation and Tourism	8	University of Zululand (UniZulu)
Bachelor of Arts Honours in Tourism	8	University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and North-West University (NWU)

Bachelor of Arts Honours in Tourism Development	8	University of Johannesburg (UJ)
Bachelor of Arts Honours in Tourism Management	8	NWU
Bachelor of Arts Honours: Heritage and Tourism Studies	8	UKZN
Bachelor of Arts Honours: Tourism	8	UKZN
Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Tourism Management	8	University of Pretoria (UP), Nelson Mandela University (NMU), University of South Africa (UNISA), NWU
Bachelor of Science Honours: Geography: Eco-tourism	8	UP
Bachelor of Social Science Honours: Heritage and Tourism Studies	8	UKZN
Master of Business Administration: Tourism Development	8	Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA)
Master of Business Administration: Travel and Tourism	8	UKZN
Postgraduate Diploma in Ecotourism	8	Durban University of Technology (DUT)
Postgraduate Diploma in Recreation and Tourism	8	UniZulu
Postgraduate Diploma in Tourism Management	8	TUT, Vaal University of Technology (VUT), DUT, Central University of Technology (CUT)
Postgraduate Diploma: Heritage and Tourism Studies	8	UKZN
Postgraduate Diploma: Management: Tourism and Leisure	8	University of Cape Town (UCT)
Postgraduate Diploma: Tourism Management	8	UNISA
Master of Arts: Events Management	9	UniZulu
Master of Arts: Heritage and Tourism Studies	9	UKZN
Master of Commerce in Tourism Management	9	UP
Master of Commerce: Tourism Management	9	NMU
Master of Management in Travel and Tourism Services Management	9	VUT
Master of Management Sciences in Tourism and Hospitality Management	9	CUT
Master of Management Sciences in Tourism Management	9	TUT
Master of Philosophy in Tourism Management	9	NMU
Doctor of Commerce in Tourism Management	10	UP

Doctor of Management Sciences in Tourism	10	TUT
Doctor of Philosophy in Tourism and Hospitality	10	UJ
Doctor of Philosophy in Tourism and Recreation	10	UniZulu

In the table above, registered postgraduate qualifications specialising in the field of tourism are presented. It should be noted that this list does not include generic postgraduate qualifications where tourism may be included as a module within a generic course of study such as MCom, MBA, and PhD degrees. In terms of the NQF level 8 qualifications listed above, all these qualifications are course-based (including learning modules) and include one or more modules related to research which are generally named research methodology and/or advanced research methodology and/or a research project. Research methodology modules are aligned with core learning outcomes associated with the development of student competencies in relation to research.

### **2.2.6. Mastering tourism as a field of study at a university of technology**

University of technologies came into existence in South Africa after the realignment of the higher education landscape through a series of inter-institutional mergers in 2004. These mergers occurred among all technikons (vocationally-based institutions of higher learning in South Africa and Namibia) in the country, resulting in the creation of several new university of technologies. The primary purpose of the former technikons was "to provide career-oriented programmes, particularly at undergraduate diploma levels" (DoE, 2001:49), emphasising vocational education. This was achieved primarily through the provision of undergraduate qualifications such as certificates and national diplomas. Later, after 1993, these institutions also offered four-year Bachelor of Technology (BTech) degrees and Masters of Technology (MTech) and Doctor of Technology (DTech) degrees (DoE, 2001).

The development of postgraduate students was not a major focus of the former technikons, with less than 1% of graduates being postgraduates as opposed to 20%

at traditional universities (DoE, 2001). As a result, there was a challenge in the provision of postgraduate qualifications at technikons, as the existing undergraduate qualifications did not adequately prepare students for postgraduate study. With the creation of university of technologies, the binary separation of universities and the former technikons was diminished. Although universities of technology today still primarily provide vocational qualifications at the undergraduate level, they now also offer research-oriented qualifications at the postgraduate level. The latter refers to qualifications on NQF8, 9, and 10 with various nomenclatures dependent on the field of study, institution, and NQF level (See Table 2.1). In the case of the Department of Tourism Management at TUT, these include the Postgraduate Diploma in Tourism Management, Master of Management Sciences in Tourism Management, and the Doctor of Management Sciences in Tourism.

### **2.3. TOURISM RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AS A MODULE OF STUDY**

Jennings et al. (2015) allude to quality learning-teaching engagements as those experiences well-founded on educational philosophy and principles, professional practice, cohort learning, context, and real-world relatedness. These engagements optimise authentic, socially constructed, individualised, and collective learning.

All postgraduate tourism programmes at TUT include one or more modules related to research in their curriculum. These modules may be presented as either a theoretical module (Advanced Diploma), a research project (mini research dissertation or a structured Master's such as MBA), or a full research dissertation (Research-based Masters) or thesis (Doctoral). Full research Masters and Doctoral degrees include a full dissertation or thesis, while in the first postgraduate degree or diploma, research is provided as a module in preparation for full research postgraduate study. In the case of TUT, the Department of Tourism Management offers a Masters of Management Sciences (MMSc) in Tourism Management. This degree consists of a single module encompassing the completion of a full research-based dissertation. Additionally, a Doctor of Management Sciences (DMSc) in Tourism is also offered, which incorporates the completion of a full research-based thesis.

In order to prepare students for possible further studies in the aforementioned qualifications, foundational modules for research are included in the Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management (ADTM) and the Postgraduate Diploma in Tourism Management (PDTM). In the ADTM, two modules include a focus on research. In the PDTM, one research module is provided. Although these three mentioned modules focus directly on learning research methodology, all other modules in these programmes require students to conduct basic applied research. These qualifications and their associated modules are listed in Table 2.4 and Table 2.5, respectively, with a brief description of each provided.

**Table 2.4: Modules of the Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management (TUT (2023c:1-2))**

<b>Name of module</b>	<b>Core or elective</b>	<b>Brief overview</b>
Research Methodology	Core	<i>Introduction to scientific research. Literature review management. Research design and approaches, how to identify and link them with suitable research studies. Ethical research principles. Develop a research plan.</i>
Contemporary Issues in Tourism	Core	<i>Students are enabled to have a clear interpretation of current tourism trends and issues and to recognise the different areas of tourism research in a South African tourism context.</i>
Strategic Tourism Management	Core	<i>Students are equipped with advanced knowledge, skills and attitudes in strategic tourism management, with a specific focus on corporate level strategies in multi-business corporations. It is an advanced programme in the sense that it will focus on advanced techniques of analysis, decision making, change management and strategy formulation.</i>
Tourism Development IV	Elective	<i>Students will be able to understand the key organisations and drivers of global tourism policy such as the United Nations climate change efforts as seen in the COP conferences and possible implications on tourism policy, planning and implementation. The module also identifies and analyses documents that influence on South African tourism policy, identify and comment on the key drivers on South African tourism policy. The motivations for using tourism as a driver of economic development, the different levels of implementation of tourism development in South Africa and key guiding documents, analyse</i>

		<i>contemporary case studies with a view to identify implementation successes and gaps.</i>
Event Planning IV	Elective	<i>Students are enabled to conceptualise sustainability through knowledge and insight, with application to principles, concepts and theories. Application of research methods, techniques and technologies within the sustainable event management sphere.</i>
Adventure Tourism Leadership	Elective	<i>Understand and explain the concept of leadership. Apply leadership techniques towards both, individuals and teams, within the Adventure Tourism Sector - complying with international standards and best practices. Evaluate the impact of leadership techniques applied in the work context (co-employees, shareholders, stakeholders).</i>

Advanced diplomas in the field of tourism management are offered at several HEIs in South Africa. Since the realignment of the higher education landscape and the autonomy granted to each university of technology to independently develop their qualifications, there is no longer a uniform alignment of modules, as was previously the case with the Technikons (Scholtz, 2020). Each advanced diploma is therefore uniquely designed; however, there is at least one similarity with the module "Research Methodology", which is offered as a core module in other advanced diplomas in South Africa, including CUT (2023), DUT (2023), VUT (2023), and CPUT (2023). The vertical articulation from the advanced diploma at NQF7 would be the postgraduate diploma at NQF8. Table 2.5 provides an overview of these modules offered at TUT.

**Table 2.5: Modules of the Postgraduate Diploma in Tourism Management (TUT, 2023d:1-2)**

<b>Name of module</b>	<b>Core or elective</b>	<b>Brief overview</b>
Advanced Research Methodology	Core	<i>Identify and formulate research idea and problem. Conduct a literature review. Select a research approach and develop an appropriate research design. Plan the research methods. Gain access and research ethics. Piloting data collection instrument. Data analysis techniques. Outline of the research report. Prepare defensible research proposal. Present and communicate a final draft of a research proposal to a range of audiences.</i>
Tourism Ethics	Business Core	<i>The development of tourism practitioners, both present and future, in order to become better global</i>



			<i>citizens through the adoption of bioethical principles in all spheres of life and business.</i>
Tourism Leadership	Business Core		<i>This module builds on foundational knowledge obtained in the areas of strategic management, entrepreneurship and basic management principles. This module aims to provide a learning opportunity for students to enhance their knowledge of leadership within the tourism industry in areas such as hospitality, airlines and aviation, ecotourism, adventure tourism, event management and attractions management. This entails an analysis of leadership theories, leadership perspectives, leadership challenges and group leadership and mentoring. The module will assist students to investigate their own personal leadership behaviour and to sharpen their own efficacy in dealing with the human element of management.</i>
Tourism Development V	Elective		<i>Students are equipped with the skills to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the tourism development process (from planning to implementation and monitoring), examine tourism development strategies and implications for rural and urban destinations, report on the relevance of tourism development objectives in relation to community needs, demonstrate a clear understanding of various pitfalls in tourism development planning and propose possible solutions and analyse tourism planning literature, draw conclusions and make recommendations on possible improvements.</i>
Event Planning V	Elective		<i>Students are exposed to the expert activities of event planning within the event management context. To enable the students to execute an event planning schedule (logistical and operational planning); identify the stakeholders of an event; control the event budget; co-ordinate bookings, admissions and seating procedures; oversee resources; conduct mid event evaluations and finally execute the small-scale event.</i>
Adventure Leadership V	Elective		<i>Students will be able to expand their knowledge and understanding about adventure leadership by applying principles of visionary leadership in the adventure tourism sector. The module also applies the concept and principles of knowledge management to adventure leadership, critique and practise models of adventure leadership and management, application of adventure leadership skills to relationship management and the application of the principles of situational leadership to an adventure tourism business.</i>



In Table 2.4 and Table 2.5, a brief description is provided of all the modules. Research Methodology and Advanced Research Methodology in the faculty are generic modules that are managed through a faculty task team at meso level. These curricula presents themselves as a foundation on which learning task design, facilitation, and assessments are built in the faculty and for which the facilitator, such as myself, has limited manoeuvrability. As can be seen, these modules are primarily content driven, which may reflect in the teacher-led approach cautioned against by Barrie (2007) and Kemp (2012; 2013). In order to promote the notion of authentic learning (Slabbert et al., 2014) and to nurture a notion of student-driven curriculum, greater focus on constructive alignment is required. Greater insight into these possible elements is provided in the chapter that follows.

## **2.4. SUMMARY**

This chapter outlines the professional landscape in which I find myself, specifically focusing on research methodology for advanced and postgraduate diploma students in tourism higher education. Higher education qualifications in the field have emerged over the last century, culminating today in a kaleidoscope of offerings at TVET colleges, private HEIs, and public universities and university of technologies.

Formal curriculum design for all higher education qualifications follows a predetermined process involving not only the lecturer developing the learning environment at the micro level but also other role players on higher levels within the academic environment at meso and macro levels. In my professional capacity, I am involved on all three of these levels. Moreover, these processes are externally monitored by external quality and regulatory bodies.

This chapter provides a tourism-focused meso and macro structural overview of the curriculum landscape; however, it does not delve into the finer details at the micro level. This leads to the following chapter, which delves deeper into the curriculum landscape.

## CHAPTER 3

### CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND THE LEARNING LANDSCAPE

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

Prior to undertaking any journey, a traveller needs to determine why they need or want to travel, where to travel, how to get there, what to do at the destination, and when to travel. So, too, it is on the research journey of curriculum design. For this journey, it becomes imperative to delineate what is meant by curriculum, what it comprises, and how it is to be designed. Once the aforementioned is achieved, then the journey through the curriculum design landscape will commence with stopovers in constructivism and constructive alignment, constructive andragogy, facilitation of learning and assessment.

#### 3.2. THE CURRICULUM LANDSCAPE

Prior to completing my Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) I considered a curriculum the equivalent of a pre-packaged set itinerary. This implies that as a lecturer, I was told what to teach, when, where, and how to teach it. There was not much freedom for manoeuvrability, and curricula were developed by those who studied curriculum design or those colleagues with higher rank and power. This I know today was a flawed understanding of reality and that the curriculum landscape is dynamic and allows for agility when all stakeholders invested in it. To elaborate on this, this section will provide an overview of the curriculum landscape by defining the concept, describing the theory of 'knowing, acting, and being' and closing with a description of philosophical practitioner education.

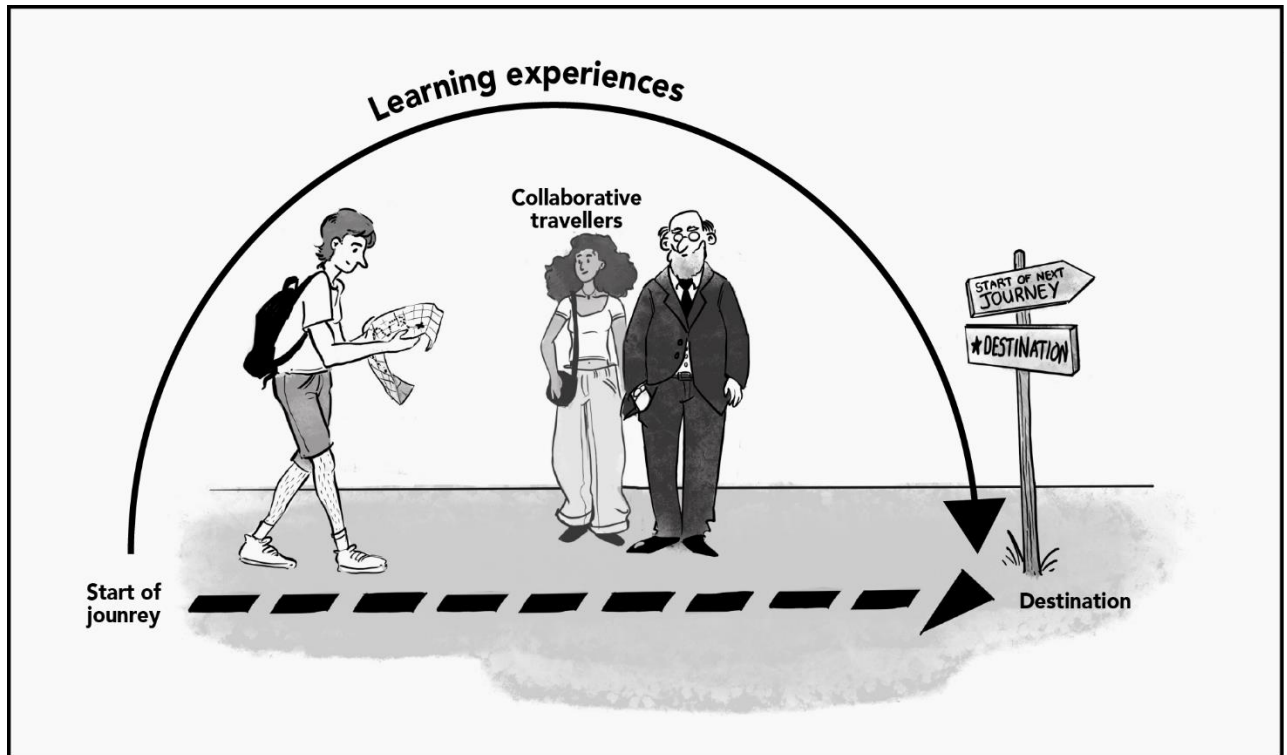
##### 3.2.1. Constructing meaning of curriculum

All journeys begin with a plan. Such a travel plan, also known as an itinerary, describes the route that will be followed by the traveller to get to the destination and the stopovers and possible activities on this journey. In Latin, the word "currere" refers to a race

course or a path that needs to be followed to get to one's destination (Etymology Online, 2023). It is from this word that the English word 'curriculum' is derived (Moye, 2019). Aligning with the travel metaphor, Rajurkar, Chavan, Kackewar and Giri (2019) refer to a curriculum as the 'roadmap' that describes various measurable learning outcomes which should be achieved by students and assessed. However, travel and curriculum may be more than just a simple roadmap. Travel encapsulates the total experience that the traveller will experience on their journey and during their stay at the destination. This comparison aligns with the view of Tribe (2002), in which he describes a curriculum as the 'whole educational experience' that a student perceives in their journey of learning. This whole learning experience encapsulates various elements and requires involvement from a number of stakeholders.

Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) describe a curriculum as a plan for achieving goals, which Moye (2019) contradicts by stating that a curriculum is more than just the goal of learning; it is the path that every student needs to follow in order to achieve the goal. The goal should be measurable and achievable at the end of the journey, such as knowledge, behaviours, values, performance, competence, and learning outcomes. Or as alluded to in Chapter 2, graduate attributes. It is often said that once the 'travel bug' has bitten you that you will forever travel. The latter echoes Slabbert et al.'s (2009) notion of a lifelong learner who initiates further learning journeys. It is the responsibility of the stakeholders in curriculum design to conceive a specific curriculum, i.e., the path that needs to be followed, and to articulate and communicate the optimal path (Moye, 2019). A traveller requires various tools on their journey, such as pathways to direct one to the destination, as well as signs and directions to keep the traveller on the path or, as Moye (2019:1) states, "to prevent them going astray". A curriculum should also provide a sense of order. This entails a clear indication of the learning outcome, i.e., the destination. A curriculum is consequently a tool that configures and facilitates the learning process. Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) outline a curriculum as four basic parts: firstly, it is a plan to achieve set goals; it encapsulates student experiences; it is focused on a specific field of study, and it contains subject matter on various levels of increased complexity as the student progresses on this path to achieving goals. In the travel metaphor this may be represented by the map or a GPS, or signage that a

traveller may experience along the journey to ensure that they reach the desired destination. Image 3.1 provides a graphic illustration of the curriculum journey by visualising the paths, students may follow as well as the associated experiences and opportunities that will assist him/her in reaching the outcome which is the destination.



**Image 3.1: The curriculum journey from my own perspective**

Image 3.1 portrays a traveller, which, in essence, is the student embarking on his/her learning journey. The student may be provided with a map that considers the resources, infrastructure, and learning plan provided to them. There are various paths that the student may follow, each one different; some involve stops along the way, while others are more direct, but they all culminate at the same destination. The journey, in essence, is multi-dimensional, involving numerous elements. The student embarks on this journey by themselves (self-regulated), taking control of their journey but may, along the way, meet and engage with others (collaboration), which may influence and enhance the journey experience (authenticity). Students need to follow their unique journey, and the archaic belief of providing a student with a map, often

drawn by the 'teacher,' and expecting all students to follow the same route no longer holds water. Each student is unique, and as such, they have distinct backgrounds, learning preferences, thinking preferences, and personalities. Expecting all students to follow the same map may not make the experience of the journey authentic. Authentic learning is one of the core elements of all curriculum development (Slabbert et al., 2009), and the empowerment of students to take control of their learning journey is one of the cornerstones of developing graduates who are prepared for the challenges of the 21st century (Barnett & Coate, 2005).

### **3.2.2. Philosophic practitioner education**

Tribe (1999, 2002) is regarded by Dredge, Benckendorff, Day, Gross, Walo, Weeks, and Whitelaw (2012) as one of the foremost leaders in discourse in the field of tourism higher education curriculum development. Tribe (2002) proposes that a higher education tourism curriculum should aim to nurture what he calls the 'philosophic practitioner'. This philosophic practitioner, in turn, requires philosophic practitioner education (PPE) to provide students with the opportunity to maximise their potential.

Higher education curricula may be categorised as either liberal or vocational. Liberal education, derived from the Latin word "liber", meaning free, denotes a curriculum that aims to develop general knowledge and fosters complex, independent thinking, along with transferrable and practical skills (Dredge et al., 2012). This form of education also strives to cultivate graduates who can think globally and independently. Although liberal education emphasises cognitive development to maximise students' potential, Tribe (2000:23) cautions that it may result in graduates who lack an understanding of real-world problems and practical skills.

In contrast, vocational education, derived from the Latin word "vocatio", meaning a calling, refers to curricula that focus on developing practical skills and knowledge for a specific trade or occupation. Tribe (2000) provides a utilitarian view of vocational education, stating that its primary goal is to produce graduates who can easily enter

the labour market and contribute positively to the profitability of a tourism organisation. When liberal and vocational education overlap, engaging students in specialised education for a particular occupation, it gives rise to "professional education" (Lum, 2009). Professional education programmes include, among others, tourism. Table 3.1 provides a brief differentiation between liberal and vocational tourism curricula.

**Table 3.1: Vocational versus liberal curricula according to Tribe (2000:22)**

	<b>Vocational tourism studies</b>	<b>Liberal tourism studies</b>
<b>Aims</b>	To produce graduates for the labour force	Understanding of tourism
<b>Research methods</b>	Positivist	Interpretive Critical thinking
<b>Values</b>	Tourism for profit	Searching for competing values Public interest
<b>Approaches</b>	Functional modules/subjects Transferrable skills	Disciplinary approach Critical modules Research methodology and research projects Complementary studies
<b>Research</b>	Industry-led	Issue-led Searching for hidden issues
<b>Evaluation</b>	Performance	Enhanced understanding

University of technology such as TUT are by purpose institutions providing vocational curricula encompassing both knowledge and practical application. The TUT prospectus (2018b:1) summarises it as follows:

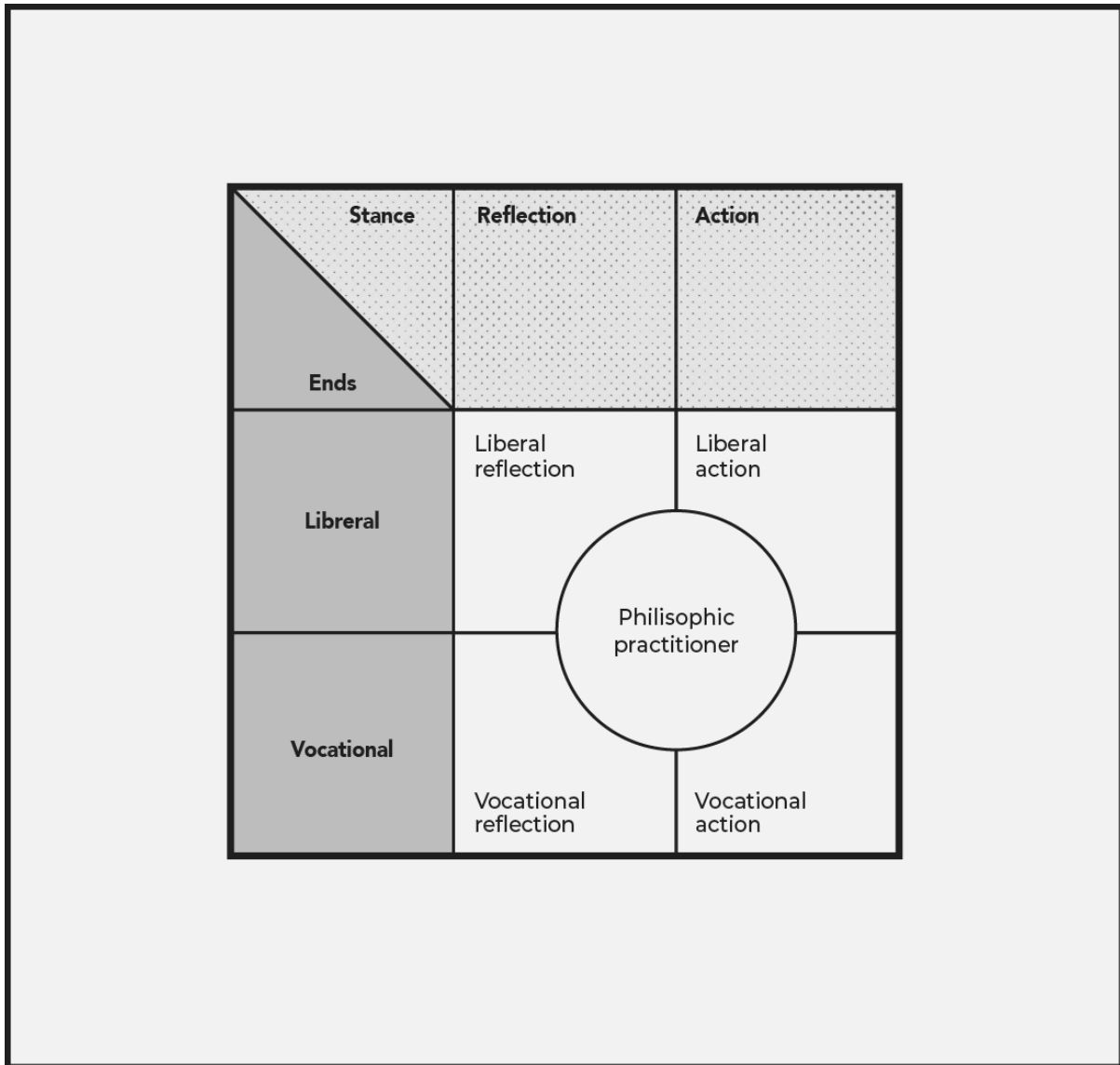
“A university of technology strives not only towards the promotion of knowledge and skills, but also, especially, towards the application of such knowledge and the development and releasing of means for the application of that knowledge in the training of manpower, emphasising the practical and the vocational.”

Tourism education generally has a strong vocational orientation (Hayes, 2021). Hayes (2021) also believes that evidence exists that liberal learning outcomes addressing broader socio-cultural and environmental needs are also being emphasised in this

curriculum. Nevertheless, there exists an uneven alignment in balancing vocational and liberal learning in tourism curricula.

Although universities of technology primarily provide vocational qualifications, these are principally at undergraduate level, and as a student articulates vertically (acquires a higher qualification), there is a greater inclusion of elements of liberal education. For example, the inclusion of research methodology and research projects. It is for this reason that Tribe (2000) proposes the notion of PPE for tourism education. The theory of PPE is illustrated in Figure 3.2. Tribe (2002) denotes that such a curriculum framework rests on two dimensions. The first dimension refers to the real world of work that is the focus of the curriculum. The second, how that curriculum engages to meet the requirements of this world. In my case, that would be tourism postgraduate education in which students are expected to expand their mastery of research methodology.

Reflection and action are fundamental aspects of a curriculum, denoting Weimer's (2013) description of a transformative curriculum—one that allows capacity for students to take greater control over their own learning. The PPE theory encapsulates a curriculum that meets the needs of industry and the employability of graduates while also engaging with the vital role of developing learning opportunities for students to allow them to self-develop as engaged and mindful of their role in society (Tribe, 2002). This framework has been widely supported by tourism curriculum researchers such as Ring, Dickinger and Wöber (2009) and Hayes and Tucker (2022).



**Figure 3.2: Philosophical Practitioner Education (Tribe (2002))**

Although this framework for the curriculum space is generally accepted, there are four main areas in which this framework is deficient and where advances are required through further research. Firstly, Cooper, Orrell and Bowden (2010) state that although the framework illustrates a balance between liberal and vocational education, this is not always the case, and, in most cases where PPE has been used as a basis for tourism curriculum development, there have been ‘trade-offs’ in which one domain exceeds the other. Secondly, the tasks of reflection and action seem to be static in this framework. Dredge et al. (2012) emphasise that these two actions develop over time and should not remain a static part of the curriculum. Thirdly, the framework offers a single ‘expert’ opinion on what good PPE should encapsulate. The model of PPE does



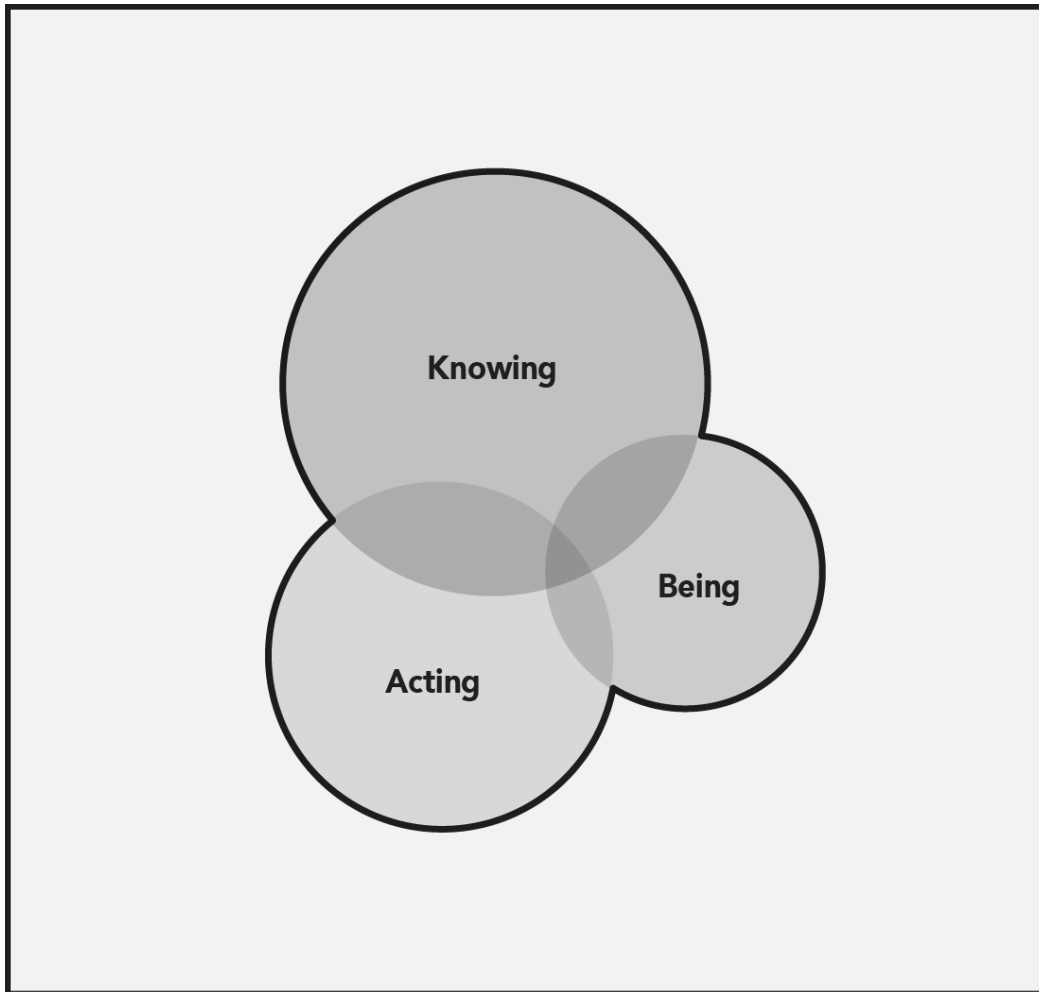
not make sufficient allowance for persons, in my position, to contribute towards the continued transformation of the predesigned curriculum, or as Hayes and Tucker (2022) indicate, it does not consider all stakeholders such as students, colleagues, or managers. Thus, the PPE oval in the centre of Figure 3.2 should effectively represent more than a single individual but a number of individuals (including myself, colleagues, and students) learning independently and cooperatively. The framework should allow curriculum developers such as myself to make valuable contributions to transform the curriculum utilising those constructive resources and strategies available to us such as action research (both participatory and individual). Lastly, the framework in total seems to only represent a snapshot in time when the student is embarking on their learning journey through the curriculum. It does not include the further development of a graduate in their professional career and for further self-development. It is pivotal for a student to maximise their potential as proposed by Slabbert et al. (2009) and feel self-empowered and to embrace lifelong learning, post formal education.

Taking the above challenges into account, the PPE framework for curriculum development still is one of the only tourism discipline-specific frameworks (Hayes & Tucker, 2022). According to Ayikoru et al. (2009), the framework is relevant in the post-modern neoliberal society in which we live and perform our professional duties, which is under constant pressure in the form of fiscal austerity, changing student demand, increased global competition and globalisation, increased focus on quality, and general staff fatigue. Dredge et al. (2012) add additional forces in the shape of ambiguous economic, social, political, and education policy pressures and an increasing dynamic labour market. However, Dredge et al. (2012) mention that this framework should not be considered set-in-stone, and each institution is unique in terms of resources available and has distinct student and staff profiles. In terms of the aforementioned, universities of technology differ from comprehensive universities and higher education institutions differ based on geopolitical contexts and economic dynamics. Each higher education institution therefore attracts a heterogeneous student cohort and staff. For this reason, I believe the PPE framework serves as a beneficial theoretical foundation but it should be adapted so that it is a more agile framework, shaped by institutional, student, and colleague contributions which affect

the total learning journey of students. This then may echo the view of Vermeulen and Van Den Akker (2010) who propose the notion of a metamodern world, which has surpassed the notion of post-modernism. Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010:12) describe post-modernism as a world with spatial disordering; then the metamodern should be understood as a “spacetime that is both neither ordered and disordered”. With significant developments in the metamodern world, society (and education) can’t be spatially or temporarily framed any longer and need to move beyond what is known now towards a future that may be a surreal place that is placeless. This notion of placeless still needs to be constructed and given meaning, following a constructivist epistemology.

### **3.2.3. Knowing, acting and being**

Graduates should learn to become global citizens, develop stewardship, tolerance and an ethical stance towards development (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006). The latter implies a movement away from a theoretical business skill (i.e. reading a map and going directly to the destination without any authentic experiences) only approach to a more authentic learning-based approach of students as proposed by Slabbert et al. (2009). In order to effectively develop a curriculum to cater for our neoliberal world which implies a general favouring of capitalistic operational requirements over cognition (Boluk, Cavaliere & Duffy, 2021). Barnett and Coate (2005) propose a three-domain model, also referred to as the *knowing, acting and being model* as indicated in Figure 3.3.



**Figure 3.3: The theory of knowing, acting and being (Barnett & Coate (2005))**

In Figure 3.3 three domains are presented in the form of spheres. Although these three spheres are indicated as overlapping in the figure, in reality this may not always be the case. The spheres in such cases may be separated from one another implying a lack of integration between them.

Dredge et al. (2012) indicate that globally, tourism curricula were, and in many cases still are, theory-based and represented by; the 'knowing' domain. However, due to vocational pressure, tourism curricula are increasingly incorporating acting or vocational learning. Barnett and Coate (2005) are of the view that placing too much emphasis on theoretical outcomes and, consequently, theoretical learning may not contribute to the holistic development of students. They are of the view that curricula outcomes should be adaptable and agile to cater to a continuously changing

workplace and global environment. Students should be able to interpret the learning content themselves to drive self-regulated meta-cognition and thus the ability of a graduate to place themselves in the context of their professional and personal lives. It may be argued that Barnett and Coate's (2005) view of knowing is based on the premise of theoretical content due to universities being seen as important knowledge producers, and this often blinds these institutions into driving content-driven curricula. Barnett and Coate's (2005) figure clearly indicate this, with the knowing domain being represented as the largest sphere. However, this is not the desired state, and curricula should strive to engage the other two domains equally.

The dimension of 'being' is often omitted or insufficiently engaged with in current tourism curricula (Millmow, 2009). One reason for this omission may be that curricula are primarily developed by academics and industry professionals, whom Barnette and Coate (2005) refer to as 'knowledge creators', and may not adequately consider the interests of students and other stakeholders (Carey, 2013; Brooman, Darwent & Pimor, 2015). This domain of learning leans towards developing well-rounded graduates who are ethical and professional. The notion of 'being' is expanded by Slabbert et al. (2009), who refer to the action of becoming. This action implies that a student cannot simply be a well-rounded graduate through learning a content-driven curriculum. There needs to be a process of personal development of potential and the achievement of continuous personal development.

The knowing, acting, and being model proposes a theoretical foundation to further enhance curriculum design; however, some elements are further questioned by scholars. For instance, Bernstein (2000) critiques the notion of knowledge in curriculum design, questioning how a curriculum designer or facilitator of learning may determine what is considered appropriate or "valid knowledge". This "valid" knowledge may be framed based on choices like selection (the scope of the curriculum), sequencing (progression/order), pacing (time/credit), and evaluation (assessment criteria) (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019). The model suggests the use of predetermined content, which may be contested to be deemed valid knowledge. This focus on a

knowledge-based curriculum, as indicated by Barnette and Coate (2005), can be a primary obstacle in transforming curricula to develop tourism graduates with the required attributes. Attributes pertain to more than mastering content and should also address the mastering of competence and as such students should also master the ability to know how and not simply to know what (Hill et al., 2016).

While the model by Barnette and Coate (2005) raises questions about the validity of content knowledge in curriculum design, it may still lean toward emphasising teaching and expecting students to know content knowledge rather than creating their own meaning (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019). Moving away from a pure content and knowledge-based curriculum opens up possibilities for interaction and negotiation between facilitators and students, allowing for the co-creation of knowledge and the embracing of constructivism (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019). This shift may also impact learning task design and resources, such as moving away from conceptual textbook-based knowledge. Questioning the seemingly enshrined dominance of content-driven curriculum developers, there should be greater advocacy for opportunities for students to co-construct knowledge, disrupting the traditional one-way transmission model of teaching.

### **3.3. CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT**

Prior to the development of the concept of constructive alignment by John Biggs (1996), curriculum design in universities was primarily an individual responsibility, with academics using their personal experiences to determine the content of curricula (Kandlbinder, 2014). Therefore, these initial content-driven curricula involved students merely required to recall what they had been told (Biggs, 2022), thus implying that lecturers were merely one-directional *teachers*. This does not align with the definition of curriculum as prescribed by Tribe (2002). In his definition, the academic (lecturer) (at micro level curriculum development) determines the learning experience that the student is to undergo. It may be argued that, in certain cases, the latter is still applied, especially considering that HEIs may not be effectively transforming their curricula to

cater to changing educational challenges such as increased class sizes, student dynamics, funding, and national policy requirements (Scott & Ivala, 2019).

The theory of constructivism and its inclusion of students as active learners is not a new phenomenon (Loughlin, Lygo-Baker & Lindberg-Sand, 2021) and has been an evident theory in the field of humanities and social sciences (Weimer, 2013), however with relatively limited application in the tourism discipline. Biggs (1999) refers to a good teaching (and learning) system as one that aligns teaching methods and assessment to stated learning objectives or outcomes-based education as described by Loughlin, Lygo-Baker and Lindberg-Sand (2021). The theory of constructive alignment essentially aims to instil a constructivist learning of students by aligning teaching (which goes hand in hand with assessment) and the exit level outcomes (Biggs, 1999). Constructive alignment is essentially a task design aimed at the outcome which students, by means of learning actions, should master and how they should provide evidence of their learning, which is aligned to the predetermined learning outcomes.

Through constructivism, the student takes charge of their learning; the student, therefore, becomes a key stakeholder in the actuation of the curriculum, which is essential for enhanced buy-in by students (Weimer, 2013; Brooman, Darwent & Pimor, 2015) which I believe gives a student a *voice* in the learning process. The evidence of learning is generally determined by means of assessment, or as Slabbert et al (2009) advocates more specifically authentic assessment. Assessment opportunities are designed to enable a clear constructive judgment to be made as to how well those learning outcomes have been attained (Biggs, 2014).

Social or socio-constructivism may be seen as the development of knowledge constructed by an individual's interaction with the social dynamics in which they find themselves. Knowledge may be constructed by the individual themselves by means of their intrapersonal intelligence, or it may be collaboratively generated through meaning-making among individuals or the generation of interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 2011). Although many students learn cooperatively, they still experience the

learning opportunity individually. Students thus have opportunities for learning from not only their own experiences but also from the experiences of others (Weimer, 2013). From Gardner's (2011) perspective, it implies that learning should be self-regulated by the student and not based on the subjective lecturer-led learning opportunities. Humanity is constantly exposed to the learning experiences of life, many of which are passive and not deliberately designed for active learning, hence the lecturer's role in providing authentic learning opportunities, which allow for active learning experiences. A student, in essence, deconstructs the meaning which a lecturer has provided and thus implies the opposite of constructivism. Students are, therefore, in the prime position to co-construct new meaning as a collective, based on lived experiences to which Whitehead (2009:85) refers, to 'giving birth to living theory' which Whitehead (2009) advocates as a means to derive lifelong learning by means of action research.

Self-regulated learning and collaborative learning may also depend on the psychological state of mind of students in terms of their comfort and ease in working with other students. Class composition and student personality were found by Beckerson, Anderson, Perpich and Yoder-Himes (2020) as determining variables in the success of a curriculum that promotes active learning among students. Therefore, a student's introversion or extroversion personality may have an effect on their comfort to work independently or in groups and the energy exerted to work. It is known that no student is totally aligned towards extroversion or introversion, and thus elements of both these personality traits may present themselves simultaneously, although preference may be for one or the other (Nittle, 2022). In such cases, a person may be considered an extroverted-introvert or an introverted-extrovert. Where both these personality traits are highly aligned with one another, this may be considered an ambivert personality (Nittle, 2022). As such, I believe that curricula should be structured to wholly accommodate extrovertive and introvertive personality traits.

In the case of a curriculum that strives to advance students into vertically articulated streams, such as a postgraduate qualification (as is the case with the ADTM and

PDTM in which I am involved), and to move away from a purely vocationally-driven (industry-based) to a more liberally-driven (research-based) curriculum, as proposed by Tribe (2002), there are a few andragogical recommendations. These recommendations may include taking cognisance of the multisectoral and cross-disciplinary nature of the tourism industry, thus not fully becoming liberal as Tribe (2002) proposes but finding a constructive balance between discipline specific learning outcomes and those learning outcomes that may be inter and intra-disciplinary which may be transferrable. Secondly, a curriculum should consider the multitude of different backgrounds (demographic, ethnic, socio-economic and geographic) of students in the metamodern higher education landscape who may have heterogeneous career paths. Thus, curriculum design should regard the pressures of both industry and student complexity in the curriculum design process (Yan, 2013).

As tourism is a social activity, social constructivism is highly relevant, not only to tourism education but to the overall understanding of tourism (Paris, 2011). Thus, institutional academic boundaries need to transgress both vocational and liberal disciplines to cater to industry dynamics and scientific inquiry. It implies that there needs to be a clear balance between what the industry needs in terms of graduate attributes and what institutions of higher learning provide in terms of curriculum and research. There is a constant need for both industry and higher education institutions to reflect collaboratively on tourism curricula to ensure the sustainability of both knowledge generation and the constructively-gearred graduates required in the world of work.

Prøitz (2015) states that it is vital to provide a foundation on which a constructively-aligned curriculum is designed, which may present initially as the predetermined learning outcomes identified for an academic programme. Accordingly, learning outcomes have emerged as tools providing impetus in education to deviate from teaching-centred towards student-centred learning (Prøitz, 2015), which is the aim of constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996; 1999). A learning outcome, according to Ewell (2005), is a way of emphasising predetermined learning achievements after the



completion of courses or modules. Although Ewell (2005) states that these learning achievements are determined after a learning opportunity, I believe that this does not adequately encompass any learning gained during an opportunity. Therefore, this definition seems to only partially address the concept of learning outcomes. It also implies that learning focuses on the achievement of a measurable target set by the lecturer and not necessarily as a competency that should be mastered that considers the perspective of other stakeholders. Notwithstanding these set measures of achievement have been utilised in curriculum development (Nicholls & Nicholls, 2018). However, in higher education, discourse has argued that curricula need to focus more on learning processes rather than just outcomes and the end result, and that curricular structures (experiences) need to include space for innovation, creativity, and ensuring relevance to learners (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019). Therefore, outcomes should not only be retrospective in terms of learning achieved but also concurrent while learning is being achieved. As a result, curriculum designers should not be too narrowly focused on outcome-based learning only but also on the design of learning opportunities and thus the facilitation of the learning to align with constructivist learning, constructivist learning task designs and teaching and assessments.

The learning outcomes are essentially the milestones that need to be achieved while the student is on their learning journey. Once the student has successfully passed all these identified milestones in the metaphorical learning itinerary, they may successfully reach the learning destination. This should serve as an 'open ticket' which opens the doors for further desire to travel and therefore the achievement of lifelong learning.

### **3.4. CONSTRUCTIVE ANDRAGOGY**

The University of Illinois Springfield (2022:1) describes andragogy as “the facilitation of learning for adults, who are self-directed learners”. Literature on tourism higher education often (incorrectly) uses the term pedagogy which the University of Illinois Springfield (2022) describes as associated with children as learners, the word ‘peda’ meaning child in ancient Greek (English Word Information, 2023). I refer to andragogy

as opposed to pedagogy in this study and in this section, more specifically, constructive andragogy.

### **3.4.1. Constructive problem-based learning**

Rather than being passive and unengaged with learning, what Hordern (2016) refers to as the initiator of 'fake' knowledge, students should learn actively by means of a *creativity-driven* process. As such, learning opportunities should be designed to incorporate challenging problems and issues that require active engagement by students, such as group discussions, research to solve problems, and the presenting of results (Chicoine, 2004). This form of learning should also be collaborative, constructive, contextual, and self-regulated (Dochy, Segers, Van den Bosche & Stuyen, 2005). Problem-based learning, through student active engagement, may lead to so-called co-creation in and of the curriculum (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019), where the perpetuation of hegemonic forms of knowledge is avoided by means of active student engagement and enquiry-led learning. The latter (enquiry-based learning) lending itself constructively towards the learning of research processes and research problem solving for both students and lecturers (McLinden, Edwards, Garfield & Moron-Garcia, 2015).

Clausen and Andersson (2018) and Ruhanen, Axelsen and Bowles (2020) further promote the notion of using problem-based learning opportunities in learning task design for postgraduate tourism students. They propose the design of learning opportunities that stem from relationships with real-world settings, which are increasingly important in the design of student learning opportunities that will allow them to self-develop their professional competencies required to meet the requirements of their tourism professional identity. Not only do problem-based learning opportunities result in the self-development of professional graduates, but it also has a significant positive effect on building student confidence, which, in turn, provides a reassuring learning environment for curiosity and motivation to continuously learn. Clausen and Andersen (2018) indicate that students do not only learn from experience and from a reflection on learning but they are also motivated to learn by creating

meaningful learning opportunities in which they could take ownership of their own learning experience, thus enhancing knowledge accumulation, employability approaches, and skills, thus their tourism professionalism.

Moving away from the archaic teacher-led classroom, metamodern learning should be an active (Clausen & Andersen, 2018) and Whole Brain® (De Boer et al., 2013) thinking journey (more context on this topic in Chapter 4). As such, learning opportunities should be designed to incorporate challenging problems and issues that require active student engagement in the learning process, such as group discussion, enquiry-led learning opportunities involving research activities and presentation wherein students are provided opportunities to demonstrate their learning (Chicoine, 2004). Each student is unique in their cognitive abilities and preferences (Gardner, 2011) implying that in order to obtain student engagement the lecturer at micro level learning task design should not employ a homogeneous approach. Multiple Intelligences is a theory proposed by Gardner (2011), challenging the traditional notion of a single, general intelligence. According to Gardner, student intelligence comprises a range of distinct abilities, or intelligences, each with its own unique cognitive profile. These intelligences are relatively independent of each other, allowing individuals to excel in one or more areas. The original list of multiple intelligences includes:

- **Linguistic Intelligence:** Involves proficiency in language, encompassing reading, writing, and verbal communication skills.
- **Logical-Mathematical Intelligence:** Centres around logical reasoning, problem-solving, and mathematical abilities.
- **Spatial Intelligence:** Involves the capacity to think in three-dimensional space, visualise, and interpret visual information.
- **Musical Intelligence:** Pertains to musical aptitude, including the ability to recognise tones, rhythms, and appreciate musical patterns.
- **Bodily-Kinaesthetic Intelligence:** Focuses on physical coordination, agility, and the ability to manipulate objects skilfully.
- **Interpersonal Intelligence:** Involves understanding and interacting effectively with others, demonstrating empathy and social skills.

- **Intrapersonal Intelligence:** Relates to self-awareness, emotional understanding, and the ability to navigate one's own thoughts and feelings.
- **Naturalistic Intelligence:** Involves a sensitivity and appreciation for the natural world, understanding and categorising elements of the environment.
- **Existential Intelligence:** An additional intelligence later proposed by Gardner, focusing on philosophical and existential questions about human existence (Gardner, 2011).

Gardner's theory suggests that individuals possess a unique combination and strength in these intelligences, and educational practices should recognise and cater to this diversity. By acknowledging and developing these various forms of intelligence, lecturers can create more inclusive and effective curricula and learning environments that accommodate the diverse talents and capabilities of students (Peterlin, 2014).

The tourism industry and tourism education may be a critical tool in promoting individual freedom, social justice, and business productivity to better equip tourism professionals to operate in this dynamic industry (Chicoine, 2004; Belhassen & Caton, 2011). Tourism education should strive to address the challenges associated with this ever-evolving industry to promote social, environmental and economic sustainability as prescribed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2023), more specifically goal 4, *quality education*. Learning opportunities should, therefore, be designed to generate interest in the competencies to be mastered and make learning relevant to real-life practice outside the classroom. Problem-based learning may be considered a constructive approach in dealing with the global pressures that a student may find themselves in in their professional careers, as it is a collaborative, constructive, contextual, and self-regulated learning approach (Dochy, Segers, Van den Bosche & Stuyen, 2005). These learning approaches to learning task design may emanate the reality of the environment that a student may face providing a foundation of skills to contend with the diversity of human characteristics which are prevalent in this socially-driven industry.

Ruhanen, Axelsen and Bowles (2020) advocate for the use of problem-based learning strategies in developing postgraduate tourism students. They propose the design of creative authentic learning tasks that stem from relationships with real-world settings, which are increasingly important for students in higher education. This allows students to develop the professional competencies required to meet the demands of their profession. Clausen and Andersson (2018) believe that problem-based learning was useful in the development of graduates in their tourism Master's programme. Their results indicate that students not only learned passively from life experience but were also actively motivated to learn by creating their own meaningful learning opportunities. Within learning opportunities, students took ownership of their learning experience, approach to employability and skills (Chicoine, 2004), and engaged in self-regulated learning.

Chicoine (2004) underlines the importance of students having a stake in what is being learned; there needs to be a sense of ownership in the learning process on their part. Learning should be based on the diverse experiences of students, which may contribute to the learning of other students and the facilitator themselves (Weimer, 2013). As with the PPE framework, professional reflexivity should be a key aspect in tourism curricula. This reflection should involve not only the facilitator but all stakeholders on all levels of the cone model, including students and colleagues. Professional reflexivity may lead to improved learning which may be facilitated through the regular use of feedback mechanisms such as peer assessment and self-assessment, as well as the fostering of meta-cognitive skills (Chicoine, 2004).

### **3.4.2. Constructive blended learning**

Blended learning is a mode of learning that disrupts the traditional *chalk and talk* teaching method. Blended learning employs a hybridised learning mode where face-to-face classroom learning is complemented by technology-mediated online learning, driven by technological advancements and the demand for improved andragogical practices for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Graham, Woodfield & Harrison, 2013; Lee, Lim & Kim, 2017). This mode has become increasingly prominent, particularly with the disruptive

effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced HEIs to rapidly adapt to online curricula, fundamentally altering how universities design their learning opportunities and assessments (Cranfield, Tick, Venter, Blignaut & Renauld, 2021).

While the COVID-19 pandemic has been disruptive, it has also provided an opportunity for curriculum renewal through blended learning, by offering more relevant learning opportunities. Blended learning has compelled curricula, especially constructively-aligned curricula, to adapt to the latest developments in information technology (O’Flaherty & Phillips, 2015), accelerated by the challenges posed by the pandemic that essentially curtailed physical classroom-based learning. This coupled with a cohort of Generation Z students that have a greater partiality to the use of information technology (Dauksevicuite, 2016), I believe may have made learning opportunities more relatable to students.

Although the theory behind this form of learning mode is not new, the andragogy associated with it is a novel and a developing field of study (Milman, 2013). The key to promoting the success of blended learning is ensuring that online and face-to-face learning opportunities complement each other (Ginns & Ellis, 2007), maintaining a constructive balance between these two modes of learning.

Stannard (2012) is of the view that the face-to-face learning opportunities need to be kept to a minimum when incorporating blended learning in a curriculum and the enquiry-based mode of learning should be expanded. Stannard’s view regarding face-to-face experiences is doubtful as this view may result in a poorly balanced blended learning curriculum that becomes overly biased to online learning. In addition to the development of critical thinking, O’Flaherty and Philips (2015) also propose blended learning as an effective approach to promote independent thinking, lifelong learning and a student who is professionally geared for the real world of work.

The promotion of authentic constructive learning and the encouragement of students to take responsibility for their own learning align with the concept of self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning encompasses cognitive, meta-cognitive, behavioural, motivational and emotional aspects of learning. As students are assumed to take ownership of their learning in a constructive blended learning environment, it has become a crucial area of research in education (Panadero, 2017). Therefore, in self-regulated learning environments, authentic assessment remains essential.

Authentic assessment in higher education refers to methods of judgement that closely mimic real-world tasks and challenges, providing students with opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in contextually relevant scenarios. Unlike traditional assessments that may focus on rote memorisation or standardised testing, authentic assessments aim to judge a student's ability to demonstrate practice and meaningful understanding of the subject matter (Wiggins, 1998) potentially leading to instilling lifelong learning (Adams-Becker et al., 2018). Some key characteristics of authentic assessment in higher education include:

- **Real world relevance:** Assessments are designed to mirror tasks and challenges students might encounter in their future professions or academic pursuits.
- **Application of skills:** Students are required to apply their knowledge and skills to solve complex problems, complete projects, or engage in tasks that reflect the complexities of their field of study.
- **Open-ended nature:** Authentic assessments are often open-ended, allowing for multiple perspectives and diverse solutions. This encourages critical thinking and creativity.
- **Performance-based:** Students are assessed based on their actual performance rather than relying solely on test scores or memorisation. This could include presentations, projects, case studies, or simulations.
- **Opportunities for reflection:** Authentic assessment often incorporates reflective elements, prompting students to analyse and evaluate their own work and learning process.



- **Feedback orientation:** The focus is not only on grading but also on providing constructive feedback that supports students in understanding their strengths and areas for improvement (Wiggins, 1998).

Authentic assessments in higher education may include research projects, case studies, portfolio assessments, group projects, presentations, internships, and simulations. By engaging in these assessments, students develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter, enhance critical thinking skills, and better prepare for the challenges they will face beyond the classroom.

McLaughlin, Roth, Glatt, Gharkholonarehe, Davidson and Griffin (2014) argue that blended learning assessments should primarily gauge the level of achievement and the application of critical and creative thinking skills to attain learning outcomes, solve problems and master content. With this viewpoint there seems to be a bias toward a content-driven curriculum here once again with the focus on content mastery, which may contradict the principles of self-regulated learning. This may lead to greater testing or theoretical examination as summative assessment as opposed to regularly formative assessments that seek to determine the achievement of competencies (Uzun & Ertok, 2020). To address this, a competency-driven curriculum, emphasising the development of skills rather than mere content acquisition, is proposed by Olalla and Merino (2019). This shift allows for greater learning flexibility and authenticity, aligning learning outcomes with real-world problems. Considering my previous argument regarding constructive learning outcomes, blended learning assessments should be a continuous process which allow for continuous reflection and incessant professional growth.

The relevance of static resources, such as textbooks, is also questioned in the context of content-driven curricula, with students increasingly seeking dynamic, online resources (Jhangiani, Dastur, Le Grand & Penner, 2018), especially considering the technologically-inclined Generation Z student cohorts. As blended learning opportunities strive to judge critical and creative thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and the attainment of competencies using various resources and assessment



methods (Milman, 2013) as opposed to a heavy or even total reliance on textbooks. These learning approaches serve as practical mechanisms for facilitators to drive the alignment of curriculum components.

### **3.5. FACILITATING LEARNING**

Chicoine (2004) characterises the role of a lecturer as that of a facilitator of learning, more specifically, in the learning process, the role is akin to that of a mentor to the student. Through mentorship, the focus of learning shifts to the student, creating an authentic learning environment where students are encouraged to develop independent thinking skills to solve problems. Students should be independent and take charge of their own learning journey. Problem-based learning provides students with opportunities to engage in situations that demand critical and reflective thinking, fostering authentic learning (Slabbert et al., 2009).

Given that the purpose of this study is to enhance professional practice to develop a transformed curriculum to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study, it may be assumed that these students may not yet be adequately prepared. Brüssow (2007) presents six main propositions to enhance preparedness, encompassing learning that is conceptual, active/interactive, reflective, cooperative, experience-based, and constructive. In the context of this study, the following section will discuss these six propositions outlined by Brüssow (2007).

#### **3.5.1. Conceptual learning**

Legazpi (2022) views conceptual learning as a learning approach in which students master the cognitive ability to categorise and organise information by creating mental logic-based structures. Maclellan (2005) promotes the utilisation of conceptual learning in learning task design. She believes that the common-sense belief that learning is purely based on the acquisition by students of new behaviour and knowledge, supported by learning experience, is an inaccurate belief. This is because it assumes that the learning of behaviour (actions) and the learning of knowledge

(content as opposed to competencies) are indistinguishable, and that acquisition constitutes learning without reference to transfer. This may lead to students being unable to successfully apply what they have learned in practice and thus their ability to transfer their learning to other situations or to their peers. Conceptual learning is a means to overcome this challenge, allowing students to critically and constructively make meaning of what is being learned and not only to apply it in practice in the short term but to empower them to apply the learning to future problems and contexts. To promote conceptual learning, Brüssow (2007) proposes the seven guidelines as indicated in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Conceptual learning guidelines by Brüssow (2007:262)**

Conceptual learning guidelines	
1	Present initial contexts (background)
2	Make students aware of their own developing ideas
3	Provide an appropriate question framework
4	Place emphasis on authentic tasks
5	Exploit concept mapping
6	Promote learning for understanding
7	Clarify epistemological beliefs

The guidelines in Table 3.2 assign predominant responsibility for the facilitation of learning to the lecturer. Although through the facilitation of learning, the student should become empowered and should take ownership of their own learning. In essence, through the provision of conceptual learning, students should become critical thinkers who actively construct their own meaning by transferring theory to practice. Although conceptual learning is promoted by Legazpi (2022), Maclellan (2005), and Brüssow (2007), I believe that the concept may have a learning limitation, in the sense that learning is focused on the mastering of concepts, augmented by action. This places emphasis on mastering knowledge (content) with limited action (competency) to support the learning process.

### 3.5.2. Constructivism and the development of critical thinking skills

Neoliberal influences have the ability to change the role of higher education, which may reduce the capacity to instil critical thinking skills among current and future students in order to promote the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Slocum, Dimitrov & Webb, 2019). If higher education curricula do not adapt to the neoliberal landscape in which we find ourselves, then that curriculum may be considered obsolete. It is vital that through the embodiment of critical thinking skills in students, the relevance of the curriculum is enhanced, resources are appropriately managed, effective communication channels are utilised, and ethics are promoted (Slocum, Dimitrov & Webb, 2019).

Knowledge evolves from our current understanding, and in our professional actions as facilitators of learning. It is important to challenge the status quo of what we know. This is done by means of developing critical thinking skills among students and for them to see things from multiple viewpoints (Chicoine, 2004). Critical thinking is a cognitive activity rather than a personality or mental trait. It implies that a student has the innate ability to think and to develop their thinking skills in critical, analytical and evaluative ways. Thus, it is a learned skill and may be developed in a student (Cottrell, 2017). Although critical analytical and evaluative thinking is seen by Cottrell (2017) as essential, these are not the only areas of critical thinking, where critical thinking may also be organised, planned, interpersonal, kinaesthetic, holistic and experimental.

Critical thinking consists of two core elements: critical thinking skills and critical thinking disposition. The skills component refers to the cognitive processes of thinking, while disposition refers to personal desire and internal motivation for critical thinking (Zhang & Lambert, 2008). There is a significant positive correlation between critical thinking disposition and critical thinking skills (Profetto-McGrath, 2003). Thus, for critical thinking to be effective, students need to have a desire to pursue it (Dehghanzadeh & Jafaraghaee, 2018), showcasing self-directedness and a motivation to learn.

Agboola (2015) notes that adult students learn best when they are self-motivated. To improve the success of students in higher education, it is vital to understand what motivates and sustains their learning processes. Eight motivating factors for adult learners in higher education are generally considered critical: quality of learning task design; quality of curriculum; relevance and pragmatism; interactive classrooms and effective management practices; progressive assessment and timely feedback; self-directedness; conducive learning environment; and effective academic advising practices (Agboola, 2015). These factors are seen as crucial for eliciting or enhancing the willpower in students toward successful constructive learning. Another approach to potential enhancement of motivations, which relates to the 'interactive classroom' of Agboola (2015), is through moving towards a more collaborative learning environment.

The flipped classroom approach is one teaching method that substitutes individual learning for group learning in a dynamic, interactive environment where the facilitation of learning of students takes place in a group (Dehghanzadeh & Jafaraghaee, 2018). Students take control of their own learning both individually (by means of intrapersonal intelligence) and as a group (interpersonal intelligence) (Gardner, 2011), as opposed to the 'teacher' driving the learning processes. Learning as part of a group additionally may assist students in feeling that they have a vested interest in the overall success of a group and feeling as though they are part of something larger, building a sense of community. To promote collaborative learning, it is vital that students feel a sense of safety and community. A facilitator should promote this sense of community where a learning environment is created that allows for group-think, critical thinking, and collaborative questioning or, as Chicoine (2004) refers to it, an environment where intellectual risk is encouraged.

Knowledge evolves from our current understanding and as a facilitator of learning it is important to challenge the prevalent status quo of teacher-led learning so as to develop critical thinking skills in students and their ability to see things from multiple viewpoints (Chicoine, 2004). Critical thinking is a cognitive activity rather than a

personality or mental trait. It implies for a student to learn to think in critical analytical and evaluative ways. It promotes the questioning of reality by students and the ability to cognitively propose solutions to problems or to develop innovations. Thus, it is a learned skill and may be developed in a student through the provision of a well-designed learning environment (Cottrell, 2017).

Indeed, for effective facilitation of learning and the development of critical thinking among students, it's crucial to shift from traditional 'teacher-based' learning to 'student-focused' learning. This necessitates the development of an appropriate curriculum and the use of effective instructional strategies for critical thinking development among students. The flipped classroom approach is one such teaching method that transitions from individual learning to group learning in a dynamic, interactive environment. Here, the facilitator provides a learning environment within which students are empowered to understand and use concepts (Dehghanzadeh & Jafaraghaee, 2018). This approach allows students to take control of their own learning, moving away from the conventional model where the 'teacher' directs the learning processes.

### **3.5.3. Active and interactive education**

In the development of curricula, the concept of the *student voice* is crucial, as highlighted by Brooman, Darwent, and Pimor (2015). The assumption that curricula will automatically be welcomed by students is challenged by the acknowledgment that a lecturer-led curriculum may not provide a holistic learning journey. Collaborative engagement between students and educators can reveal different priorities, emphasising the importance of involving students in shaping their own learning experiences (Mihans et al., 2008). According to Tribe (2002), each student is on their unique learning journey, underlining the significance of students having a stake in what is being learned and a sense of ownership in the learning process (Chicoine, 2004).

Weimer (2013) introduces the concept of 'learner-centred teaching,' which focuses on enhancing engagement with learners (students) and their learning experiences. In this

approach, learners become partners in the learning process, and educators are challenged to explore new teaching methods while actively reflecting on their practices (Weimer, 2013). Lubicz-Nawrocka (2018) outlines three main benefits of involving students in co-creating curricula: promoting shared responsibility, respect, and trust; fostering a collaborative learning community; and contributing to individual satisfaction and development. The involvement of postgraduate tourism students in the learning process is crucial for the authenticity of their learning experiences, as emphasised by Ruhanen, Axelsen and Bowles (2020).

#### **3.5.4. Critical reflection**

Productive reflection is a key element that can lead to improved learning, and this can be facilitated through the regular use of feedback mechanisms such as peer assessment and self-evaluation, as well as the development of meta-cognitive skills (Chicoine, 2004). Meta-cognition, often described as “thinking about one’s own thinking”, enables students to delve more deeply into their own actions and thought processes during the learning journey (Ruhanen, Axelsen & Bowles, 2020:5). Establishing an environment where students feel free to ask and answer questions openly is crucial in fostering meta-cognitive skills and promoting reflective practices. In summary, critical reflection is a foundational skill in a research methodology curriculum. It equips students with the intellectual tools needed to conduct rigorous, ethical, and impactful research.

#### **3.5.5. Experience-based independent learning**

Chicoine (2004) describes the role of the facilitator as one of a mentor and coach to the student. Through the provision of a learning environment that promotes independent thinking, students may be empowered to solve problems at hand. Students take ownership of their own learning and, as such, may be more motivated to learn.

Referring to Agboola's (2015) notes on adult learning and motivation, Agboola (2015) identifies eight motivating factors for adult learners in higher education. These include the quality of learning task design; quality of the curriculum; relevance and pragmatism; interactive classrooms and effective management practices; progressive assessment and timely feedback; self-directedness; conducive learning environment; and effective academic advising practices. These eight factors are seen as critical by Agboola (2015) to elicit or enhance the willpower in students in higher education toward successful learning. These motivator factors mirror the main elements of the micro environment of curriculum design, as described by Malan, Du Toit and Van Oostrum (1996), falling under the direct responsibility of the lecturer.

### **3.5.6. Cooperative learning and building a sense of community**

In order to promote collaborative learning, it is vital that students feel a sense of safety and community. A facilitator should promote this sense of community where intellectual risk is encouraged (Chicoine, 2004). This is one of the main drivers to inform collaborative learning in a postgraduate tourism learning environment (Ruhanen, Axelsen & Bowles, 2020). Not only should students themselves feel as though they are part of a learning group or cohort, but facilitators should also be part of this learning community. A sense of community may create a learning environment where students learn from one another, freely ask questions, solve problems together, and engage more deeply with the facilitator as a mentor or role model.

## **3.6. CONSOLIDATING THE LANDSCAPE**

From this chapter it is evident that curriculum design is not a static, one-directional environment. It is a realm in which all stakeholders in learning should be involved, including students, lecturers, and curriculum developers. The tourism industry faces a multitude of pressures, including economic, national policy, social, and environmental factors. These pressures affect not only undergraduate students but also those who may wish to pursue a postgraduate career. To prepare these graduates professionally, it is imperative that the curricula catering to these needs are effectively designed.

Curricula for senior tourism students should preferably align with the theory of philosophical practitioner education, catering not only to industry needs but also promoting liberal education, reflection, and action learning.

An active learner constructs their own meaning and takes ownership of their learning and professional development. For facilitation of learning to be effective in this desired state and to develop critical thinking among students, it is essential to move away from traditional 'teacher-based' learning to 'student-focused' learning. Therefore, educators, such as lecturers of tourism research methodology at institutions of higher learning, need to develop an appropriate curriculum and use effective strategies for critical thinking to enable students to self-develop the traits required for a 21<sup>st</sup> century graduate, promoting lifelong learning.

Curricula should transcend being offered at a physical place, at a given time, in a predetermined way, it should adapt to a world that is unpredictable and a future that is uncertain, considering global pressures such as climate change and global political and economic shifts. Curricula should evolve and transform to meet the demands of the metamodern world in which we find ourselves now and may find ourselves in the future.



## CHAPTER 4

### MY PERSONAL LANDSCAPE

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical overview of the tourism curriculum landscape, and in Chapter 3, the landscape of curriculum development and learning is discussed. Research is considered a phased process, requiring a clear understanding of each step to develop a holistic research plan. The first step involves assessing the point of view of the research, the research discipline, and the researcher. The first two aspects, assessing the research and the research discipline, have been covered in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively. This chapter will delve deeper into my personal landscape as the third element of relating to the researcher's point of view in research. Once all these three elements of this point of view are addressed, the study's epistemology is determined, facilitating the selection of the research design. These two aspects are covered in the next chapter (Chapter 5). The research design ultimately guides the research analysis, which forms part of the final sections of this thesis. In this chapter, I elaborate on my personal landscape, providing insight into the contextual construction of this study.

#### 4.2. MY POINT OF VIEW

With a contextual overview provided of the tourism higher education and curriculum landscape, it now becomes necessary to describe the landscape from my point of view. Janesick (2016) refers to a researcher's point of view as the mindset, bias, skills, and knowledge that the researcher contributes to a study, which may affect the overall objectivity of the research. Reflecting on these elements concerning my research professionalism, I consider myself primarily a positivist researcher, which, ironically, strives to base research on objective results-based findings and attempts to steer away from mindset and bias (Comte, 2015).

However, with a constructivist theoretical framework (mindset) adopted in this study, I have also come to believe that as a researcher in higher education, I am a part of the phenomenon being studied, as indicated by Schostack (2002). This study, therefore, moves away from my purely positivistic and etic research approach to one that is constructivist and emic. The theoretical lens and my research skills will have an effect on the research I conduct, as this, in turn, has the capacity to influence my perceptions of the phenomena and thus my results. A researcher should not expect to be in the same cognitive space at the end of a study as they were at the start of the study. As a departure point on this theoretical journey of personal-contextual framing, I will utilise both a professional and cognitive perspective as a frame.

#### **4.2.1. Professional perspective**

Over the past two decades, I have embarked on a developmental journey through higher education, first as an undergraduate student and later on the other side of the classroom as a lecturer. As a millennial who grew up in the 1990s, I often found frustration in the traditional teaching methods employed during my student years. The learning experience seemed like a black-and-white checklist, and questioning a lecturer or exploring the grey areas between the rigid structures of *what to learn* was discouraged. Despite these challenges, I thrived in this educational landscape, completing my studies on time and developing a sense of professional admiration for some of my lecturers. The practice of these lecturers becoming the benchmark for my own professional practice.

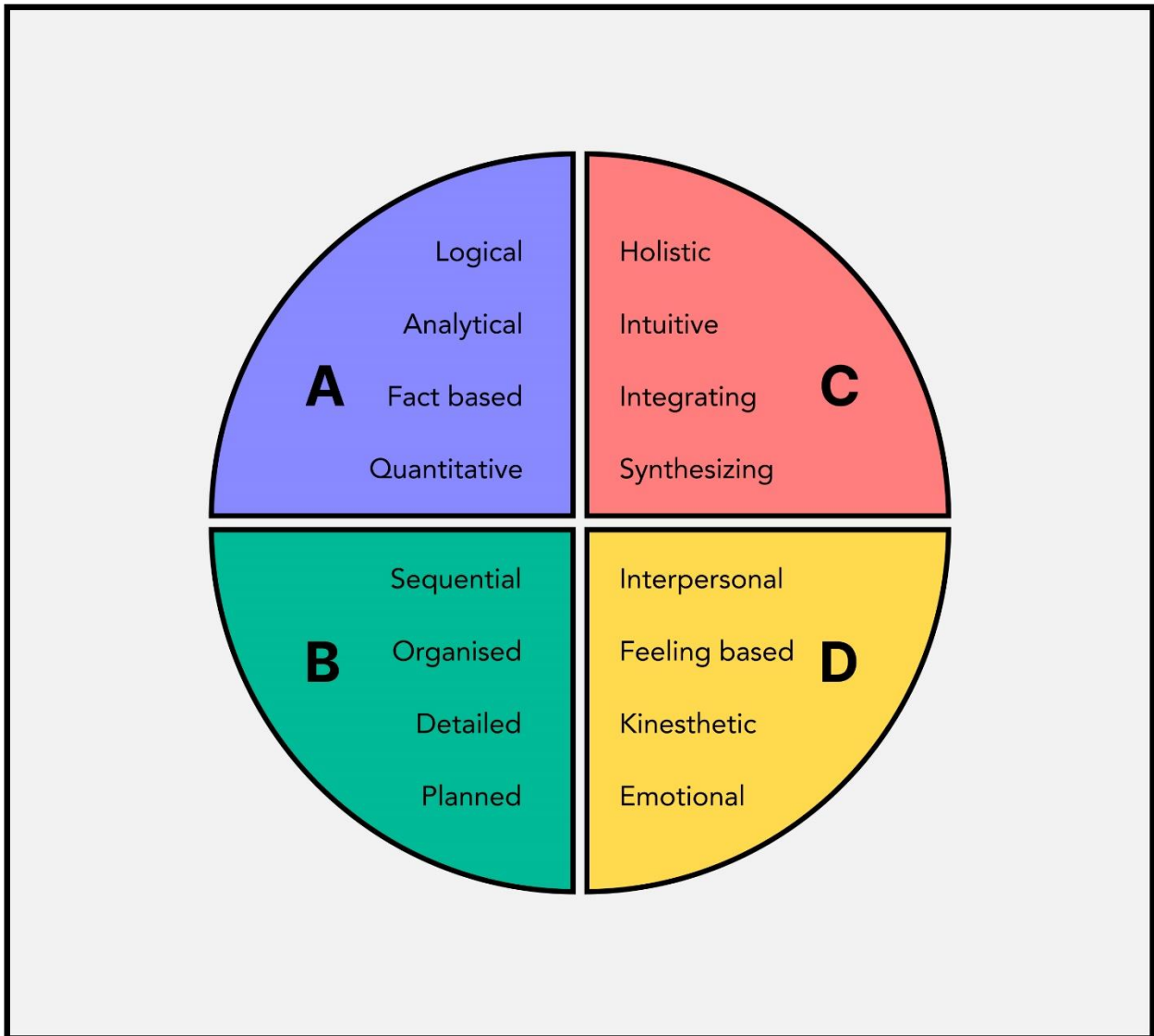
As I transitioned from a student to a junior lecturer, then to a lecturer and later a senior lecturer, my frame of reference was largely influenced by the teaching strategies of my mentors. In 2016, I reluctantly enrolled in the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education at UP, prompted by pressure from my line manager. The PGCHE, initially exasperating, proved to be transformative, unveiling numerous professional pathways within my once one-directional mindset. It empowered me to shift from being a pure teacher to a facilitator of learning. The experience encouraged me to question the status quo of my profession, offering me the chance to view higher education from my

students' perspective, an insight that has become the fundamental foundation of my professional existence. In addition, the PGCHE instilled a sense of self responsibility for my own continued professional development by means of action research.

As a millennial facilitator of learning, I cannot afford to be static in my professional capacity. It is my responsibility to continually promote my own professional development and contribute to the ongoing improvement of the curriculum that I am responsible for. Together with my colleagues and stakeholders, I aim to authentically contribute to the constructive learning of my students, enabling them to make a meaningful impact on the world in which we live, both today and in the future. That encapsulates my professional philosophy.

#### **4.2.2. Cognitive perspective**

The Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI®), based on the theory of Whole Brain® thinking, serves to elucidate an individual's thinking preference, influencing their cognitive abilities and, consequently, their learning (Du Toit, 2018). The HBDI® is founded on the theory of Whole Brain® learning depicted in Figure 4.1, which advocates for an enriched learning experience by incorporating different quadrants of the human brain. This model posits that individuals have preferred modes of thinking aligned with these four quadrants, and these preferences may shift or intensify under stress (Kirstein & Kunz, 2016; Du Toit, 2018). The HBDI® facilitates the adjustment of learning facilitation to enhance flexibility in curriculum development (Du Toit, 2012; Lucas, Dippenaar & Du Toit, 2014).

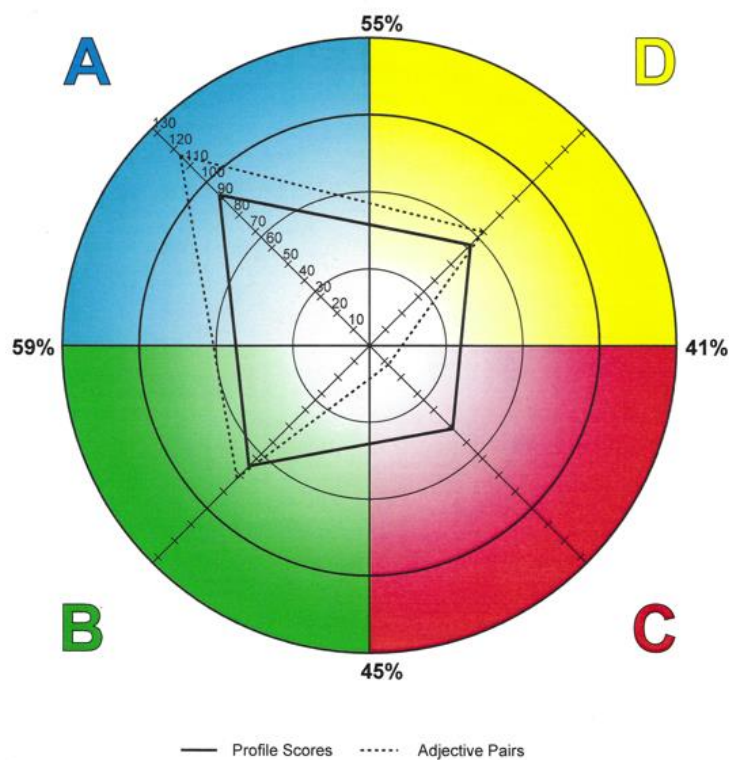


**Figure 4.1: The Whole Brain® Model (Adapted from O’Neil (2023:1))**

The Whole Brain® model proposes four modes of thinking. Quadrant A, situated in the left hemisphere of the brain, involves logical, analytical, fact-based, and quantitative thinking. Quadrant B, also in the left hemisphere, focuses on organised, sequential, planned, and detailed thinking. Quadrant C involves interpersonal, feeling-based, kinaesthetic, and emotive thinking. Quadrant D, in the right creative hemisphere, centres on holistic, intuitive, integrative, and synthesised thinking (Herrmann International, 2023).

Previous studies have successfully utilised the HBDI® model, demonstrating that the quality of lecturers' facilitation of learning practices and curriculum design is influenced by their awareness of thinking preferences and the implications on their practices (De Boer et al., 2013; De Boer et al., 2015; Du Toit, 2018). It also aids in understanding one's own and students' points of view for curriculum development and authentic learning (Kirstein & Kunz, 2016; Hughes, Hughes, & Hodkinson, 2016).

As part of the PGCHE, my Whole Brian® profile was analysed, by means of completion of the HBDI® survey (See Appendix K) providing baseline secondary data to understand my thinking and worldview. Figure 4.2 illustrates my HBDI® profile.



**Figure 4.2: My HBDI® profile**

As may be seen in Figure 4.3, my preferred thinking mode, indicated by the solid lines, rests predominantly in Quadrant A, followed by B, then D and finally C. When under

pressure my thinking preference may adapt to the areas indicated by the dotted line. This implies that when under pressure I tend to move increasingly towards quadrant A as opposed to the other quadrants. Table 4.1 provides a more detailed indication of these results.

**Table 4.1: My HBDI® scores**

Quadrant	A	B	C	D
Preference code	1	1	2	2
Adjective pairs	10	7	1	6
Profile scores	<b>92</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>62</b>
Work elements	Analytical Technical Problem solving Financial	Organisation Planning Administrative Implementation	Teaching Writing Expressing Interpersonal	Integration Conceptualising Creative Innovating
Key descriptor	Factual Quantitative Rational Logical Analytical	Conservative Sequential		Holistic*

My most descriptive descriptor is *holistic*. As mentioned earlier, my primary mode of thinking predominantly rests in Quadrant A, with a score of 92. This indicates a preference for logical, analytical, rational, quantitative, and factually-based thinking, offering a general overview of my mental preferences in day-to-day life. The work elements I most strongly associate with are analytical and technical. Additionally, the adjective pair score of 24. This reveals that under stressful situations, Quadrant A becomes my dominant thinking preference, evident from the adjective pair score of 10.

The next most preferred Quadrant is B, scoring 74 points. In this quadrant, I describe myself as sequential and conservative, with work elements encompassing organisation, planning, and implementation. Quadrant D follows with 62 points, emphasising holistic thinking as a key descriptor. Quadrant C is my least preferred thinking preference, scoring 51.

### 4.3. SUMMARY

This chapter has offered an overview of my personal landscape within the broader context. It involved recognising the contextual background provided in the previous chapters and extending that context to include my identity as a researcher and lecturer. Placing myself into this context necessitated an evaluation of my professional philosophy, considering my background and experience. The analysis of my HBDI® profile further enriched this contextual understanding.

My HBDI® profile highlights a preference for logical, analytical, rational, quantitative, and factually-based thinking. This preference may explain my comfort with teaching styles employed by my former lecturers and mentors, who likely aligned closely with these thinking preferences. However, recognising that these thinking preferences might not be universally beneficial, especially for Generation Z students, guides my research towards an action-based constructivist framework. This understanding of my background, potential biases, and thinking preferences serves as a constructive contextual narrative to inform the research process as it moves towards an action-based constructivist framework. The subsequent chapter will delve into the development of the epistemological lens and research design.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESEARCH EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODS

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

All journeys undertaken by a tourist require some form of itinerary, essentially, a planned description of where and when the activities on the journey will reveal themselves and how the journey will unravel. A well-planned itinerary clearly outlines all actions related to the journey and may thus empower the tourist with a sense of security. Itineraries may be very rudimentary or meticulously planned and detailed, catering to the specific needs of the tourist.

The research methodology section of a thesis serves a very similar role, albeit more meticulously planned and detailed. This chapter essentially functions as the itinerary of the journey I undertook with this study. It presents the philosophical underpinnings of the journey (research paradigm and approach), the data collection stops on the way (methodology), ethical considerations, and quality assurance.

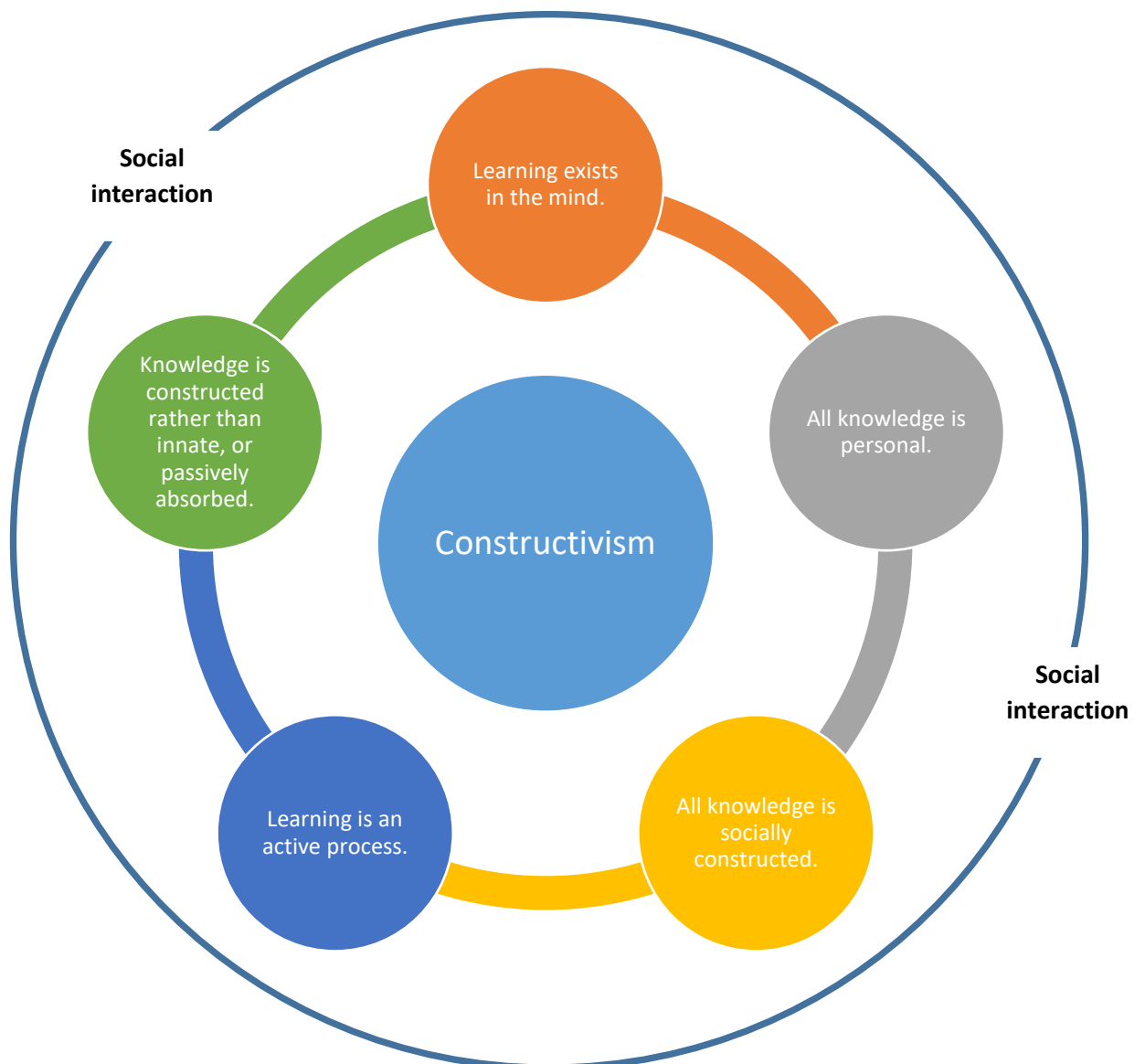
#### 5.2. RESEARCH EPISTEMOLOGY

The aim of this study is to transform a curriculum, implying taking what is already there and building on that to improve the status quo. This involves two major aspects: firstly, bringing forward my own learning based on theoretical and empirical evidence, reflecting on this learning, and finally constructing new meaning. Therefore, it was established that two philosophical and epistemological lenses would be needed to view this study, namely constructivism and action research.

John Dewey is often referred to as the philosophical founder of constructivism, as he emphasised the place of experience in education in terms of the student (Vanderstraeten, 2002). Constructivism is deemed a learning theory that emphasises



the active role of students in building their understanding. This implies that rather than passively receiving information, students reflect on their experiences, create their meaning, and incorporate this new knowledge into their learning opportunities. This should promote deeper learning and understanding (McLeod, 2023). Constructivism is ‘an approach to learning that holds that people actively construct or make their knowledge, and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner’ (Elliott, Kratochwill, Littlefield Cook & Travers, 2000). According to McLeod (2023) constructivism is based on five main principles as illustrated in Figure 5.1.



**Figure 5.1: The theory of constructivism (Based on McLeod (2023) and adapted)**

According to the principles of constructivism, knowledge is constructed rather than innate or passively absorbed. Within a constructivist learning theory paradigm, students should be self-directed and construct knowledge via personal experiences, while the instructor should act as a mentor (Chuang, 2021). Although I agree with Chuang's point of view, I believe the term *instructor* as used by her may be contradictory to the notion of constructivism, as the lecturer instructing students may align more towards teacher-led learning, which does not allow for a student's ownership of their own learning. The lecturer as a 'facilitator of learning' may be a more suitable term in constructivist curriculum design, as this role goes beyond simply instructing or mentoring but also encapsulates other roles, including learning task design, supporting community building, generating opportunities for learning by stimulating reflection, and providing access to relevant resources and continuous feedback (Margalef & Roblin, 2016). Essentially, the facilitator of learning plans, develops, and implements learning opportunities for students in which constructive learning may take place. This learning is centred cognitively in the mind of the student through various modes of thinking (See Section 4.2.2); it is active as opposed to passive, and the student creates their meaning as opposed to the lecturer teaching students what to know and how to process the knowledge.

The knowledge created through constructivism involves social interaction between the student and their environment, both socially with other students by means of collaborative learning, as well as physically. As this learning is constructed by the student, it is personal, and each student may learn in a different way, promoting an exchange of meaning and learning among students in collaborative learning opportunities.

The constructivist approach was deemed the most suitable epistemological theory as it claims that a single objective reality may not always exist (Given, 2008). As is the case with this study, there is a need to further deliberate on what is known by means of social interaction with a group of participants. This allows the researchers to gain a better interpretive understanding (*Verstehung*) of the real world. The theory of

constructivism has been expanded over the years, and there are generally three main types of constructivism: social constructivism, cognitive constructivism, and radical constructivism. These three types are summarised in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Types of constructivism (McLeod (2023))**

<b>Social constructivism</b>	<b>Cognitive constructivism</b>	<b>Radical constructivism</b>
Knowledge is created through social interactions and collaboration with others.	Knowledge is constructed through mental processes such as attention, perception, and memory.	Knowledge is constructed by the individual through their subjective experiences and interactions with the world.
The student is an active participant in the construction of knowledge and learning is a social process.	The student is an active problem-solver who constructs knowledge through mental processes.	The student is the sole constructor of knowledge and meaning, and their reality is subjective and constantly evolving.
The lecturer facilitates learning by providing opportunities for social interaction and collaboration.	The lecturer provides information and resources for the student to construct their own understanding.	The lecturer encourages the student to question and reflect on their experiences to construct their own knowledge.
Learning is a social process that involves collaboration, negotiation, and reflection.	Learning is an individual process that involves mental processes such as attention, perception, and memory.	Learning is an individual and subjective process that involves constructing meaning from one's experiences.
Reality is socially constructed and subjective, and there is no one objective truth.	Reality is objective and exists independently of the learner, but the learner constructs their own understanding of it.	Reality is subjective and constantly evolving, and there is no one objective truth.

This study sought to make use of a Whole Brain® epistemology that incorporates data derived from social interactions and where the perspectives of students are included. The process involved reflection on my part as researcher and the reality is driven by my subjective interpretation as opposed to objective reality and memorisation of cognitive constructivism and the individualistic construction of meaning in radical constructivism. It is clear that the philosophy of Whole Brain® social constructivism would be the ideal approach focused on two main areas of this study. Secondly, the theory will be applied towards providing a foundation for the development of the

transformed curriculum so as to base that curriculum within a Whole Brain® social constructivist epistemology.

### 5.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

As with Whole Brain® social constructivism, the student (in this case me) is an active participant in the process of knowledge creation, there is also a need for critical reflection. Learning is an action-driven process for which action research was deemed the most appropriate research design. The term *action research* involves two broad aspects: firstly, *action*, which implies taking some form of action in a real-world setting, and *research*, which implies how one *finds things out* about what to do (McNiff, 2016). Action research, as described by McNiff (2016), involves acting in a Whole Brain® world that strives to improve the quality of interactions with others. This interaction creates scholarly community of practice, which, should lead to the continuous improvement of my own practice to the benefit of students through a transformed curriculum.

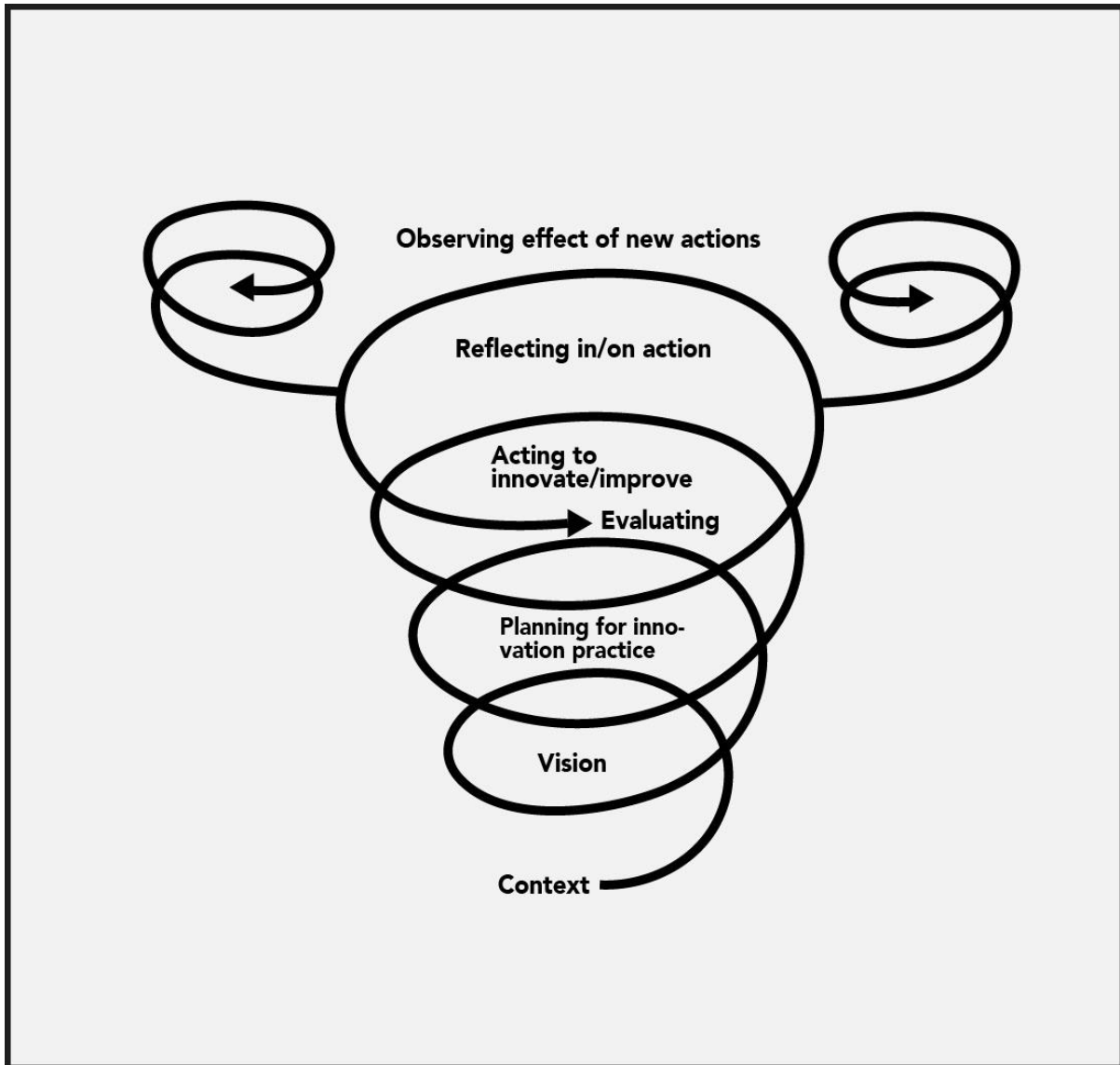
According to Zuber-Skerritt (2012), action research is a methodology with the main aim of transforming one's practice. This form of social science investigation differs from other alternative methodologies in that it is practical, participative, collaborative, emancipatory, egalitarian, interpretive, and critical towards developing transformative change agents in one's community (Zuber-Skerritt, 2012). McNiff (2014) promotes this form of research in an academic environment, as it is a process of transforming one's practice, with an emphasis on improving the social context within which the practice is located. For the purposes of this study, this design would be the best suited as it is designed around enhancing one's own professional development within a social context, thus inclusive of all stakeholders such as colleagues and students.

Action research is founded on the intention of constantly improving one's professional practice. It involves commitment, reflection on one's practice, knowledge creation, and participative and collaborative working to transform one's practice (McNiff, 2016).

Reason and Bradbury (2008) highlight four broad goals of action research in this regard:

- **A commitment to educational improvement:** Action research aims to improve learning to promote advancement in specific social contexts (McNiff, 2016). This may involve addressing issues that "need fixing" or testing innovations (Gustavsen, 2005).
- **Specific kinds of research questions:** As this form of research is based on a personal journey by the researcher, it implies research from an insider's perspective, involving first-person reporting and research questions. This compliments the constructivist approach adopted in this study.
- **Taking responsibility for the self:** Action research report writing reflects the author's personal account of the research journey, and the researcher takes responsibility for their own learning and reporting. While it is a personal reflective report, this research may also be collaborative, incorporating the perspectives of others.
- **Educational action that is informed, committed, and intentional:** Action research aims to bring about transformation, both professionally and in one's practice, through a continuous cycle of improvement and engagement with others (Pilkington, 2009).

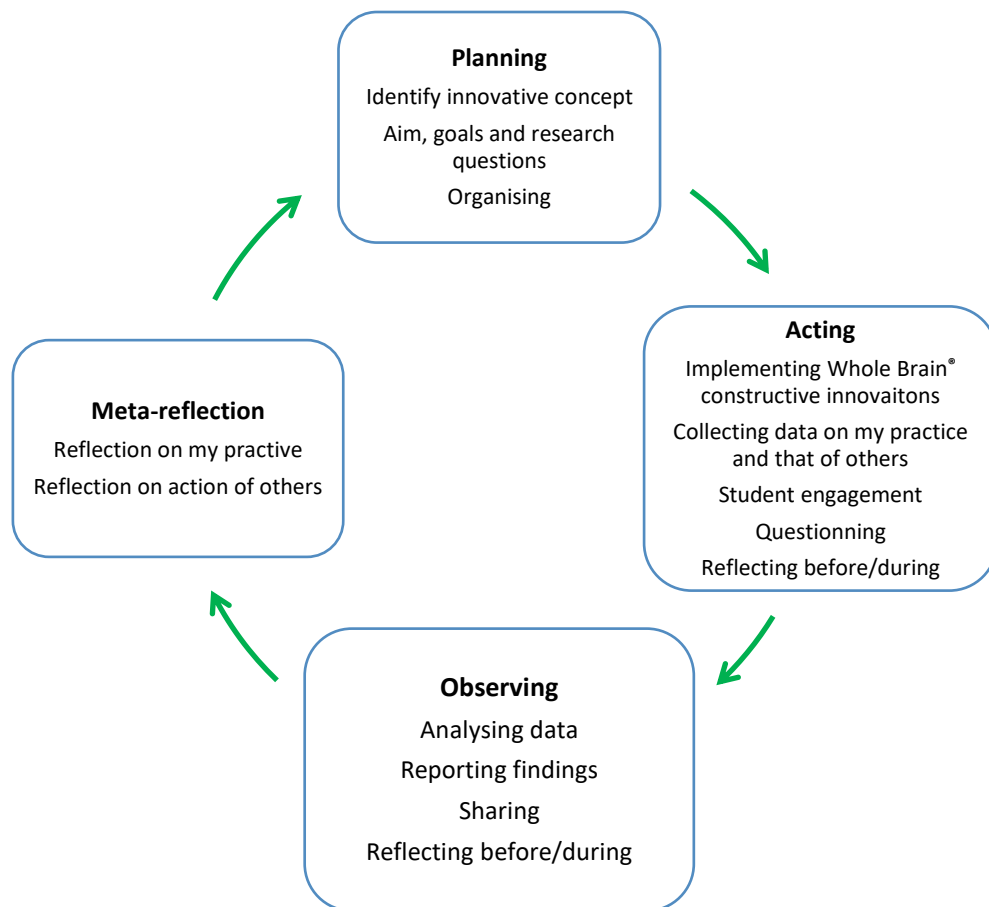
As this study aims to transform a current curriculum and contribute to professional development, action research is deemed an appropriate research design. This form of research is characterised by a series of action cycles (illustrated as a series of spirals in Figure 5.2) that involve planning, evaluation, action, reflection on/in practice, and observation of new actions (Du Toit, 2008; McNiff, 1984; 2014). These cycles allow for continuous learning, identification of further learning opportunities, and the initiation of new actions or sets of secondary spirals. Figure 5.2 provides a visual representation of the action research process.



**Figure 5.2: A visionary action research model for innovating practice (Du Toit (2008:255))**

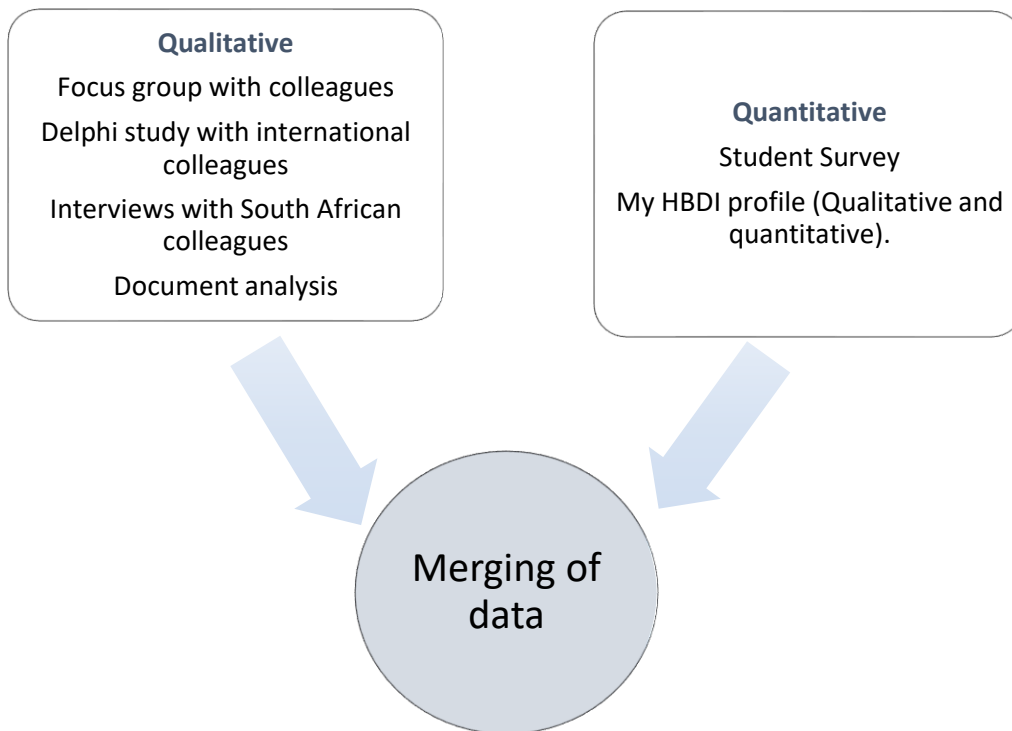
Wolvaardt (2013) advocates for the use of action research in the context of educational research due to its adaptable nature, however she expands on the action of reflection which may be expanded to include reflection before action as advocated by Schön (1983). This leads to reflection not only being a reactive action but also a proactive and concurrent action in practice. Action research implies the attainment of no single predetermined outcome but rather an evolutionary learning process aimed towards fulfilling one's practice, thus outcomes are unpredictable. From the above an adapted

Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> social constructivist action research design was used in this study as depicted in Figure 5.3.



**Figure 5.3: Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> social constructivist action research (Own design)**

With a Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> social constructive action research approach as the philosophical and epistemological foundation for this research, this research design was implemented using a convergent parallel designed mixed-methods approach. This design focuses on collecting, analysing, and merging both quantitative and qualitative data into a single study. The main principle is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) states that for a convergent parallel mixed methods approach to work effectively then both qualitative and quantitative data needs to be collected simultaneously. Figure 5.4 provides a visual presentation of the simultaneous data collection process.



**Figure 5.4: Mixed methods research approach**

As illustrated in Figure 5.3, multiple data sources were used as evidence during this action research study. Both quantitative and qualitative data was generated and gathered. All the results were then merged and triangulation of data was achieved.

Due to the aforementioned description of the research design adopted, especially the constructivist nature of the research this thesis makes use of researcher reflexivity. IN this process I acknowledge my role in the research process. As a qualitative researcher, I acknowledge that I am a critical part of the research process, and my prior experiences, assumptions and beliefs have potentially influenced the research process. By being reflexive I have acknowledged the cultural, political, social and ideological origins of my own perspective and voice, the perspectives and voices of my research participants and respondents and the perspectives of those to whom I have reported on in my research as advised by the University of Melbourne (2024).



## **5.4. EMPIRICAL POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

As this study is based on a social constructivist action research approach, I attempted to obtain primary data from a number of stakeholder groups. This was done in order to obtain representation from those stakeholder groups at the macro and meso level of curriculum development and to incorporate collaborative input into the curriculum design process and to fulfil the need for benchmarking at these levels as promoted by Szende, Catalfamo and Upneja (2019) and Scholtz (2020). The sampling strategy of each target population is described in the section that follows.

### **5.4.1. Student population**

The first target population for this study included students from TUT registered for the ADTM and PDTM in 2023. This target group represented the cohort of students at the core of this study. For the year 2023, there were a total of 40 students registered for ADTM (TUT, 2023a), while 12 students were registered for the PDTM (TUT, 2023b). Due to the small target population size, it was decided that a non-random sampling approach would be most suitable, specifically a census sample. A census sample is known to be effective in small group sizes where the entire population is targeted for inclusion (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023:1). It was also possible to obtain a sampling frame in the form of a class list of all registered students, which assisted in determining the sampling strategy. Due to the voluntary nature of the study, the responses to the census sampling technique would be considered a convenience sample.

### **5.4.2. Faculty colleagues**

The research methodology modules in the Faculty of Management Sciences at TUT have been designed by a single task team at macro and meso level. This means that the curriculum is the same for each of the seven departments in the faculty. The curriculum is implemented in each department at micro to cater to the specific needs of the department and industry. Therefore, on the journey to transform the tourism research methodology curriculum, it was imperative that I also sought the input of my

fellow colleagues in the faculty. For this reason, the second population included in this study consists of colleagues from each of the six other departments in the faculty (Department of Tourism Management excluded here as I am the representative), namely; Department of Business Information Management Systems, Department of Management and Entrepreneurship, Department of Marketing, Logistics and Sport Management, Department of Operations Management and the department of People Management and Development.

However, to ensure that the colleagues are suitable for inclusion, an inclusion criterion of at least two years as a lecturer for the module was set. This inclusion criterion helped ensure that the relevant colleague had experience with at least two student cohorts, allowing for authentic reflection upon the curriculum. To identify potential participants, emails were sent to each head of department (HOD) requesting the details of the relevant lecturers. Where those lecturers did not meet the inclusion criteria, they were omitted from the sample. In total, eight colleagues participated in the focus group interview.

#### **5.4.3. External South African-based colleagues**

TUT does not exist in a vacuum and is part of a group of 12 HEIs in South Africa offering postgraduate qualifications in the field of tourism (See Table 2.2). Therefore, understanding the dynamics at play in the tourism research methodology curricula at these institutions were beneficial. The respective HODs at the institutions were contacted, and after introducing the study, were requested to furnish me with the name/s and contact details of the respective lecturers responsible for tourism research methodology. As with the internal colleagues, an inclusion criterion of at least 2 years' experience in lecturing the modules was required. Through this expert sampling technique, a total of 6 colleagues at these institutions participated in a semi-structured interview. A fully representative sample of all 12 institutions was not achieved due to the voluntary nature of participants (some participants did not respond) or did not meet the inclusion criteria.

#### 5.4.4. International academic experts

Tourism is a global industry and to serve the needs of this industry HEIs around the globe provide postgraduate qualifications in the field. This panel of experts also served as a basis for not only domestic benchmarking as with the previously discussed sample but also for international evaluation. In order to ensure that the empirical evidence used to promote the transformation of the curriculum does not have a strict South African bias, international experts were also requested to participate by means of a Delphi data collection technique. In order to ensure that the sample was as representative as possible, South African participation was kept at a minimum of 2.

A Delphi study is a method of consensus development whereby data is collected from a group of participants, usually experts in a specific field, analysed and written up. The report is then redistributed to the panel, reviewed by the panel, additional inputs or amendments made and the report is updated. The report may be redistributed to the panel multiple times until consensus is reached (Vogel, Zwolinsky, Griffiths, Hobbs, Henderson & Wilkins, 2019).

To recruit participants, an invitation was distributed on TRINET (an international mailing list for tourism academics). In total 15 responses were received from potential participants indicating their willingness to participate; however, only ten actively contributed to the study. Contributions were received from participants in South Africa (2), Poland (1), the United Kingdom (1), Portugal (1), Greece (1), New Zealand (2), and Australia (2). A survey link was distributed to all participants via Survey Monkey, an electronic data collection platform, and they were requested to provide input on a number of questions. More information on the procedure is provided in Section 5.5.4.

## 5.5. EMPIRICAL DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The strategies employed to collect the empirical data differed among the respective sample groups. The sub-sections below provide an outline as to how data was collected from each of these populations.

### 5.5.1. Student survey

A structured questionnaire was developed for data collection from ADTM and PDTM students. The quantitative section of the questionnaire (See Appendix E) was divided into sections based on previous studies, including motivation to study (Zhang & Lambert, 2008; Clausen & Andersen, 2018), learning experiences (Mihans et al., 2008; Weimer, 2013; Ruhanen, Axelsen & Bowles, 2020; McLeod, 2023), technology use (O’Flaherty & Phillips, 2015; Dauksevicuite, 2016), Whole Brain® thinking preferences (Herrmann, 1991; De Boer et al., 2013; Du Toit, 2012; Kirstein & Kunz, 2016; Du Toit, 2018), multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2011), and the holistic student (Tribe, 2002; Ring, Dickinger & Wober, 2009; Hayes & Tucker, 2022). The last question was open-ended requiring students to reflect on their future in relation to career and further study. This allowed for the notion of ‘reflection before action’, according to Schön (1983).

The questionnaire was pre-tested (see Section 5.8) and then uploaded to Survey Monkey. A link to the survey, along with an introductory information leaflet, was sent to the institutional email address of each registered student. Data collection took place from June 14 to August 31, 2023, with a total of 33 student responses. Of these, 11 out of 12 PDTM students participated (92% participation rate), while 22 out of 40 ADTM students participated (55% participation rate).

As the questionnaires were completed electronically, there was the additional advantage that the data could easily be extracted onto an Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This data, once downloaded, was first cleaned to ensure that there was no duplication in rows and that the columns were correctly labelled. This data was

then uploaded to Stata version 18 for statistical analysis. Data analysis included a first round of splitting the data into two groups (ADTM & PDTM groups) and thereafter descriptive statistics were run to determine frequencies, means and standard deviations for each variable.

Further analysis was done by clustering the variables associated to Whole Brain® thinking and determining group means, standard deviation and confidence intervals. This allowed for the data to be presented on the Whole Brain® thinking plot diagram. Further analysis also included *t*-tests to determine whether significant differences exist between selected variables.

### **5.5.2. Faculty colleagues focus group**

In order to obtain input from fellow colleagues in the Faculty of Management Sciences at TUT an online focus group interview was organised (See Appendix G). Originally a physical focus group was planned but due to the physical unavailability of colleagues and the geographical dispersion of campuses an online discussion was deemed preferred. A focus group brings forth other advantages such as group engagement which may be more authentic than a quantitative survey or interview as it provides rich engagement between participants, the online platform also provided benefits of convenience for participants (Geyer, 2022).

After receiving the names and contact details of colleagues from the respective HODs, a process of screening potential participants in terms of the 2-year inclusion criteria was done. In total 10 potential participants were identified and invited to the focus group interview which took place on 23 August 2023. I served as the moderator of the focus group and after brief introductions the discussion was guided around 8 main areas of discussion.

1. The group was requested to describe what they believe the purpose of research methodology is as a module within their respective contexts.

2. A description of the most ideal research methodology curriculum for the purposes of preparing students for postgraduate study.
3. A comparison of the 'ideal' research methodology curriculum with the current curriculum in place.
4. A discussion of the challenges faced in the facilitation of research methodology in their context.
5. A discussion on the challenges faced in terms of assessing research methodology in their contexts.
6. A discussion of the utilisation of Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> learning, and to what extent they believe that the research methodology curriculum is designed to accommodate Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> learning in students.
7. A discussion on what innovative techniques the participants have used to assess and facilitate the module.
8. A discussion on potential changes or improvements that should be considered to transform the curriculum.

In total 8 colleagues participated in the focus group interview which lasted 1 hour and 27 minutes. The focus group interview was recorded on Microsoft Teams with participant informed consent. The transcription, in Microsoft Word, were downloaded and cleaned. Once the transcriptions were cleaned, they were analysed by means of thematic analysis, more specifically descriptive phenomenology. This approach to qualitative data analysis strives to describe, observe and understand a phenomenon aligned to the relationship between an individual and their living world, or profession (Schurink, Schurinck & Fouché, 2021a).

Thematic analysis, is a qualitative research approach used to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within data, particularly in the context of interviews. It involves systematically coding and categorising information to uncover recurring themes, patterns, or trends. The process typically includes the following steps:

1. **Familiarisation with the data:** It was essential for me to become acquainted with the interview data by reading and re-reading the transcript. This helped in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the content and assisted in the process of cleaning the data.
2. **Generating initial codes:** Relevant segments of the data were systematically coded, assigning labels or tags to capture key concepts or ideas. This process was often conducted in a line-by-line fashion.
3. **Searching for themes:** Codes were then grouped into potential themes based on similarities or connections. This involves identifying patterns that emerge across the coded segments.
4. **Reviewing and defining themes:** I reviewed and refined the identified themes, ensuring that they accurately represent the content and that they were distinct from each other. Themes were defined and named to reflect the essence of the data they encapsulate.
5. **Mapping and interpreting themes:** The relationships between themes are explored, and researchers delve into the meaning behind each theme. This step involved interpreting the data in the broader context of the research question or objectives.
6. **Writing up the results:** Finally, the findings are reported in a clear and coherent manner, often supported by illustrative quotes or excerpts from the focus group. The report aims to provide insights into the research question and contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Qualtrics, 2023).

Thematic analysis is flexible and can be adapted to various research contexts. It allows researchers to uncover both explicit and implicit patterns within the interview data, providing a rich and nuanced exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences (Schurink, Schurinck & Fouché, 2021b).

### **5.5.3. Interviews with external South African-based colleagues**

As evident from Table 2.2, multiple HEIs in South Africa offer both NQF7 and NQF8 qualifications (See Section 2.2.5) in the field of tourism. To facilitate domestic benchmarking, as discussed in Section 2.2.4, I collaborated with South African colleagues who lecture research methodology at other HEIs in South Africa. Using my professional network, I reached out to colleagues responsible for these modules, as well as HODs at institutions where I didn't have an existing network. In total, I contacted 10 institutions and received 9 names of potential participants.

The inclusion criterion for the study was that potential participants should currently be lecturing one of these selected modules for at least 2 years to ensure expertise and experience. These colleagues were selected based on expert sampling as experts in their respective fields. An information leaflet detailing the study was sent to each of the 9 potential participants via email. Subsequently, dates and times for possible interviews were determined.

In total, 8 colleagues responded positively to participate, but 2 were eliminated as they did not meet the 2 years' experience exclusion criterion. In the end, 6 participants were willing to take part in the study. Individual online semi-structured interviews (See Appendix G) were held with each participant. Interviews were recorded and transcriptions generated on Microsoft Teams after consent to do so was received from the respective participants. As with the focus group interviews, thematic analysis by means of descriptive phenomenology was utilised.

### **5.5.4. International academic expert Delphi panel**

As with the individual interviews with South African colleagues, it was deemed necessary to also collate data from a sample that included international colleagues in order to ensure international benchmarking and for this a Delphi data collection technique was used (See questionnaire at Appendix H). The target population of this



study included a group of international experts. The inclusion criterion of this group of experts was that each participant had to be a lecturer of a tourism research methodology module in a postgraduate NQF level 8 qualification such as a postgraduate diploma or an honours degree or equivalent with a focus on tourism studies. At least two years of experience in lecturing the aforementioned module and experience in postgraduate supervision was also required as inclusion criteria.

To recruit participants, an invitation was distributed on TRINET (an international mailing list for tourism academics). A survey link was distributed to all participants by means of Survey Monkey and they were requested to provide input on the following questions:

- How would you describe the ideal undergraduate tourism student's attributes upon completion of their studies?
- In order for an undergraduate tourism student to successfully pursue postgraduate study (Postgraduate Diploma/Honours/Masters), what fundamental learning should be in place?
- How would you describe the ideal curriculum that should be in place in terms of better preparing an undergraduate student for postgraduate study?
- Describe the major challenges and opportunities that a 21<sup>st</sup> century lecturer is faced in terms of facilitating learning on to be better prepare student for postgraduate study.
- Describe the ideal assessment methods for an undergraduate student to be better prepared for postgraduate study in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- As a supervisor of Masters students, describe your ideal student as he/she may present themselves at the beginning of their Master's journey.
- What are your views on how to enhance the quality of postgraduate research at institutes of higher learning focussing on the development of postgraduate students?

The results were analysed thematically and the evidence was presented as a collective response to each question. The collated evidence was then redistributed by email to all participants in the form of an MS Word document in the second round so that they could add comments and adjust. On receipt of the returned emails, the responses were incorporated into the final report. Data collection took place from April to September 2023 and consensus was reached after two rounds.

## **5.6. SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION**

A constructivist action research approach involves creating new meaning and knowledge for professional development. To construct this new knowledge, the initial step is to assess the existing body of knowledge related to the topic. Various sources of existing data, including articles, books, dissertations, theses, and online resources, were utilised to develop the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3. Keywords used for the literature search included curriculum development, constructive alignment, tourism higher education, research methodology, action research, constructivism, postgraduate attributes, and Generation Z.

Considering the aim of transforming a curriculum, the two module curricula in question, namely RTM107V and RTM108G, presently exist within the ADTM and PDTM qualifications, respectively. Various curriculum-related documents, such as faculty and departmental prospectuses, study guides, and institutional policies, including those relevant to CHE, DHET, and SAQA, were analysed.

Whole Brain® thinking is a fundamental theory underpinning in this study. During my PGCHE journey in 2016, I completed an HBDI® analysis, serving as a point of departure to understand my own thinking preferences and how I act in my profession. The HBDI® profile analysis and reflection are presented in Chapter 4.

Critical reflection on one's own practice is fundamental for action research design. Engagements with students, including learning task design, contact sessions, and

assessments, provide opportunities for reflection and holistic meta-reflection. One tactic used during these reflection opportunities is to document actions through photographic images. These photographs enable critical reflection, serve as evidence in the results chapter, and form the basis for unpacking the success of an intervention and identifying potential innovative opportunities for further development in my action research journey.

## **5.7. ETHICS CONSIDERATIONS**

For the purpose of data collection, multiple sample groups were included, allowing for a rich composition of data to be collected. However, this also necessitated careful consideration of ethical aspects related to data collection. Identifying ethical risks and adhering to general principles of research ethics is crucial. Research ethics is grounded in four primary principles: integrity, accountability, respect, and beneficence (United Nations Evaluation Group [UNEG], 2020).

Integrity implies "honesty and truthfulness in communication and actions" (UNEG, 2020:7). It includes professionalism based on competence, commitment, ongoing reflective practice, and credible and trustworthy behaviour. Integrity also encompasses independence, impartiality, and incorruptibility. Given the reflective nature of action research, honesty and truthfulness are essential for authentic reflection (Truykov, 2023). I have endeavoured to uphold the highest levels of honesty and truthfulness in conducting this study and compiling this report.

Accountability is a fundamental principle of research integrity (All European Academies, 2017), involving transparency about the purpose of the research and actions taken. It establishes trust and increases accountability for performance to the population and stakeholders, especially those affected by the evaluation. Accountability also requires responsiveness as questions or events arise, adapting intentions and plans as needed. There should be no corruption, fraud, sexual exploitation or abuse, or other misconduct or waste of resources. As the researcher, I

am responsible for meeting the evaluation purpose, taking actions with due care, and ensuring redress and recognition as needed. UNEG (2020) also emphasises the need for justifying and accurately reporting decisions, actions, and intentions to stakeholders, including affected people. Throughout the research process, I strive to behave ethically, be honest, and act professionally. I take responsibility for high-quality, robust research by ensuring that methods are reliable and valid, as proposed by Path2Integrity (2023).

In accordance with the UNEG (2020) guidelines, I ensured access to the evaluation process and products for all relevant stakeholders. This involved meaningful engagement, fair treatment, and fair representation of all participants. To achieve this, a comprehensive information leaflet (See Appendix A, B, C, and D) unique to each target population was developed. The leaflet outlined the study's purpose, methods, and the roles and responsibilities of the participants. Participants were informed that the study results would be made available to them upon completion, and, in some cases, such as the Delphi study, participants were continuously involved in the data reporting process. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Beneficence requires professionals to take actions that benefit others, providing for their good and not favouring the researcher's interests alone (Payne, 2017). This involves explicit and ongoing consideration of risks and benefits from evaluation processes, maximising benefits, doing no harm, and refraining from proceeding with an evaluation when harms cannot be mitigated. Ensuring that the evaluation makes an overall positive contribution to human and natural systems is crucial (UNEG, 2020). The voluntary nature of this study ensured that all participants, including students, were not coerced to participate. Email communication was sent to participants with the information leaflet, and one follow-up reminder was sent to potential participants. To ensure no harm befell participants, the principles of anonymity and confidentiality were employed. For students, the distributed survey did not require the provision of identifiable data. Additionally, all responses received were delinked by removing email

addresses from the data sheet prior to data analysis to ensure anonymity. While I was aware of the identities of participants in the focus group, Delphi study, and interviews, it was not possible to guarantee anonymity. However, to protect participant identity, pseudonyms were employed, and minimal identifiable characteristics, such as age, years of employment, or job description, were incorporated, as these characteristics may lead to the identification of participants due to the small sample size.

The study's purpose is to transform the research methodology curriculum, benefiting primary stakeholders such as students, colleagues, HEIs, and, ultimately, the tourism industry. On a personal level, the study contributes to my ongoing professional development and efforts to enhance my professionalism. I've ensured that the study serves the interests of all stakeholders rather than being driven solely by self-interest. The main beneficiary of this research will be the curriculum and the students engaging in the transformed curriculum. Furthermore, I intend to disseminate the study's findings to other stakeholders by making the final report available to all research participants. Additionally, presentations, journal articles, conference proceedings, and further collaborative action research with colleagues are avenues to extend the benefits of this research to a broader audience.

Regarding ethical formalities, the research proposal was presented to the Research Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, on 31 January 2020. Ethics approval was granted on 7 November 2022 by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, with protocol number EDU133/20 (Appendix I). Since this study involves colleagues and students from TUT, ethics approval was also obtained from the TUT Research Ethics Committee on 2 March 2023, with reference number REC/2022/11/005 (Appendix J).

For data management, all data, including hard copies and electronic files, will be securely stored for 15 years post-completion of the study. Hard copies will be kept in a sealed box in my possession, while electronic copies will be stored on a password-

protected portable drive on the UP data repository and by the supervisor. The report of the study will also be made available to the University of Pretoria library repository.

## **5.8. QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Although this study made use of a social constructivist approach, implying my own interpretation of data, coupled with reflection and report writing, it was still essential to manage the quality of this research process. In order to manage the quality of the research methods used the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, validity and reliability were employed. Table 5.2 provides a description of these quality assurance criteria and how they were actioned during this study.

**Table 5.2: Quality assurance of the research**

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Credibility and authenticity</b>	This includes a demonstration that the study was conducted in such a manner in which the participants were accurately identified and described (Schurink, Schurink & Fouché, 2021a). The strength of credibility rests on how well the innovative idea, the setting, the process and the patterns of interaction are described (Tracy, 2013).	All participants are clearly described, in terms of recruitment, the research process and how empirical evidence was analysed. The research process is described and constructive linkages are presented that link the innovative idea, the process, data collection procedure and reflective reporting.
<b>Transferability</b>	The extent to which the results of this study can be applied in other contexts and studies (Schurink, Schurink & Fouché, 2021a).	This study makes use of a multi-stakeholder perspective within a participatory action framework. Multiple stakeholders allow for the learning from this study to be transferrable to other similar environments such as other disciplines within the field of management sciences or even the social sciences.
<b>Dependability and trustworthiness</b>	This refers to the stability of findings over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Trustworthiness ensures that the data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017).	All research tools are provided at the end of this thesis which allows for scrutiny as well opportunities for possibly replication and modification for future research.  Research methods are comprehensively described in Chapter 5.
<b>Confirmability</b>	The importance of a self-critical attitude towards my own preconceptions and the need for continuous reflexivity (Leavy, 2018).	As this study made use of a constructivist action research approach reflexivity is paramount. I also describe my lived experiences, possible biases and cognitive discord which reveals conformity.
<b>Validity</b>	In short, validity refers to whether a research instrument actually measures what it had been designed to measure (Field, 2009). This generally applies to quantitative research instruments.	In the process of ensuring validity three approaches were used: <i>Criterion validity</i> : In order to evaluate how well the instruments could predict a concrete outcome, or how well the results of the data collection processes the pre-test and pilot study were used. The pre-test allowed for the results to be analysed to determine that the criterion (items) used were appropriate in terms of achieving set outcomes. Where these outcomes were not met, questions and measuring scales were adapted. In addition, some of the items used in the research instruments were based on previously used and validated studies.

*Content validity:* this involves an assessment of the degree to which the research instrument evaluated all aspects of the topic that it is designed to measure. Where possible previous research instruments were scrutinised and appropriate measurement items identified for inclusion in the questionnaire. These previously validated studies allowed for valid items to be included.

*Construct validity:* The pre-test also assisted in the modification of research instruments in order to ensure that the research instruments measurements matched the construct I wished to measure. For example, definitions were provided with terms in the student questionnaire to ensure concepts were understood and clear.

*Face validity:* To ensure face validity, the research instruments, both quantitative and qualitative were peer reviewed in a pre-test by colleagues and former students. In addition, the instruments were proof read by a professional language editor. Feedback provided by reviewers assisted in ensuring that questions were appropriately structured, comprehensible, and free of spelling and grammatical errors thus ensuring that the instruments were appropriately designed (face valid).

**Reliability**

This refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be reproduced when the research is repeated under the same conditions (Middleton, 2023).

- I ensured that question framing during the interviews were consistent.
- The same questions were provided to each Delphi participant at the same time and in the same manner.
- Comparison of my results to that of others to test for consistencies.
- Where possible the quantitative data was analysed by means of Cronbach's alpha to determine the reliability of the data.



## 5.9. SUMMARY

Embarking on a research journey without a solid methodology is similar to setting out on an expedition without a map. Just as a traveller relies on a well-defined route, landmarks, and a compass to navigate uncharted territories, a researcher depends on a robust methodology to guide through the vast realm of data and knowledge. It is the compass that ensures the research stays on course, the landmarks that provide context, and the roadmap that transforms a seemingly chaotic exploration into a purposeful and meaningful journey towards understanding and discovery.

In this chapter, a comprehensive overview of the research methodology landscape of this study is provided. The results of the study, stemming from the various data analysis processes, are presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### MY EMPIRICAL LANDSCAPE

#### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

Unveiling research results is akin to unfolding a meticulously crafted travel itinerary. Each finding serves as a destination, revealing its unique landscape and contributing to the overall narrative of the journey. Just as a traveller eagerly anticipates the unveiling of hidden gems and unforeseen vistas, a researcher eagerly reveals the insights and revelations discovered along the investigative path. The interpretation of results becomes the compass, guiding future exploration, much like a traveller refining their itinerary based on the places they have already explored. The journey through research, like travel planning, involves a dynamic interplay of discovery, adjustment, and the continual quest for a deeper understanding of the unexplored terrain.

In this chapter, I present the results of my research journey revealing the empirical evidence emanating from a first round of this action research study. These results emanate from the student survey, focus group among faculty colleagues, interviews with South African colleagues, results from the Delphi study among international colleagues and finally the results regarding a self-reflection on my own practice.

#### 6.2. RESULTS OF THE STUDENT SURVEY

The student questionnaire consisted of seven sections. The results of which are presented to align to the sections in the student survey.

##### 6.2.1. Socio-demographic results

The first section of the questionnaire was focussed on developing a short demographic overview of the sample so that it could be described and to determine representation. Table 6.1 provides a brief overview of the sample.

**Table 6.1: Student socio-demographics**

Variable		ADTM		PDTM	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	7	35	5	46
	Female	13	65	6	55
<b>Year undergraduate qualification completed</b>		2010	5	2004	9
		2021	15	2011	9
		2022	80	2012	9
				2014	9
				2017	9
				2021	55
<b>Mean age</b>		24.5		34.7	

Regarding the ADTM sample, a total of 20 students participated out of a registered cohort of 35, indicating a 57% participation rate. For the PDTM, all 12 students in the cohort participated, realising a 100% participation rate. I acknowledge the small sample size, however this was expected due to the small population size and the voluntary nature of participation. The results will therefore not be considered generalisable to the whole population and will only be generalisable to the sample.

It is evident that the mean ages of respondents in the PDTM are higher, with an average of a 10-year difference between the two groups. The majority of students in the sample articulated their intention to pursue further study directly after completing their undergraduate qualification, with 80% moving from the diploma to ADTM the following year. In terms of the PDTM, 45% of respondents experienced an interruption in studies before pursuing further study.

### 6.2.2. Motivations for pursuing further study

Students were required to rank various motivations for pursuing further study from most important (5) to least important (1). The results are presented in Table 6.2.

**Table 6.2: Motivations for pursuing further studies**

Variable	ADTM		PDTM	
	Mean (St Dev)	Rank	Mean (St Dev)	Rank
For career development (Employed, seeking promotion/remuneration increase/to get a better job)	2.65 (1.56)	3	2.27 (1.55)	1
For my own personal development (Something I really want to achieve)	2.5 (1.57)	1	2.91 (1.04)	2
For academic development (Enhance my knowledge)	2.6 (0.75)	2	3.18 (0.98)	3
To become a postgraduate researcher (Masters/doctoral student)	3.55 (1.19)	4	2.91 (1.64)	2
To get a job (Unemployed, seeking employment)	3.7 (1.49)	5	3.73 (1.61)	4

From Table 6.2 above, it is evident that for both the ADTM and PDTM, the main reason for further study is to secure employment. In the case of the ADTM, studying further for personal development ranked the lowest in terms of importance, and for the PDTM, it was for career development. These results reveal a misalignment between the purpose of these qualifications and student expectations. Firstly, the ADTM is a vocational qualification designed for career development (TUT, 2023c), yet career development was not the core reason for pursuing this qualification. While the primary purpose of the PDTM is to prepare students for a research career and postgraduate study (TUT, 2023d), these two reasons are ranked lowest. It could therefore be said that most students are furthering studies in ADTM and PDTM for reasons that do not relay what these qualifications have been designed for, and thus the curriculum may not meet student expectations.

### 6.2.3. Work elements

As alluded to by Hill et al. (2016) graduate attributes often sought by HEIs include critical thinking skills (such as intellectual curiosity, problem-solving ability, and reflective judgement, analytical thinking), effective communication, leadership and teamwork skills, research and inquiry skills, information literacy, digital literacy, personal attributes (self-awareness, self-confidence, personal autonomy, creativity, and flexibility), and personal values (ethical, moral, and social responsibility, cross-cultural awareness, and integrity). Although these attributes are sought by HEIs there

is very little evidence that explores attributes from a student perspective, which this section of the survey delved into.

The section that followed in the student questionnaire pertained to measuring the work elements preferred by students, i.e the attributes required in the world of work. Students were requested to rate each of the work elements according to their perceived strength in that activity, using the scale: 1 = work I do least well, 2 = work I do less well, 3 = neutral, 4 = work I do well, 5 = work I do best. These results are presented in Table 6.3.

.

**Table 6.3: Work elements**

Advanced Diploma						Work element	Postgraduate Diploma					
Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best	Mean (Sd Dev)		Mean (Sd Dev)	Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
5	15	35	25	20	<b>3.40</b> (1.14)	<b>Analytical</b>	<b>3.72</b> (1.19)	9	0	27	36	27
0	0	25	50	25	<b>4.00</b> 0.72	<b>Administrative</b>	<b>4.36</b> (0.92)	0	9	0	36	55
0	0	55	25	20	<b>3.65</b> (0.81)	<b>Conceptualising</b>	<b>3.90</b> (0.94)	0	0	45	18	36
0	10	40	25	25	<b>3.65</b> (0.98)	<b>Expressing ideas</b>	<b>3.63</b> (1.28)	9	9	18	36	27
0	10	30	40	20	<b>3.70</b> (0.92)	<b>Integration</b>	<b>3.36</b> (1.20)	9	9	36	27	18
0	5	40	25	30	<b>3.80</b> (0.95)	<b>Writing</b>	<b>4.00</b> (1.00)	0	9	18	36	36
10	10	20	35	25	<b>3.55</b> (1.27)	<b>Technical aspects</b>	<b>3.81</b> (0.98)	0	9	27	36	27
0	5	37	42	16	<b>3.68</b> (0.82)	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>4.09</b> (0.94)	0	9	9	45	36
0	10	10	30	50	<b>4.20</b> (1.00)	<b>Planning</b>	<b>4.18</b> (0.87)	0	9	0	55	36
0	5	5	20	70	<b>4.55</b> (0.82)	<b>Interpersonal aspects</b>	<b>4.18</b> (1.16)	9	0	0	45.5	45.5
0	0	10	30	60	<b>4.50</b> (0.68)	<b>Problem solving</b>	<b>4.00</b> (1.18)	9	0	9	45	36
0	10	10	35	45	<b>4.15</b> (0.98)	<b>Innovating</b>	<b>3.63</b> (0.92)	0	9	36	36	18
5	5	15	30	45	<b>4.05</b> (1.14)	<b>Teaching and training others</b>	<b>3.81</b> (0.98)	0	9	27	36	27
0	5	25	45	25	<b>3.90</b> (0.85)	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>3.90</b> (0.830)	0	9	9	64	18
0	0	50	25	25	<b>3.75</b> (0.85)	<b>Ability to be creative</b>	<b>3.63</b> (1.12)	9	0	27	45	18
5	10	30	40	15	<b>3.50</b> (1.05)	<b>Ability to manage finances</b>	<b>3.36</b> (1.12)	9	9	36	27	18

The work elements of planning, interpersonal aspects, problem-solving, and teaching and training others were rated the highest by both groups, with means ranging  $\geq 4$ . The ADTM cohort perceived themselves as innovative, while the PDTM cohort perceived themselves as less innovative. For the ADTM cohort, analytical skills and the ability to manage one's own finances were rated the lowest. For the PDTM cohort, analytical skills, integration, innovating, and the ability to manage one's own finances were rated the lowest. Paradoxically Ntshangase and Ezeuduij (2023) refer to innovative skills and the ability to integrate learning as core skills required from a student to succeed.

#### **6.2.4. Technologies and usefulness**

With Generation Z, often referred to as the digital generation, it is generally understood that this cohort is accustomed to technology. In the subsequent section of the questionnaire, students were requested to rank a number of learning technologies and tools in terms of their usefulness in their learning journey. This ranking process involved ranking the options up or down in terms of usefulness, with the most useful placed at the top of the matrix and the least useful placed at the bottom of the matrix. Therefore, the scores in this section are rated conversely to other scores in this study. The technology and tool with the highest rank effectively had the lowest score, i.e., highest would rank 1 while the lowest rank would be 10.

ADTM students perceived academic internet search engines as the most useful technology for learning, followed by the physical classroom environment and general search engines. The PDTM cohort, as with the ADTM cohort, also perceived academic search engines as the most useful; however, general search engines were rated second highest, followed by audio and video recordings related to modules. For both groups, social media sites were rated as the least useful technology for learning.

**Table 6.4: Technologies and usefulness**

Advanced Diploma			Technologies and usefulness	Postgraduate Diploma		
Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank		Rank	Standard Deviation	Mean
3.65	2.43	<b>1</b>	Academic Internet search engines such as Google Scholar	<b>1</b>	1.04	1.91
4.60	3.10	<b>3</b>	General Internet search engines such as Google or Yahoo	<b>2</b>	2.61	3.72
4.80	2.98	<b>5</b>	Audio and video recordings related to your subject on YouTube, iTunes etc.	<b>3</b>	2.15	4.72
5.95	2.39	<b>7</b>	Web-based citation and referencing tools	<b>4</b>	1.97	5.91
8.00	2.41	<b>10</b>	Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter	<b>10</b>	2.51	7.91
5.15	2.11	<b>6</b>	Your university's online learner management system (LMS)	<b>6</b>	2.74	5.11
4.65	2.35	<b>4</b>	Textbooks	<b>5</b>	2.02	5.10
6.35	2.50	<b>8</b>	Your university's library	<b>8</b>	2.72	6.73
4.55	3.05	<b>2</b>	Physical classroom	<b>9</b>	3.04	6.73
7.35	2.66	<b>9</b>	Virtual meeting software such as MS Teams	<b>7</b>	3.23	6.36



## 6.2.5. Thinking preferences

Whole Brain® thinking and its associated theory, Whole Brain® learning, are cognitive concepts that emphasise the utilisation of all four cerebral quadrants to enhance problem-solving, decision making, and learning processes. By recognising and leveraging these thinking preferences, individuals can optimise their cognitive abilities and communication strategies. Whole Brain® learning aims to promote a holistic approach to cognition, acknowledging and valuing the diverse thinking preferences that individuals may exhibit (De Boer et al., 2013; Du Toit, 2018). This section is presented in two parts. In the first part the results of the Whole Brain® profile of the ADTM and PDTM are presented. This will be followed in the second section by comparative results to determine whether there are any significant differences between the two cohorts and the preferred thinking preferences.

### 6.2.5.1. Whole Brain® profiling

In the section, students were requested to reflect on their thinking preferences. These thinking preferences align with the Whole Brain® learning model as previously used by De Boer et al. (2013, 2015) and Du Toit (2018). In this case, students were requested to select eight adjectives that best describe how they see themselves. The descriptive results are presented in Table 6.5

**Table 6.5: Thinking preferences**

ADTM	Thinking preferences	PDTM
Frequency		Frequency
14	<b>Logical</b> (Thought process that have been established as leading to valid solutions to problems)	6
11	<b>Creative</b> (Coming up with new ideas)	7
3	<b>Musical</b> (Interested in or having musical talent)	0
3	<b>Sequential</b> (Follow a logical order)	3
9	<b>Synthesizer</b> (Putting facts together and coming up with my own opinion)	3
8	<b>Verbal</b> (Expressing yourself using words)	7
4	<b>Conservative</b> (Favouring established ideas)	3
11	<b>Analytical</b> (Examining things in detail)	5
4	<b>Detailed</b> (Separating something into smaller parts)	5
9	<b>Emotional</b> (Having feelings that are easily affected)	2
1	<b>Spatial</b> (Relating to the position, area, and size of things around me)	0
10	<b>Critical</b> (Being particular about something)	7
1	<b>Artistic</b> (Taking enjoyment from or skilful in painting, drawing, music, or sculpture. Able to coordinate colour, design, and texture for pleasing effects)	1
10	<b>Spiritual</b> (Believing in a higher power)	4
11	<b>Rational</b> (Basing decisions on clear thought and reason)	6
2	<b>Controlled</b> (Allowing another party/person to drive your thoughts and actions)	1
2	<b>Mathematical</b> (Using maths to make decisions)	0
1	<b>Symbolic</b> (Seeing the function or meaning of an object or figure that stands for something else)	2
2	<b>Dominant</b> (Allowing yourself to dominate others)	0
3	<b>Holistic</b> (Seeing the whole of something, the bigger picture)	7
5	<b>Intuitive</b> (Based on feelings rather than facts or proof)	0
5	<b>Quantitative</b> (Prefer to base decisions on numbers)	2
4	<b>Reader</b> (Reading and understanding words. Making meaning of words)	4
8	<b>Simultaneous</b> (Processing more than one type of mental input at a time, attend to more than one activity at a time)	3
9	<b>Factual</b> (Focussing on the accurate, objective, descriptive elements of an event or situation)	5
4	<b>Kinaesthetic</b> (Knowing where the parts of your body are and how they are moving in order to use them effectively)	1

Table 6.5 provides an overview of the thinking preferences of students, in descriptive terms, making it clear how each individual thinking preference is preferred by students. For example, the ADTM group indicated that logical, creative, analytical, critical, and spiritual thinking preferences were most prevalent. For the PDTM group, creative, verbal, critical, and logical thinking preference were more prevalent. Spatial, musical, and artistic thinking were least prevalent in both groups.

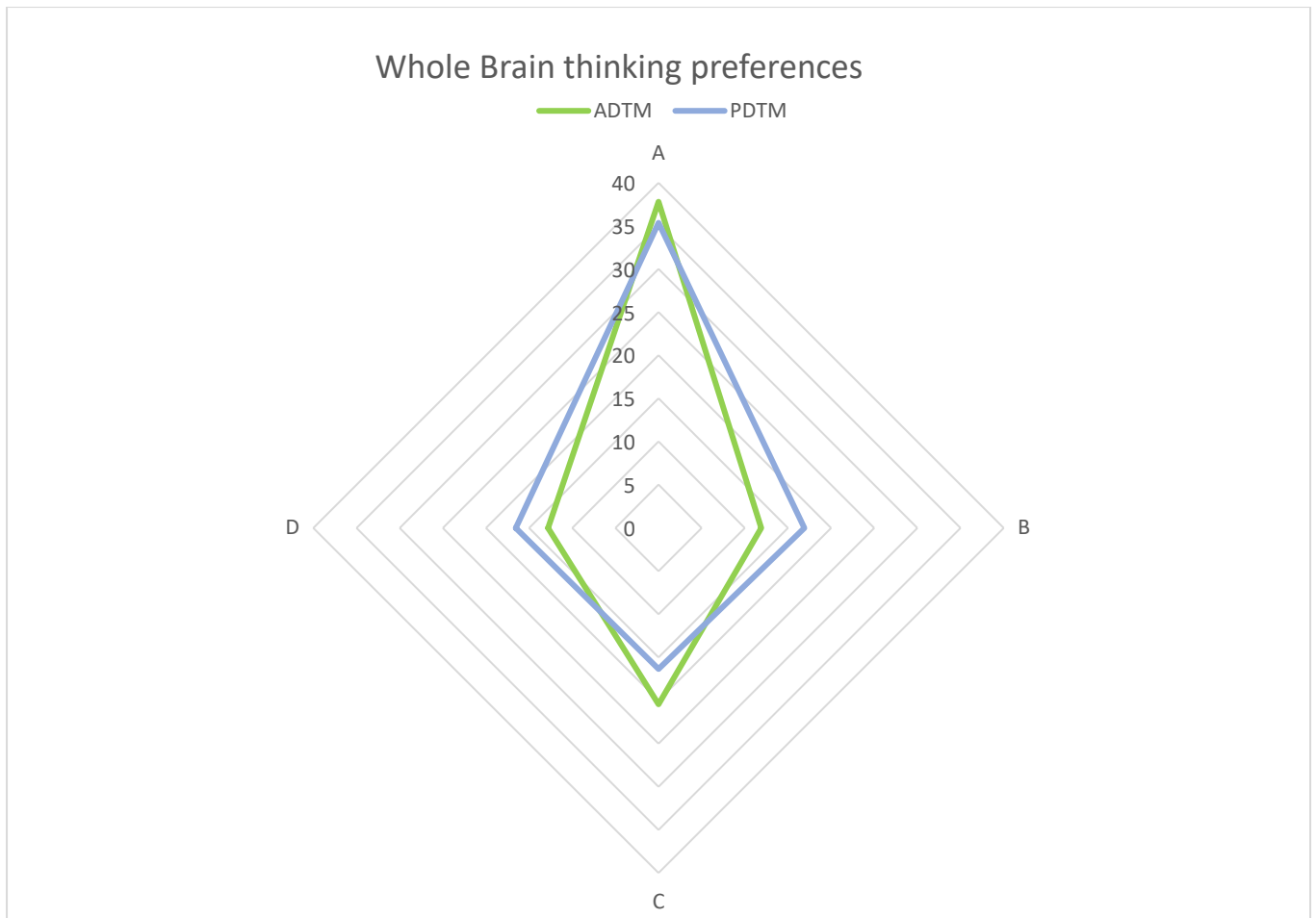
To analyse these results further and align them with the Whole Brain® model of Herrmann (Herrmann International, 2023), as applied by Du Toit (2018), the items were grouped into their respective quadrants. Mean scores with their associated standard errors were then calculated. Minimums, maximums and modes were also calculated and reported accordingly. All statistical computations were undertaken using STATA 17. These results are indicated in Table 6.6.

**Table 6.6: Whole Brain® groups**

Quadrant	ADTM				PDTM			
	Mean	St Err	Conf Lower *	Conf Upper *	Mean	St Err	Conf Lower *	Conf Upper *
<b>A</b>	37.80	4.357	28.67	46.92	35.36	6.366	21.17	49.54
<b>B</b>	11.90	3.019	5.58	18.21	16.90	2.967	10.29	23.52
<b>C</b>	20.45	3.407	13.31	27.58	16.36	4.993	5.23	27.48
<b>D</b>	12.80	2.358	7.86	17.73	16.54	3.401	8.96	24.12

\*95% Confidence interval

From Table 6.6 it is evident that both the ADTM and PDTM cohort have very similar aligned thinking preferences. Quadrant A is the most preferred thinking preference, achieving the highest mean in both groups.



**Figure 6.1: Student Whole Brain® thinking preferences**

When positioning the results of Table 6.6 onto a figure, as in Figure 6.1, it is evident that the profiles of both the ADTM and PDTM cohorts are very similar. In both cohorts the preference is aligned to Quadrants A then C, followed by D and lastly B. Quadrant B, representing thinking preferences associated primarily with organised, sequential, planned and detailed thinking, is the least preferred thinking preference of students. This in itself may indicate a curriculum challenge whereby the thinking preferences (and learning preferences) of students do not align with the content-driven nature of the curriculum. Although previous studies have been conducted utilising the Whole Brain® model within disciplinary contexts, no literature on its application in the discipline of research methodology has been noted and as such this may serve as one of the first set of results in this regard.

### 6.2.5.2. Whole Brain® comparisons

In order to ascertain whether there were any differences between the two cohorts and Whole Brain® thinking preferences, a two-tailed *t*-test was conducted. The results of this test is presented in Table 6.7.

**Table 6.7: Whole Brain® comparison**

Quadrant	Group	Mean		St. Dev.	95% conf low	95% conf up	<i>t</i>	Df	P
A	ADTM	37.8	Com.	19.48	28.67	46.92	0.3235	29	0.7486
	PDTM	35.36	36.93 Diff 2.43	21.11	21.17	49.54			
B	ADTM	11.9	Com.	13.50	5.58	18.21	-	29	0.2893
	PDTM	16.90	13.67 Diff -5.00	9.84	10.29	23.52			
C	ADTM	20.45	Com.	15.23	13.31	27.58	0.6931	29	0.4937
	PDTM	16.36	19.00 Diff 4.08	16.56	5.23	27.48			
D	ADTM	12.8	Com.	10.54	7.86	17.73	-	29	0.3634
	PDTM	16.54	14.12 Diff -3.74	11.28	8.96	24.12			

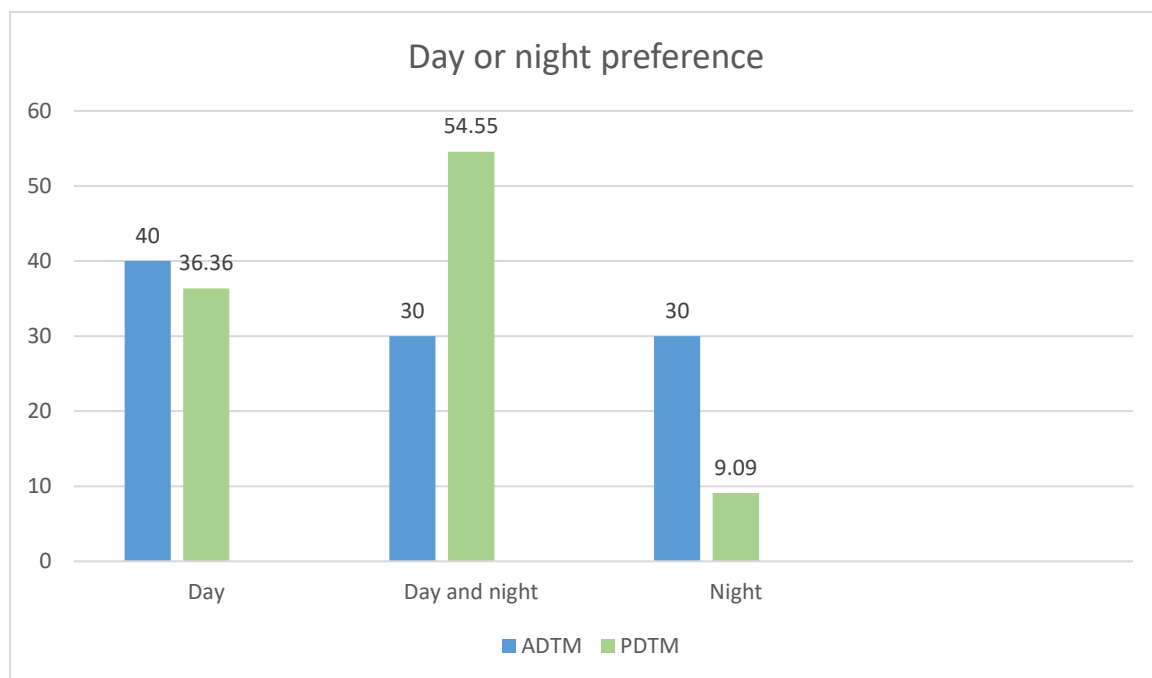
As described in Table 6.6, although similar, there is a descriptive difference between the Whole Brain® thinking preferences among the two groups. However, these statistics do not reveal whether these differences are indeed significant. For this purpose, a *t*-test was utilised to investigate whether there were any significant differences between the two groups and their Whole Brain® thinking preferences. A *t*-test is a statistical tool used to compare the means of two groups (Whole Brain® profile and ADTM/PDTM cohort). It is often employed in hypothesis testing to determine whether the two groups differ from one another (Bevans, 2022).

From the output table, we can see that the difference in means for Quadrant A data is 2.43 (37.8 – 35.36), and the confidence interval shows that the true difference in means is between 28.67 and 21.17. So, 95% of the time, the true difference in means will be different from 0. With a p-value of 0.7486 greater than 0.05, we can accept the null hypothesis of no difference. These results are consistent with those for Quadrants

B, C, and D, respectively, indicating that there are no significant differences between Whole Brain® thinking preferences and the two cohorts. Both cohorts may therefore effectively be approached in the same way regarding thinking preference integration and curriculum design.

### 6.2.6. Energy level and drive

Students were requested to reflect on their energy level and drive, and then to select whether they are having greater levels of energy and drive during the day, at night or both day and night. Figure 6.2 provides an insight into the responses received.



**Figure 6.2: Student energy level and drive**

From the figure above, it is evident that, in terms of ADTM students, the energy levels and drive of these students are generally evenly distributed, with a slightly larger number of students indicating a preference for the day. In terms of PDTM, the results show that night is the time of day with the lowest energy levels and drive. Perhaps this may be attributed to these students having families due to being older and also having work responsibilities during the day.

### 6.2.7. Introversiön vs extroversiön

Beckerson et al. (2020) highlight the interrelation between the desire for active learning and the effect of personality type on this process, where introvertive students may be less receptive to collaborative learning opportunities. This section of the survey requested students to indicate their introvertive vs extrovertive personality on a semantic differential scale where 1 represented introvertive and 100 represented extrovertive.

Results revealed that for the ADTM cohort, a mean of 49.5 was achieved with a standard deviation of 21.72. For the PDTM cohort, a mean of 54.54 was achieved with a standard deviation of 34.91. These results reveal that both group scores were in the mid-range of introvertive and extrovertive, which may align with what Nittle (2020) refers to as an ambivert. Although this may be the case for these two groups, it must also be noted that the standard deviations were very high, which points to high deviations in responses among individual respondents. This implies that although as a whole the mean may point to ambivertive cohorts, there are students in both groups that lean strongly towards introvertive and extrovertive personalities.

In order to delve deeper into the possible relationship between student personality type and Whole Brain® thinking preferences, a two-tailed *t*-test was employed. The results of this *t*-test are presented in Table 6.8 and Table 6.9 respectively.

**Table 6.8: ADTM Whole Brain® preferences and introversion/extroversion**

Quadrant	Group	Mean	St. Dev.	95% conf low	95% conf up	t	Df	P
A	Intro	36.66	Com.	19.89	25.64	-0.4408	18	0.6646
	Extro	41.20	38.80	19.96	16.40			
			Diff -4.53					
B	Intro	9.53	Com.	10.72	3.59	-1.3907	18	0.1813
	Extro	19.00	11.90	19.46	-5.17			
			Diff -9.46					
C	Intro	23.06	Com.	15.62	14.41	1.3596	18	0.1907
	Extro	12.60	20.45	12.07	-2.39			
			Diff 10.46					
D	Intro	13.46	Com.	9.85	8.00	0.0780	18	0.6373
	Extro	10.80	12.80	13.47	-5.93			
			Diff 2.66					

**Table 6.9: PDTM Whole Brain® preferences and introversion/extroversion**

Quadrant	Group	Mean	St. Dev.	95% conf low	95% conf up	t	Df	P
A	Intro	35.71	Com.	20.54	16.71	0.0691	9	0.9464
	Extro	34.75	35.36	25.31	-5.53			
			Diff 0.964					
B	Intro	18.28	Com.	10.40	8.66	0.5934	9	0.5675
	Extro	14.50	16.90	9.71	-0.95			
			Diff 3.78					
C	Intro	19.71	Com.	18.23	2.84	0.8774	9	0.4031
	Extro	10.50	16.36	13.30	-			
			Diff 9.214	10.66				
D	Intro	15.85	Com.	12.29	4.45	-0.2549	9	0.846
	Extro	17.75	16.54	10.90	0.39			
			Diff -1.89					

From the output Table 6.8 the difference in means for Quadrant A and introversion/extroversion is -4.53 (36.66 - 41.20), and the confidence interval shows that the true difference in means is between 25.64 and 47.68 for introversion and 16.40 and 65.99 for extroversion. So, 95% of the time, the true difference in means will be different from 0. With a p-value of 0.6646 greater than 0.05, we can accept the null hypothesis of no difference. These results are also consistent with those for Quadrants B, C, and D, respectively, indicating that there are no significant differences between Whole Brain® thinking preferences and the student personality types. Very similar results were obtained from the PDTM cohort. So, in an effort to determine whether the



full combined sample perhaps revealed any significant differences another *t*-test was conducted as presented in Table 6.10.

**Table 6.10: Combined Whole Brain® preferences and introversion/extroversion**

Quadrant	Group	Mean		St. Dev.	95% conf low	95% conf up	<i>t</i>	Df	P
A	Intro	36.36	Com.	19.61	27.66	45.06	-0.2479	29	0.8059
	Extro	38.33	36.93 Diff -1.96	21.24	21.24	54.66			
B	Intro	12.31	Com.	11.18	7.35	17.35	-0.9530	29	0.3485
	Extro	17.00	13.67 Diff -4.68	15.18	5.32	5.32			
C	Intro	22.00	Com.	16.13	14.84	29.15	1.7324	29	0.0938
	Extro	11.66	19.00 Diff 10.33	11.85	2.55	20.77			
D	Intro	14.22	Com.	10.45	9.59	18.86	0.0780	29	0.9384
	Extro	13.88	14.12 Diff 0.33	12.20	4.51	23.26			

Table 6.10 reveals that even when both cohorts are clustered into one group, there are no significant differences in personality type and Whole Brain® thinking preferences. This may potentially be attributed to the ambivertive nature of both cohorts. Effectively, the Whole Brain® curriculum developed for this group would need to accommodate all personality types and may not necessarily have to be developed considering personality type as a mediating variable.

### 6.2.8. Student intelligences

Gardner (2011) believes that learning takes place by means of the utilisation of one or a number of multiple intelligences, which include spatial, naturalistic, musical, logical-mathematical, existential, interpersonal, bodily-kinaesthetic, linguistic, and intrapersonal intelligences. Both cohorts were requested to reflect on their intelligences and then to rank these intelligences from most important to least important as they pertained to how the student associates with them. The results of this section are presented in Table 6.11. As students were required to rank from most

important (1) to least important (9), the means with the lower scores essentially ranked higher.

The results reveal that the ADTM cohort ranked naturalistic, interpersonal, and spatial intelligence the highest, while the PDTM cohort ranked intrapersonal, naturalistic, and interpersonal intelligences as the highest. This implies a preference to learning amongst one another, for collaborative learning that places elements of nature at the forefront. In both cases, logical-mathematical and bodily-kinaesthetic were ranked the lowest although the research methodology curriculum outcomes are aligned to logical research development and mathematical calculations and interpretation. Learning opportunities would therefore be more authentic and relatable to students should they be developed around the preferred intelligences and that possibilities are sought to advance those intelligences rated as least preferred. For example, making mathematics fun and exciting using interpersonal and naturalistic contexts.

**Table 6.11: Student intelligences**

Advanced Diploma			Student intelligences	Postgraduate Diploma		
Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank		Rank	Standard Deviation	Mean
<b>4.65</b>	2.85	<b>3</b>	<b>Spatial</b> (Ability to see the world in 3D, virtually or online)	<b>4</b>	2.77	<b>4.64</b>
<b>3.85</b>	2.68	<b>1</b>	<b>Naturalistic</b> (Ability to understand living things)	<b>2</b>	1.57	<b>3.54</b>
<b>5.30</b>	2.39	<b>6</b>	<b>Musical</b> (Discerning sounds, their rhythm, pitch etc)	<b>5</b>	2.05	<b>5.00</b>
<b>5.55</b>	2.41	<b>8</b>	<b>Logical-mathematical</b> (Quantifying things, testing and proving hypothesis)	<b>8</b>	2.12	<b>6.91</b>
<b>4.80</b>	2.48	<b>4</b>	<b>Existential</b> (Spirituality and tackling the questions of life)	<b>6</b>	2.00	<b>5.27</b>
<b>4.00</b>	1.92	<b>2</b>	<b>Interpersonal</b> (Understanding other peoples' feelings and motives)	<b>3</b>	2.22	<b>4.18</b>
<b>6.45</b>	2.35	<b>9</b>	<b>Bodily-kinaesthetic</b> (Coordinating your body and your mind)	<b>9</b>	1.27	<b>7.27</b>
<b>5.55</b>	2.19	<b>7</b>	<b>Linguistic</b> (Ability to find words to express yourself)	<b>7</b>	3.27	<b>5.45</b>
<b>4.90</b>	3.19	<b>5</b>	<b>Intrapersonal</b> (Understanding yourself, what you feel and what you want)	<b>1</b>	2.65	<b>2.73</b>

### 6.2.9. The student learning landscape

A student's Whole Brain® profile and their intelligences are cognitive capacities for which a curriculum developer has a marginal effect to change. Although we may create environments for students to develop these cognitive capacities, a student will always have a preferred thinking preference or set of intelligences within which they are most comfortable engaging in the world around them. For this reason, I deemed it necessary to delve deeper into the concept of the student landscape of learning and to better understand how students interact with this landscape and what their perceptions are of their learning environment. In this section, 32 variables associated with the student landscape are assessed on a five-point Likert scale where 1 represented strongly agree and 5 represented strongly disagree. The results of this section, together with associated mean scores and standard deviations, are presented in Table 6.12.

With a Likert scale positively skewed to strongly agree at 1, the lower mean scores reveal variables to which student respondents perceived a greater positive experience. Overall, the mean scores for the ADTM group were positive, with the lowest score being 3.35, which was associated with 'Online learning provides greater opportunities to collaborate and learn with classmates'. This indicates that there is generally a moderate agreement that online learning is not perceived as an effective collaborative learning tool by these students. The three variables that scored the most positive response from the ADTM group were as follows:

- I believe that I am responsible for my own learning (M=1.45);
- I feel that a step-by-step method is best for solving problems (M= 1.5);
- I believe that my lecturers are professional in their practice (M= 1.5).

When compared to the ADTM results, the PDTM student responses also had generally positive perceptions of the variables tested with the lowest perceived variable being 'I sometimes get a kick out of breaking the rules and doing things I am not supposed to do'. This implies a general moderate agreement that these students wish to adhere to rules. The four variables that received the most positive results were as follows:

- I believe that my lecturers are professional in their practice (M= 1.18);
- I feel that a step-by-step method is best for solving problems (M= 1.36);
- Thorough planning and organisation of time are mandatory for solving difficult problems (M= 1.36);
- I believe that learning opportunities should deal with real-life situations (M= 1.36);
- I believe that I am responsible for my own learning (M= 1.36).

**Table 6.12: The student learning landscape**

ADTM						The student landscape	PDTM					
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean (Sd Dev)		Mean (Sd Dev)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
65.0	30.0	0	0	5.0	<b>1.50</b> (0.95)	<b>I feel that a step-by-step method is best for solving problems.</b>	<b>1.36</b> (0.50)	63.6	36.4	0	0	0
10.0	40.0	35.0	10.0	5.0	<b>2.60</b> (0.99)	<b>Daydreaming has provided the impetus for the solution to my more important problems.</b>	<b>2.36</b> (0.81)	9.1	54.6	27.3	9.1	0
45.0	40.0	10.0	5.0	0	<b>1.75</b> (0.85)	<b>I like people who are most sure about their conclusions.</b>	<b>2.27</b> (1.10)	18.2	54.6	18.2	0	9.1
60.0	20.0	15.0	5.0	0	<b>1.65</b> (0.93)	<b>I would rather be known as a reliable than an imaginative person.</b>	<b>1.45</b> (0.52)	54.6	45.4	0	0	0
10.0	15.0	15.0	55.0	5.0	<b>3.30</b> (1.12)	<b>I often get my best ideas when doing nothing in particular.</b>	<b>3.18</b> (1.40)	9.1	27.3	27.3	9.1	27.3
15.0	45.0	35.0	5.0	0	<b>2.30</b> (0.80)	<b>I rely on hunches or my 'gut feeling' when making decisions.</b>	<b>2.64</b> (1.36)	27.3	18.2	27.3	18.2	9.0
10.0	25.0	15.0	45.0	5.0	<b>3.10</b> (1.16)	<b>I sometimes get a kick out of breaking the rules and doing things I am not supposed to do.</b>	<b>3.45</b> (1.29)	9.0	9.1	36.4	18.2	27.3
26.3	31.6	26.3	5.3	10.5	<b>2.40</b> (1.26)	<b>Much of what is important in life cannot be expressed in words.</b>	<b>2.45</b> (1.44)	27.3	36.4	18.2	0	18.2
35.0	45.0	10.0	10.0	0	<b>1.95</b> (0.94)	<b>I am more competitive by myself than with others.</b>	<b>1.64</b> (0.92)	54.6	36.4	0	9.1	0
25.0	15.0	25.0	20.0	15.0	<b>2.85</b> (1.42)	<b>I enjoy spending an entire day alone with my thoughts.</b>	<b>2.09</b> (1.37)	45.4	27.3	9.1	9.1	9.1
21.0	63.2	15.8	0	0	<b>1.94</b> (0.62)	<b>I prefer certainty and predictability .</b>	<b>2.09</b> (0.83)	27.3	36.4	36.4	0	0
10.0	30.0	50.0	5.0	5.0	<b>2.65</b> (0.93)	<b>I prefer to work with others in a team rather than solo.</b>	<b>3.18</b> (1.40)	18.2	9.1	27.3	27.3	18.2
30.0	50.0	20.0	0	0	<b>1.90</b> (0.72)	<b>It is important for me to have a place for everything and everything in its place.</b>	<b>1.81</b> (0.75)	36.4	45.4	18.2	0	0
21.1	57.9	15.8	5.3	0	<b>2.05</b> (0.77)	<b>Unusual ideas and daring concepts interest and intrigue me.</b>	<b>2.18</b> (1.16)	27.3	45.4	18.2	0	9.1
15.0	75.0	5.0	5.0	0	<b>2.00</b> (0.65)	<b>I prefer specific instructions to those which leave many details optional or up to me.</b>	<b>1.82</b> (0.75)	36.4	45.4	18.2	0	0
10.0	50.0	25.0	15.0	0	<b>2.45</b> (0.88)	<b>Know-what is more important than know-how.</b>	<b>2.18</b> (0.98)	27.3	36.4	27.3	9.1	0

30.0	60.0	10.0	0	0	<b>1.80</b> (0.61)	<b>Thorough planning and organisation of time are mandatory for solving difficult problems.</b>	<b>1.36</b> (0.50)	63.6	36.4	0	0	0
25.0	55.0	20.0	0	0	<b>1.95</b> (0.68)	<b>I can frequently anticipate the solutions to my problems.</b>	<b>1.90</b> (0.54)	18.2	72.7	9.1	0	0
5.0	40.0	30.0	20.0	5.0	<b>2.80</b> (1.00)	<b>I tend to reply more on my first impressions and feelings when making judgements than on a careful analysis of the solutions.</b>	<b>2.27</b> (0.90)	18.2	45.4	27.3	9.1	0
20.0	20.0	45.0	10.0	5.0	<b>2.60</b> (1.09)	<b>I feel that rules should be strictly enforced.</b>	<b>2.18</b> (0.98)	27.3	36.4	27.3	9.1	0
10.5	21.1	26.3	21.1	21.1	<b>3.21</b> (1.31)	<b>I prefer using online learning resources as opposed to attending physical classes.</b>	<b>2.09</b> (0.83)	27.3	36.4	36.4	0	0
20.0	15.0	35.0	20.0	10.0	<b>2.85</b> (1.26)	<b>Online classes and learning provides more opportunities for independent learning as opposed to traditional classroom learning.</b>	<b>1.80</b> (0.63)	30.0	60.0	10.0	0	0
45.0	50.0	5.0	0	0	<b>1.60</b> (0.59)	<b>I believe that learning opportunities should deal with real-life situations.</b>	<b>1.36</b> (0.50)	63.6	36.4	0	0	0
5.0	15.0	35.0	30.0	15.0	<b>3.35</b> (1.09)	<b>Online learning provides greater opportunities to collaborate and learn with class mates.</b>	<b>2.18</b> (1.16)	36.4	27.3	18.2	18.2	0
60.0	35.0	5.0	0	0	<b>1.45</b> (0.60)	<b>I believe that I am responsible for my own learning.</b>	<b>1.36</b> (0.67)	72.7	18.2	9.1	0	0
35.0	65.0	0	0	0	<b>1.65</b> (0.49)	<b>I strive to empower myself to learn more than what is expected.</b>	<b>1.45</b> (0.68)	63.6	27.3	9.1	0	0
15.0	45.0	25.0	10.0	5.0	<b>2.45</b> (1.05)	<b>I prefer to voice my own opinions as opposed to my lecturer/learning material in class and assignments.</b>	<b>2.18</b> (0.60)	9.1	63.6	27.3	0	0
25.0	65.0	10.0	0	0	<b>1.85</b> (0.58)	<b>I feel that my input would be valued in the development of the curriculum which I am involved in.</b>	<b>2.00</b> (0.44)	9.1	81.8	9.1	0	0
35.0	40.0	15.0	10.0	0	<b>2.00</b> (0.97)	<b>I am overall satisfied with the qualification that I am registered for.</b>	<b>1.54</b> (0.94)	63.6	27.3	9.1	0	0
60.0	30.0	10.0	0	0	<b>1.50</b> (0.68)	<b>I believe that my lecturers are professional in their practice.</b>	<b>1.18</b> (0.40)	81.8	18.2	0	0	0
20.0	40.0	25.0	15.0	0	<b>2.35</b> (0.98)	<b>My learning is strongly influenced by the availability of online technology.</b>	<b>1.81</b> (0.98)	45.4	36.4	9.1	9.1	0
30.0	70.0	0	0	0	<b>1.70</b> (0.47)	<b>I strive to actively use what I have learned in practice in order to make the world around me a better place for all.</b>	<b>1.45</b> (0.52)	54.6	45.5	0	0	0

### 6.2.10. Students and their future

A concluding question in the survey requested students to reflect on their possible future path in terms of the possibility of further study. The following question was posed; 'Do you intend to pursue postgraduate studies? Briefly, in about 20 to 30 words, elaborate why you intend to do so or why not'. Table 6.13 provides an overview of the responses. ADTM student responses are indicated in blue while PDTM reposes are indicated in green.

**Table 6.13. Students and their future**

<p><i>I am still considering it because there are a lot of factors to consider. One of which is funding, there are not a lot of bursaries for tourism management to be specific and sometimes it can be very challenging to focus on completing your qualifications whereas you have a R47 000 debt to pay with no solid income but God-willingly, I want to pursue my studies (un)till I reach my Masters. I love enhancing my knowledge and gaining more information.</i></p>	<p><i>Pursuing a Master's degree I believe it can offer individuals opportunities for specialised knowledge, career advancement, research experience, and personal growth.</i></p>
<p><i>I intend to pursue my postgraduate studies because I've (I find) the industry on its own very interesting and therefore I'd like to take part on growing it.</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, I want to be a lecturer for I possess relevant knowledge and have an eagerness to invest such others and I do not prefer to work in the tourism industry</i></p>
<p><i>I intend to complete a master's degree I feel like it's going to make my mother proud and I'll be exposed to many work opportunities than those who don't have it.</i></p>	<p><i>I am for academics, research and enhancing my knowledge which changes every time. I would want to be involved in research once i complete my Post grad.</i></p>
<p><i>Over the past few months, I have been carefully evaluating the potential job opportunities and career prospects in the field of Tourism Management. Unfortunately, it has become increasingly evident that the job market in this sector is currently facing significant challenges. Despite my passion for the subject and my desire to excel in the field, the scarcity of viable job opportunities has given me pause. I believe it's crucial to make informed decisions about my educational and career path, and in light of the current circumstances, I find myself re-evaluating my plans. As much as I am dedicated to furthering my education and honing my skills, the uncertainty surrounding job</i></p>	<p><i>After completing this PG Dip I am going straight for a Masters Degree as I plan to further my studies up to PhD and beyond. This is a personal desire and drive that I want to fulfil for myself development which will assist my career as a lecturer as well.</i></p>



<i>prospects has led me to question whether pursuing postgraduate studies in Tourism Management is the most prudent choice at this time.</i>	
<i>After I complete my Advanced diploma I plan on working full time in the industry to solidify my professional experience in my field learn as much as i can. And only after at least 5 years of working experience do i intend on pursuing my postgraduate qualification/Masters degree for my own research/dissertation.</i>	<i>I intend to do so as I believe it will widen up employment opportunities for me within the tourism space while broadening my understanding of the sector in order to improve upon it in my own small way.</i>
<i>I would be pleased to continue with my studies because I have so many questions and I feel that research and proving theories has all the answers I need.</i>	<i>I am for Academics, Research and enhancing my knowledge which changes every time. I would want to be involved in research once i complete my Post grad.</i>
<i>To be honest I don't see myself furthering my studies in tourism (be)cause there are no job opportunities just like the other study streams. The chances of you getting a job in tourism industry are very slim. I will choose myself other studies streams which is teaching and further my career there</i>	<i>After completing this PG Dip I am going straight for a Masters Degree as I plan to further my studies up to PhD and beyond. This is a personal desire and drive that I want to fulfil for myself development which will assist my career as a lecturer as well.</i>
<i>The eager(ness) to increase my level of specialist knowledge compared to an undergraduate, is much bigger and might make one be more likely to be shortlisted, or to earn a higher starting salary.</i>	<i>I intend to fulfil my studies so (that) I can stay relevant and competent in the tourism industry</i>
<i>Yes, I do intend to furthermore, I enjoy researching in my field of study and coming up with ideas.</i>	<i>I'm not sure if I will further my studies after this advanced diploma, there's limited funding or no funding at all.</i>
<i>Yes, I'm interested in pursuing to further my studies as to they enhance or benefit me in various ways, including career advancement, expertise and specialisation in a specific field, personal development, and networking opportunities. It enhances knowledge and skills, fosters personal growth and critical thinking, and provides valuable connections for potential collaborations.</i>	<i>Yes, I intend to pursue my postgraduate studies to broaden my knowledge and understanding of the tourism sector and develop more skills on research.</i>
<i>To expand knowledge on tourism field.</i>	<i>I would intend on pursuing a postgraduate study mainly because of enhancing my knowledge and also to share the knowledge that I have acquired.</i>
<i>I intend to further my studies because I believe that knowledge is power and with the NQF level 8, I can achieve more.</i>	

The responses above have been included here *verbatim* and have been edited minimally in order to enhance understanding where grammatical or spelling errors

were present. This was done in order to present an undiluted perspective of what students' intentions are post completion of their current studies.

From the feedback provided by students, it is evident that a large majority have intentions to study further. The main reasons for further study were revealed to be for professional development and continued learning about the industry, as well as securing employment or obtaining a promotion for those who are already employed. The few students that indicated they will not be pursuing further study identified the challenge of securing funding as the primary obstacle in this regard.

The above information once again reveals a potential misalignment (as indicated in the motivations to study further section) in terms of curriculum purpose and student intentions for studying these programmes. The ADTM is still considered a vocational undergraduate qualification designed to develop students for career growth. However, the PDTM is not a pure vocational qualification, as it has been designed to prepare students for potential further postgraduate study. An ADTM student who wishes to pursue further study to PDTM or a PDTM student wishing to study further to a Masters for the purpose of enhancing the success of securing employment may be completing a qualification not designed for that specific purpose. Such a student may be overqualified for the needs of securing employment, for which the NQF7 Diploma or NQF8 ADTM has been purposefully designed.

This reveals three possible predicaments: firstly, the diploma and/or ADTM curriculum may not have been effectively designed to cater to the needs of the tourism employment market, resulting in students not being able to secure employment. Secondly, the tourism employment market may be saturated or the industry is not growing sufficiently to absorb graduates. Thirdly, the curriculum of the diploma and ADTM may not effectively empower students to take control of their own professional development, resulting in the inherent need for students to further their studies with the expectation that this will empower them. This results in students pursuing

postgraduate study in curricula that are not explicitly aligned for vocational purposes. These students may potentially be pursuing postgraduate study when they are not adequately prepared or do not have the definite desire to pursue a research career. Subsequently, these programmes could be recruiting students who effectively do not have the desire to conduct research, resulting students experience challenges completing their postgraduate qualifications or who may drop out. This may also subsequently lead to poor-quality research to which Fidgeon (2010), Airey (2014), and Airey et al. (2015) have previously voiced concerns about.

### **6.3. RESULTS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP**

The research methodology modules in the Faculty of Management Sciences at TUT were developed at macro and meso level as generic modules in all advanced diploma and postgraduate diploma curricula in the faculty. A focus group interview with colleagues from other departments presenting these modules would provide valuable insights and an opportunity to collaboratively reflect on scholarly practice.

On 23 August 2023, a focus group session was held with faculty colleagues at TUT. The discussion was conducted over MS Teams, and 8 colleagues participated. These colleagues represented the following departments: Hospitality Management, Business and Information Management Services, Management and Entrepreneurship, Marketing, Supply Chain and Sport Management. The focus group interview was designed around the following core discussion points: delineating the purpose of research methodology as a module, problems experienced as a lecturer facilitating the module, solutions proposed to deal with the identified problems, innovative ideas to transform the curriculum, assessment planning, and the application of the Whole Brain® thinking model in research methodology curriculum design.

The focus group session was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Subsequently, the transcript was thematically analysed to identify underlying codes, which were then

aligned with associated themes. The results will be presented in the sub-sections that follow.

### 6.3.1. Delineating the purpose of research methodology as a module

During the focus group discussion themes pertaining to the overall purpose of research methodology were identified as well as specific themes pertaining to the modules at ADTM and PDTM. The following key themes were identified; competency-based purpose, content base purpose and teacher-led purpose which are presented in Table 6.14.

**Table 6.14: Purpose of research methodology**

Theme	Code
Competency-based purpose	Developing students' ability to disseminate information.
	Advancing critical thinking skills of students.
	Conceptualising new knowledge through literature review.
	Develop academic writing skills.
	Ability to develop evidence-based solutions to problems.
	Master the skills to search for secondary data and literature.
	Ability to apply research to the workplace.
	Ability to develop planning skills.
Content-based purpose	Ability to conduct basic data analysis.
	Master foundational knowledge pertaining to research methodology.
Teacher-directed purpose	Understand and apply research ethics.
	Teaching students how to think.
	Prepare student for postgraduate study.

The first theme regarding the purpose of research methodology pertained to the development of student competencies. These competencies align to numerous skills and abilities students are required to develop. These skills are associated with the various skills that a researcher would need to foster effectively in order to execute a successful research project.

Knowledge, skills and abilities related to literature reviews were also considered important. My faculty colleagues were of the view that students need to develop their ability to search for literature effectively, read for meaning, and conceptualise new knowledge from these resources. From a communication standpoint, research methodology should provide opportunities to improve students' academic writing skills and enhance their ability to disseminate information. The above also indicates the importance of cognitive abilities, including conceptualisation and critical thinking skills. Colleagues also indicated that the primary purpose of research methodology being to "teach students how to think". This I believe goes against the constructivist theory adopted in this study, where it is believed that all students are able to think; one cannot be taught how to think, but a student's creative thinking ability may be further developed, leading to innovative thinking and an enhanced ability to solve problems and critical thinking.

From the focus group, it was evident among all participants that the primary purpose of the research methodology module was to develop students' respective research competencies based on a foundation of content knowledge. Colleagues were of the view that this foundational knowledge should be developed at the advanced diploma level and then expanded upon in the postgraduate diploma. Although this foundational knowledge aligns to a content-based curriculum, the substantial weight behind competencies indicates a need for a curriculum that aspires to develop student competencies associated with *know how* and not only *know what*.

### **6.3.2. Problems experienced with research methodology curricula**

The findings in the section above detail the purpose of a research methodology curriculum from the perspective of faculty colleagues. In this section I provide an analysis of problems (or challenges) experienced by participants in their professional practice related to the tourism research methodology curriculum. Table 6.15 provides a summary of the main problems experienced, thereafter a comprehensive discussion of these results is provided.

**Table 6.15: Problems experienced with research methodology curricula**

Theme	Codes
Under preparedness	Poor critical thinking skills.
	Poor academic writing ability.
	Poor reading ability.
	Inadequate preparedness of students resulting in poor articulation of learning from advanced diploma to postgraduate diploma and therefore to postgrad study.
Poor success rates	Low rates of progression of students from postgraduate diploma to Masters study.
	Poor class attendance.
Negative preconceptions	Negative perception of research methodology demotivates students.
Student exclusion in curriculum design	Students excluded as participants in knowledge creation.
	Lack of quality engagement due to large group sizes.
Vocational needs	Working students not driven to do academic research.
	Misalignment between expectations of vocationally-driven and academically-driven students.
	Perpetual students not entering the job market.
Unconstructive alignment of curriculum	Inauthentic assessments resulting a mismatch between students' expectation of postgraduate study and their own perceptions of their ability.
	Modules offered in silos resulting in research skills not being transferrable to other modules.
	Poor ability of students to conceptualise research.
	Poor commitment and no ownership of own learning.

The first challenge pertains to students admitted into further study that have not developed foundational competencies in this regard. The poor reading and writing abilities of students were highlighted as stumbling blocks in the effective delivery of the research methodology curriculum at both the advanced diploma and postgraduate diploma levels. One reason provided was the disadvantaged backgrounds and socio-economic upbringing of the majority of students. Most students had received poor-quality high school education that did not prioritise reading and writing skills, which affect their success in further education. However, it was also noted that lecturers are not always prepared to put in extra effort to bridge this gap and assist students in their development to bridge this learning gap. This may be due to lecturers not seeing it as their responsibility, or they are already under pressure with large class groups and workloads, making it challenging to exert extra energy on this obligation. Faculty colleagues acknowledge that general terminology and jargon in higher education,

especially research methodology, is used in the curriculum; however, many students are not able to comprehend this language. Students seem to be aware of their shortcomings in this regard, as it seemingly contributes to poor motivation. One participant stated the following in this regard:

*'...it is my experience that their writing skills, their motivation to read and their belief to read is not up to standard, so my experience is that there is a big gap between what they need to do and what they need to know and I don't have a problem with people willing to learn, but in my experience, they don't have the motivation to read. It might be that it is too difficult, but the motivation is lacking to read.'*

The poor reading and writing competencies of students, coupled with low motivation, may be a cause behind the lack of critical thinking ability. Students appear to have been inadequately prepared for further study, where problem-solving abilities and critical thinking are increasingly required. The focus group interview revealed that students seem to lack initiative or ownership of their learning, relying on lecturers to provide exact chapters to learn, along with checklists and guidelines.

During the focus group discussion, it was also mentioned that there is a feeling that advanced and postgraduate diploma students are not all adequately prepared for postgraduate study due to poor curriculum design. Inauthentic assessments in undergraduate and in some cases in advanced diploma modules has resulted in students' having higher perceptions of their own abilities and therefore perceive that they meet the requirements for postgraduate study. Some students fail to accept that they have not successfully developed the entry-level competencies for postgraduate study. Those students that are however, granted access to a postgraduate qualification do not progress, they stagnate or place increased pressure on supervisors. Those focus group colleagues that were also postgraduate supervisors voiced their opinion that effective gatekeeper processes need to be put in place to only grant access to postgraduate study to those students who have adequately developed themselves as potential postgraduate students. As one participant stated "*not all students should be allowed to do masters studies*".



The focus group noted that the economic situation in the country and the high rate of unemployment also contributed to the challenges experienced. Participants voiced their concern over increased numbers of students studying further into advanced diploma and postgraduate diploma as a result of not securing employment in the stagnant job market. As a result, the participants were of the view that students believe that they need to study further to be more competitive in the job market, or in some cases, do not want to work and prefer to benefit from the comforts of being a student. The problem arises with the postgraduate diploma, which is not designed to be a vocational qualification but a postgraduate entry qualification. Students who do not have employment and who complete a postgraduate diploma may effectively be overqualified for the industry which will hamper their success in securing employment even more. Students seem not to clearly understand the purpose of the advanced diploma and postgraduate diploma.

Participants voiced their concern with the poor success rates of students on advanced and postgraduate diploma levels. Poor class attendance, both online and physical, are areas of concern for the lecturers in the focus group. Perhaps this is due to poor student motivation. Participants were of the view that even with the inclusion of an 80% class attendance policy in the study guide, students still do not attend classes. One participant mentioned the following in this regard; *“When you enrol for a course, you're supposed to attend classes, I can guarantee you (that) 50% of my group do not attend classes.”*

Although this study did not delve into understanding why students do not attend classes, the seemingly negative preconception of the module may be a cause as highlighted by Schultze (2009). Failure to incorporate students into curriculum and instructional design may also have an influence on the success of the constructive alignment of the curriculum, which in this case seems to be desired.



Another challenge perceived from the focus group arose from the undergraduate curriculum is the ingrained nature of traditional teaching and learning strategies. Students aiming to pursue further studies in their advanced diplomas encounter difficulties because they have never been incorporated as creators and co-creators of knowledge; traditionally, they have been told what to learn and memorise. One participant expressed frustration with her students who complain about having to “*read so much*” and are frustrated that they are not simply told the information. Students have been conditioned to accept “*hand-to-mouth*” learning and have not been empowered to take control of their own learning journey. It is evident from the above that after three years of being excluded as co-creators of knowledge, students may struggle with the key competencies and skills desired from them, such as problem-solving, the ability to synthesise, critical and logical thinking, and constructivist learning.

Taking the concerns of Browne and Foss (2023) regarding Generation Z into account, a conflict seemingly occurs in lecturer practice, as illuminated by the focus group. Participants indicated their frustrations with regard to students not conforming to guidelines. One participant indicated to their students “*You must do it like this. If you don't do it, you will lose marks. Then they use a different method, so I don't know. I don't know if you say to them you have to add with data analysis for example, mention a few aspects. Then they will dance around those aspects and demonstrate that they will not do what I'm going to tell them.*” Another participant stated that they spent a large period of time mentoring a student on a literature review assignment and then; “*That's how far I went, and still the next time I received his literature review, it looked like it (he) just went like, oh, screw you, I'm not going to do anything, but you told me to do so. It's almost like they don't listen. Even if you try and help them, it's almost like they have a no care attitude they want to do the minimum but get the maximum marks. ...there is a lack of almost passion and caring for your work.*” From the aforementioned quotes there seems to be a push back from students with regard to being told what to do and following structured approaches which resonates with Browne and Foss’s (2023) notion of Generation Z’s drive to move away from complacency.

Browne and Foss (2023) also highlight the increased social awareness of Generation Z students noting increased levels of activism, engagement and a need for answers as they want change. Which coupled with the need for instant gratification and answers makes teaching even more challenging (Jaleniauskiene & Juceviciene, 2015). In relation to this one participant indicated her challenge of students reactively concerned about marks as opposed to proactive learning to achieve marks.

*“The students are concerned about the marks...So, then they are very vocal, then they want meetings. They are concerned and they bring in (along) the SRC and the dean and whoever because they are concerned they think they deserve better marks.”*

It was perceived by participants that students just want to “*get the diploma to go and look for a job*”. Participants believed that students are not interested in the processes of learning and writing and really analysing and interpreting information and they just want to get the qualification and graduate. Taking this a little further another participant indicated their concern related to postgraduate diploma students not taking accountability for their learning and shifting the responsibility to the supervisor.

*“They (students) have this perception that it's a supervisor's job to get them through this module, so if they fail the module, it's a supervisor's fault. ...(Students believe that) we should have made sure that their document was correct, but I mean we as supervisors, we cannot rewrite their work for them, (and) that's unethical.”*

The same participant also indicated their challenge related to students feeling entitled to be given their qualifications as they have paid for them. “*I had a student that indicated to me in so many words that they paid for the degree, so they insist on getting the degree and I mean, that's not how it works. You need to do the work, you need to put in the effort and if you don't put in the effort, you are not going to get the degree. (It) doesn't mean that because you paid for the degree that you necessarily have to get the degree.*” The right of entitlement often seemingly overshadows the privilege of gaining access to higher education and the rights of students to take ownership of their own learning.

### 6.3.3. Solutions and innovative ideas for the research methodology curriculum

During the focus group, participants were also requested to provide input towards any potential solutions and innovative ideas related to the problems that they had identified as discussed in the previous section. Table 6.16 provides a summary of the 12 main points raised in this regard.

**Table 6.16: Innovative ideas for facilitating learning of research methodology**

1	Separate applied research from academic research in the curriculum to cater to the diversity of needs of students and industry.
2	Integrate research methodology into all modules to reduce the 'silo effect'.
3	Apply research methodology to practice.
4	Active engagement with literature.
5	Master academic writing skills in advanced diploma or earlier.
6	Introduce the concept of research for everyday life in undergraduate curriculum.
7	Introduce academic writing in undergraduate qualifications.
8	Link research with a career path in the advanced diploma.
9	Introduce the practice of action research in advanced diploma or earlier.
10	Storytelling.
11	Utilising online platforms and LMS more rigorously.
12	Seeing the advanced diploma as a transitional qualification.

The focus group participants revealed that the general approach adopted in the curricula of both the advanced and postgraduate diploma was heavily aligned with academic research. The challenge that this creates is that some students have difficulty learning as the application of the curriculum is overly theoretical with very little real-world application. In addition, students see research methodology as an overly theoretical and 'boring' subject and as such they are not motivated to learn. Considering the purpose of the advanced diploma as a qualification designed to develop students professionally, I believe that research methodology should then also be aligned to practical workplace-related learning opportunities. One participant provided the following input in this regard;

*"..you need to prepare applying it (research methodology) to the workplace, it's not just academic research. I think research skills are important even in the work place".*

I am of the view that as research is not only an academic skill, the various benefits and uses of research in practice may be improved by introducing the concept of research for everyday life in the undergraduate curriculum or in the advanced diploma. Research may be a beneficial tool for decision-making and problem-solving in practice, and therefore, it may also be beneficial to students if research methodology was introduced linked to a career path. One possible strategy is to introduce the practice of action research in the advanced diploma or earlier. This will allow students to practically solve applied and professional research problems in practice, allowing for reflection, potential improvements in problem-solving skills, and critical thinking, both of which were identified as challenges in the previous section. This may also assist in the promotion of lifelong learning among students and practical experience in research that may serve as foundational knowledge for further studies in advanced and postgraduate diplomas.

The colleagues in the focus group also indicated their need for better alignment of research methodology in all modules of the advanced diploma and postgraduate diploma as they currently experience challenges associated with the offering of modules in 'silos'. I believe that elements of research methodology such as problem-solving skills and academic writing may be transferable to other modules or between modules. In addition, the challenge of poor academic writing skills may also be overcome if academic writing is learned earlier in undergraduate modules, and academic writing should be a standard requirement in all modules to reduce the silo effect. One participant mentioned the following in this regard:

*"...they (the students) have not been exposed properly to reading and writing, because the way the curriculum is we have one year to teach them. But what happens then is that we focus on the technical aspects and we all know as soon as it becomes too technical, then they don't have the reading motivation. So, this is the problem that that cannot be solved with an additional year. It must be integrated in our courses much earlier.... ideally reading the writing and discipline specific knowledge has to happen since (from) first year already."*

The focus group initially suggested that it may be useful to “*bring in another year of research methodology*” due to the challenges associated with the allocated notional hours not being sufficient to cover the current curriculum yet alone implementing initiatives for students to ‘catch up’ in learning basic foundational knowledge and skills. However, it was later agreed, in the focus group discussion, that this would not be realistic or feasible but that a solution may be in actively including elements of research methodology in undergraduate curricula. One participant exemplified the need for undergraduate students to also develop critical thinking skills, to develop an ability to critique and debate standpoints on a topic and to support this through constructive arguments backed up by evidence. Should these basic skills have been developed during undergraduate study then the foundation should be set in the advanced and postgraduate diplomas for further enhancement of these skills.

There was a strong consensus in the focus group that research methodology students on both levels have difficulty in sourcing the correct literature, interpreting information (both primary and secondary) as well as integrating and synthesising their learning in order to conceptualise and present their results. One innovative solution proposed by the group was the possibility of introducing storytelling skills in the curriculum. One participant mentioned the following on this theme;

*“...first area of learning is to identify, to select, analyse and interpret information and that way I think we are able to bring the aspect of academic writing early and I think more than anything you allow them to learn how to tell a story. I always say research is storytelling. From what was (and) which is, in the past literature, what is the status quo currently and what will be so they are learning to use writing to tell a story.”*

Although Generation Z is considered to be a technologically inclined generation, the focus group perceived a lack of engagement by students with online academic resources. The unfamiliarity with the institutional LMS and its associated functions has resulted in lecturers failing to effectively use the platform. It was suggested that active learning opportunities, as opposed to passive learning opportunities, should be incorporated on the LMS, where students are required to constructively engage with

learning resources. In addition, academic online resources such as university library portals, academic search engines like Google Scholar (and others) should actively be used as primary resources in the curriculum and not seen as supplementary resources.

The panel conceded that although foundational theoretical knowledge should be included as an outcome of a research methodology curriculum, this should only be assessed at the advanced diploma level. Additionally, this theoretical assessment should carry a lower weight, and the majority of learning opportunities as well as assessments should be constructively aligned towards practical learning such as assignments, projects, and presentations. In addition, due to the need for practical learning and assessments, research methodology curricula are more effectively offered through continuous evaluation as opposed to theoretical examination.

In addition to the above, it was mentioned, by the focus group, that a qualification such as an advanced diploma at a university of technology such as TUT exists on NQF7; it, therefore, rests on the transition between an undergraduate and postgraduate qualification. Teaching, learning and assessments should be aligned to this point, and a module such as research methodology cannot be based purely on academic research while students have not had adequate liberal learning opportunities in this regard, coming from a vocationally focused undergraduate diploma.

**Table 6.17: Innovative assessment and the research methodology curriculum**

1	Assessments should be practical with limited theoretical testing in the foundation phase of the advanced diploma.
2	Advanced and postgrad diplomas are better assessed on a continuous evaluation basis as opposed to theoretical examination.
3	Assessments in the advanced diploma should incorporate the analysis and synthesising of datasets in order to develop and interpret results.
4	Include a short practical research project in the advanced diploma that concludes with a research report.
5	Include the development of an authentic research proposal for Masters study in the postgraduate diploma.
5	To counter the challenges of artificial intelligence, learning opportunities within a class such as presentations may be used.
6	Peer review opportunities to learn about research peer review processes.

As stated in the previous section, the focus group participants revealed that the general approach adopted in the curricula of both the advanced and postgraduate diploma was heavily aligned with academic research. The challenge that this provides is that some students have difficulty learning as the application of the curriculum is overly theoretical with very little real-world application. I believe that therefore the current curricula would accommodate predominantly Whole Brain® Quadrant A students, disadvantaging other students with different thinking preferences. In terms of the theoretically-based shortcoming of the current curriculum, one participant mentioned the following;

*“... we (are) assessing them to just do memorisation, which doesn't work for research. You know, they'll come and say I'm reading my textbook, but I'm not passing, so that transition from this is how I was taught and how I got my cumulative (mark) for my diploma. But it's not working for research. So, something that's solves that problem is to say you cannot (just) read a research methodology textbook and come up with the proposal.”*

A solution to this challenge, as suggested by the focus group, was that the curriculum be transformed in order to cater for real world application and to make provision for applied research that is designed around solving real world practical problems. This allows students to learn and reflect on practical application and therefore the value of



research methodology may be revealed to students so as to not only solve academic but also real-life problems. In relation to this one participant elaborated the following:

*“So, they say, what will positivism and interpretivism help me with the everyday life problems that we are facing as a country, you know? So, I think we need to fill that gap. I think it's one that really unlocks opportunities that merges what was gained from this research methods to their work situations to their community situations, and then you bring in the aspect of ... applied research and also action research. So, I think for me that would be my ideal curriculum in terms of research.”*

The focus group revealed that the current curriculum of the ADTM requires students to complete a collaborative research proposal. This is also done in the PDTM, where students again complete a proposal as their major assessment, but this time individually. A practical research-based assignment or project would be more beneficial at the advanced diploma level as it will also avoid duplication of the same assessment on both levels. The research methodology curriculum of the postgraduate diploma should be constructively aligned towards a final summative assessment that includes the development of an authentic research proposal geared towards a realistic Master's research concept.

The participants voiced their disappointment with the summative assessment of the advanced diploma. Students want to do research and collect data but the current curriculum requires them to develop a research proposal on a predetermined topic in groups. One participant stated *“Actually, when I told them that they're only going to their proposal, some of them were quite disappointed.”* I believe that, there is a need for greater real-world application of learning (Sheldon, Fesenmaier & Tribe, 2011) and building the foundation of research methodology concepts at advanced diploma level. The focus group suggested that the curriculum of research methodology in the advanced diploma should rather be geared towards an actual research project, where students are required to collect data, interrogate and analyse the data, and write a final research report accompanied by a presentation. A particular participant recognised the potential positive impact that this change in the curriculum may present



with regard to transforming student motivation and morale. Selecting topics that are 'hot' and that resonate with students, but at the same time are applied to real-life industry problems and are feasible would potentially increase the buy-in of students and boost their excitement and motivation to learn. Compiling the report may also develop creativity skills among students and stimulate Quadrant D of the Whole Brain®. Another alternative, mentioned by the focus group, was to provide secondary data already collected, perhaps from a former Masters or Doctoral student, which may also be used for the purposes of this research report. This may also bring forth the potential for collaborative learning, whereby Masters and Doctoral students can be involved as guest presenters. The final research proposal may be more beneficial in the postgraduate diploma curriculum, as by that time, the students have developed the knowledge and skills required to compile a comprehensive research design. These postgraduate diploma students may then also have greater ability and critical thinking skills to select their own research topics.

The rise of artificial intelligence in the higher education landscape was seen by the focus group as a challenge in the assessment process. Generation Z students, who are increasingly tech-savvy (Jaleniauskiene & Juceviciene, 2015), have begun using artificial intelligence to develop assignments and their research proposals. Although I believe it will not be possible to exclude student interaction with artificial intelligence technologies, a means to counter its influence and to ensure authentic learning would be needed such as practical class exercises and student presentations.

In addition to the above, a more dynamic approach to assessment was also proposed, by the focus group, in relation to peer review opportunities. In the advanced diploma final assessments are externally moderated and, in the postgraduate diploma the final research proposal assignment is assessed by a third-party lecturer (not the supervisor) and then also externally moderated. In such a case, students are provided with examiner and moderator feedback, which the participants in the focus group likened to the process of academic peer review. However, students often have a challenge understanding this subjective process and the fact that the lecturer of the subject is

not the final assessor. In addition, they often overestimate their own ability and expect high marks when, after a double review process, their marks may not be as high as expected, leading to frustration. A solution would be to introduce the review process to students in the curriculum where opportunities for peer review of evidence such as assignments or presentations are provided. This collaborative and constructive learning process allows students to learn from one another, and the lecturer serves as the final assessor.

#### **6.3.4. Whole Brain® thinking and the research methodology curriculum**

During the focus group interview participants were requested to provide their perceptions of the theory of Whole Brain® thinking theory and its relation to the research methodology curricula. In this regard it was revealed that there is a general belief that research methodology curricula, especially those in the field of management sciences, are geared predominantly towards Quadrant A and B thinking preferences. In this regard one participant summed up their perception:

*“I think because, at advanced level, they are not given an opportunity to interact with data a lot or to even go as far as collecting and analysing information. I think C is missing or can be improved, and I think it's not entirely their (students) fault.”*

I perceive that the principal deficiency in relation to the Whole Brain® thinking theory is related to a lack of awareness and understanding thereof in practice by lecturers and curriculum developers. There was a concern that although lecturers try to develop curricula that are holistic and incorporate aspects such as synthesis and integration, the lack of awareness of the theory and its benefits, result in ineffective implementation thereof.

It was revealed by participants that different lecturers have different and preferred ways of doing things and this also applied to divergent student preferences, *“each of us have strong points and weak points in research”*. Focus group participants acknowledged that there may also be scenarios where the thinking preference of a

lecturer and that of a student clash. I believe that a Whole Brain® curriculum is a method to mediate in this process and to provide an impetus towards a transformed curriculum. For example, it was proposed by the focus group that guest lecturers should be actively included in research methodology curricula on both advanced diploma and postgraduate diploma levels. Guest lecturers, who may have different perspectives thinking preferences related to the module, may provide a more dynamic interpersonal learning space where students may be more inclined to be active learners.

A challenge identified by a participant was related to large group sizes. This results in difficulty in providing individualised attention to each student and to provide effective feedback. I also recognise the potential of ineffective feedback, as a concern in achieving authentic learning as this is a fundamental aspect in this regard (Wiggins, 1998). As a solution, the focus group revealed collaborative learning opportunities and peer review opportunities as possible mitigating strategies in this regard as students become active participants in disseminating feedback between one another, one again leading to collaborative and constructive learning. This allows for students to learn from one another, the lecturer plays the role of a facilitator in this process overseeing the learning process. One participant mentioned that they actively use the institutional LMS where classes with large student numbers are placed into groups and required to complete learning tasks that also include peer review.

The potential of incorporating role playing in learning opportunities was highlighted in the focus group as a constructive strategy used in some classes to enhance the authentic learning of research methodology. This places the student at the forefront of the flipped classroom learning process. Students are provided with necessary resources and then the class is requested to role play, thus experiencing different tasks from multiple perspectives, requiring different thinking preferences and thus more holistic learning and a greater inclusion of more cognitive quadrants of the brain. Students also felt more excited and it has worked well with large groups.

#### 6.4. RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH SOUTH AFRICAN COLLEAGUES

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 6 colleagues from universities in South Africa. These colleagues were all responsible for facilitating the learning of research methodology modules at NQF8 levels respectively. These colleagues from other institutions were included as they were deemed experts in the field of tourism research methodology curriculum and instructional design. Interviews ranged between 30-45 minutes and revolved around 9 major areas of investigation, namely;

1. Determining the purpose of a tourism research methodology curriculum.
2. Analysing to what extent the participant perceives the research methodology module facilitated to have meet the aligned purpose of the module.
3. Requesting the participant to describe what challenges they face in facilitating research methodology in their professional environment.
4. Requesting the participant to describe what challenges they face in assessing research methodology in their respective professional environments.
5. Considering the theory of Whole Brain® thinking, to determine to what extent the participant believes that the research methodology curriculum is designed to accommodate Whole Brain® thinking in students.
6. To identify the innovative techniques that have been used by the participants in facilitating the module.
7. To identify the innovative techniques that have been used by participants in assessments.
8. To identify what changes the participants would recommend to transform the curriculum.

Table 6.10 provides an outline of the affiliation and gender distribution of participants. Due to the small population size and the interconnected relationships between participants, no personal identifiable information was requested in order to protect the confidentiality of participants. Pseudonyms are provided for participants and the number of the pseudonym in this report does not correlate to the number allocated to a respondent as indicated in Table 6.18.

**Table 6.18: Affiliation and gender distribution of interview participants**

	<b>HEI represented</b>	<b>Gender</b>
1	University of South Africa	Female
2	North-West University	Female
3	Vaal University of Technology	Female
4	University of Pretoria	Female
5	Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Male
6	Central University of Technology	Female

The empirical evidence obtained from these interviews were analysed thematically in order to identify codes, themes and families as prescribed by Schurink, Schurinck and Fouché (2021b). The major themes are presented as sub-headings in this section with a description of the main findings. Although qualitative data analysis and thematic analysis is subjective in nature I have attempted to be objective in relation to the evidence provided by participants in the transcriptions in order to uphold authenticity. However, my subjective reflections on this evidence is also provided. Although 8 questions were posed to participants, it was realised during data analysis that there were overlying themes and in some cases one response may have captured in more than one question. This is evident by the number of main themes which do not directly correlate to the number of questions posed.

#### **6.4.1. The purpose of tourism research methodology**

The first question posed to interviewees was related to their perception of the purpose of tourism research methodology at both advanced diploma and postgraduate diploma levels. This discussion led to the identification of the first and most universal purpose, which is developing the understanding by students of what research methodology is, particularly academic research. This key theme involves developing knowledge of the fundamental concepts used in research, knowledge about how to identify a research problem, and the research process and how to conduct research. However, the term *teaching* and *to teach* students was a recurring code. For example, P2 mentioned the following:

*“The purpose is to teach the students to do research, to teach the students the theoretical aspects around research and the lingo we use... a lot of the students also ask me why do we do that and I tell them.”*

From the above, it gives the impression that some lecturers are still inclined towards the one-directional lecturer-led approach, i.e., telling students what to know and how to act. This effectively is in contrast to the theory of authentic constructivist learning in which the act of learning is proactively aligned to the student, where the student takes control of their learning. Table 6.19 provides a representation of the results of themes and associated codes for the purpose of research methodology.

**Table 6.19: Purpose of a research methodology curriculum**

Main theme	Codes
Understanding fundamental aspects of academic research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fundamental concepts used in research.</li> <li>• Knowledge about how to identify a research problem.</li> <li>• Knowledge on how to source literature.</li> <li>• Knowledge of how to develop research aims and objectives.</li> <li>• Knowledge of the research process.</li> <li>• Knowledge on how to write a research report.</li> <li>• Knowledge on how to write a proposal.</li> </ul>
Preparing students for further study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare students for Master’s degree.</li> </ul>
Competency-based learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires actual problem investigation.</li> <li>• How to conceptualise a research problem.</li> <li>• Opportunities for practical learning.</li> <li>• Conduct realistic research project.</li> <li>• Develop a real-life research proposal.</li> </ul>
More than just academic research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to design projects for solving local community problems.</li> <li>• Learn to design research projects for practical business problems.</li> <li>• Learning about research holistically.</li> </ul>
Empowering students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop critical thinking skills.</li> </ul>

Another purpose of research methodology which was identified during the interviews, which is closely aligned to building a foundational knowledge of academic research, was in terms of the curriculum's role in preparing students for Masters and postgraduate study. P4 summarised this theme as follows:

*“I would obviously think that we need to prepare these students for postgraduate studies on a Master’s level and also on a Doctoral level. But then this module should lay a solid foundation for students to comprehend research methods and research terminology and all the basics of research so that they are able to continue towards the Master’s degree qualification.”*

Interviewees identified that the purpose of a research methodology curriculum also includes competence-based learning. This implies that such a curriculum should require actual problem conceptualisation, investigation, opportunities for practical learning such as conducting real-life research, and developing a real-life research proposal. It was also revealed that the tourism research methodology curriculum should be more than just academic research. It serves as a platform for students to learn about designing projects to solve local community problems. The curriculum should also provide opportunities for students to learn to design research projects for practical business problems. This should lead to students learning about research holistically and seeing research as a practical philosophy that is transferable to numerous environments.

#### **6.4.2. Challenges in the tourism research methodology curriculum**

After interviewees provided feedback on the purpose of the tourism research methodology curriculum and indicated the practical application thereof they were requested to elaborate further on any challenges experienced in their scholarly practice. Table 6.20 provides an outline of the main themes identified and the associated codes.

**Table 6.20:** Challenges in the curriculum

<b>Main theme</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Poor reading and writing abilities of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor academic writing skills.</li> <li>• Poor ability to read for meaning.</li> <li>• Lack of exposure to academic articles in undergraduate qualifications.</li> <li>• Poor skills in practising citations and referencing.</li> </ul>
Content heavy curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over reliance on theory with little practical application.</li> <li>• High reliance on tests.</li> <li>• Students unable to apply learning in class an in assessments due to poor application of application-based learning in undergraduate qualification.</li> </ul>
Misalignment of curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too few notional hours to cover all that is required.</li> <li>• Some students expect to learn about research in general but the curriculum only aligns to academic research.</li> <li>• Some supervisors unfamiliar with NQF8 outcomes and supervising at NQF9 level.</li> </ul>
Assessment challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor quality tests as assessment tools.</li> <li>• Unauthentic testing such as MCQs.</li> <li>• Static testing due to nature of theory.</li> <li>• Poorly aligned summative assessments.</li> </ul>
Rigidity of curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflexibility in facilitation and assessment.</li> <li>• Teaching and learning not aligned to outcomes.</li> <li>• Lecturers lacking expertise in all fields of research.</li> <li>• Bureaucratic processes.</li> </ul>
Low motivation among students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are not motivated to learn.</li> <li>• Compulsory module deemed boring and irrelevant by some students.</li> <li>• Only students that want to study further are engaged.</li> <li>• Students do not prepare for lessons.</li> <li>• Poor class attendance.</li> <li>• Plagiarism conducted by those students not motivated.</li> </ul>
Low motivation among lecturers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecturers not stimulated due to poor student moral, engagement and creativity.</li> </ul>
Challenges of Generation Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instant gratification.</li> <li>• Aware of their rights.</li> </ul>
Influx of artificial intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inauthentic evidence of learning.</li> </ul>



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Silo effect

- Poor integration between modules.
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During all interviews, the first and most common challenge identified was that of poor reading and writing abilities of students. This was particularly related to poor academic writing skills, an inadequate ability to read for meaning, a lack of exposure to academic articles in undergraduate education, perhaps associated with the challenge of reading, as well as poor skills in practicing citations and referencing. This challenge has resulted in the acceptance that students are not adequately prepared for further study, and lecturers are having to devote a significant amount of time to assist students in 'catching up'. This is particularly relevant to the issue of academic writing and the development of competencies in the use of citations and referencing. This has resulted in insufficient time devoted to the facilitation of learning of the research methodology learning outcomes. P2 mentioned the following regarding the lack of notional hours assigned to the curriculum:

*“..if you really think about it and you think about the notional hours that they supposed to put in and what they supposed to deliver, It's too much”.*

Currently, the tourism research methodology curricula at various HEIs in the sample seemingly are structured around a content-driven curriculum that significantly involves theoretical testing as well as structured assignments. This reliance on tests has been identified in the interviews as an issue as, in some cases, the quality thereof is lowered to make assessment 'easier' for students and to increase success rates. P1 mentioned that they *“try to make it as simple as possible for them (the students)”*. This has been done, for example, through the use of multiple-choice question (MCQ) assessments which one participant questioned as not being suitable for assessing application and authentic learning at this high NQF level. One reason for including a high number of tests is due to their apparent ease of use for large groups and the ability to accommodate the problem of insufficient notional hours.

As a result of the above, it was noted in the interviews, that there was an inclination to use static testing (also referred to as passive assessment by Roberts, 2019) due to

the nature of theory, which implies the continued use of previous tests. An inability to apply learning in class and in assessments due to poor application of learning in undergraduate qualifications has led to the use of ‘parrot learning’ (memorisation) among students. This mirrors the concerns raised by Uzun and Ertok (2020) regarding the use of theoretical summative assessments as opposed to more competency-based formative assessments. Students are thus not empowered to think critically and apply their learning to real-life case studies in undergraduate education and therefore find it difficult when applied for the “first time” in advanced and postgraduate diplomas. Effectively, I believe this to be indicative of a shortcoming of constructivist learning in undergraduate curricula.

The interviews also revealed that there is also a trend related to perpetual assessment at some HEIs in order to continuously reassess a student until they pass. P4 mentioned the following in this regard:

*“My thing about continuous assessment is that they get a second chance. So, we have an opportunity A and an opportunity B. (If) you don't pass opportunity A, then you have opportunity B. What we did in the past and we thought that is our policy, but then we found out it's not our policy is that a student cannot get more than 50% for your (their) assessment B, but that was apparently never a policy, and then afterwards someone said (that) the Dean or someone said no, but we mustn't do that. But I find it unfair. Actually, you know this thing is students who did not submit a first assessment as opposed to someone who did everything on time can still get the full benefit and the full mark for the work.”*

This action sets a precedence that perpetuates the problem even further to postgraduate study. In some cases, a report was marked, one examiner passed the student, and another one failed the student. There is increased pressure to appoint a third examiner and then a fourth examiner until one of them passes the student, which compromises quality and the reputation of the institution and ultimately the profession of higher education. I believe that this assessment strategy cannot be deemed authentic assessment or authentic learning. It may result in higher success rates but

also in students not adequately prepared for further study who are then granted access to further study which creates the problem of perpetual students that are not adequately equipped for the real world of work or for the real world of academic research. In addition, the result of these actions demotivates those students who do not perform well once they commence their postgraduate learning journeys.

The rigidity of learning opportunities was also identified as a challenge during the interviews. Within this theme, the inflexibility in facilitation and assessment was identified. This implies due to large class sizes, the unpreparedness of students and an inadequacy of lecturer competencies, poorly developed learning opportunities and assessments are not easily adapted to the need of students. One interviewee mentioned that they consider themselves an expert on quantitative research and as a result, learning opportunities and assessments are mostly skewed towards this form of research which disadvantages a student that may be interested in qualitative research. This I believe may be indicative of the predominant belief that research methodology is aligned to Quadrant A thinking preferences. In addition, the interviewees perceived that facilitation and assessment are not always effectively aligned to the outcomes of the module. For example, P1 mentioned that *“the outcome is to produce a research paper and then all they do is a research proposal, which I mean is obviously completely different because they never conducted the research”*.

In addition to the above P6 noted a challenge related to the rigidity of curriculum design due to bureaucratic processes. As a result of these rigid processes the agility of curriculum transformation is curtailed. P6 mentioned that *“that's one of the fights that I have had and you know, because our systems are structured in in such a way that once a qualification has been approved through all the CHE, DHET and SAQA channels, it's really difficult to then change a lot of the structure and everything”*. Thus, I am of the view that the design of these curricula is not constructively geared towards adaptability and as a result these curricula may often already be archaic when implemented considering the time it takes to develop these curricula through the macro curriculum design process.

Research methodology is a compulsory module in all advanced diploma and postgraduate diploma/Honour's qualifications in tourism. There is a concern that a large proportion of students are not motivated to learn as they see very little or no benefit in the subject to them or as P6 mentioned, these students are not familiar with the '*language*' of research methodology. Students are said to find the subject overly theoretical, boring and not applicable as some do not have intentions of continuing further study to masters. "*Sometimes students already come with a defeated attitude to say, you know, I've been told that research methodology is difficult*" (P6). This may also be related to very low levels of class attendance among students. P2 mentioned that "*they (the students) just completely don't have any interest in research because they hate reading, they hate their topic, they don't see themselves doing research, so why should they? But it's now the subject that they have to pass. So, they do the bare minimum in that, so there's definitely a problem with that.*" This may also lead to frustration among lecturers, for example P4 mentioned the following "*I hope that this module would spark something in them to (want) know more or to learn more, or to continue with research as research for me, it's like a passion. So, I would like to see some of that passion coming through in the students as well to be intrigued by what they're learning and that they want to pursue further studies.*" Lecturers may be passionate about academic research but students may not be, which may lead to demotivated lecturers themselves. Some participants mentioned that they are not stimulated due to poor student morale, engagement and creativity.

The challenges brought by underprepared students and low interest in the module have also brought with it further problems associated with lecturer practise, for example, P4 mentioned that they have been inclined to "*sort of spoon feed the students. So, it means that I tried to make it as easy as possible*". The pressure of underprepared students and the associated insufficient notional hours has led to lecturers providing students with structured learning opportunities and assessments where students are obligated to use set templates and guidelines. This I believe once again benefits only those students who prefer Quadrant B thinking. P4 indicated their challenge in this regard;

*“...if I don't give the template what I get back is not a good standard document and then we simply don't have the time to rework and rework the research and that is, that's part of the process of research, but we also need to push these students to go through in one year in the advanced diploma and one year in the postgraduate diploma, so sometimes I feel like some students need a lot of more guidance, maybe more time or more guidance”.*

The above quote once again details the time pressures placed on lecturers and as such the inclination to implement lecturer-led teaching and assessment is heightened.

The challenges of the current Generation Z cohort were also revealed during the interviews. P1 referred to them as the ‘Google generation’ where instant answers and instant gratification are demanded. These students are well informed about their rights with a seeming heightened sense of entitlement and have advanced knowledge of technology and the use thereof, for example, with artificial intelligence applications such as ChatGPT. The emergence of artificial intelligence applications, especially in the post-COVID-19 landscape has emerged as a concern for the colleagues that were interviewed. It has become apparent that students are increasingly using artificial intelligence platforms to complete assignments, abstracts, and literature reviews. This is particularly prevalent with demotivated students who are known to use artificial intelligence dishonestly and are also known to have higher inclinations to plagiarise work as opposed to students that are academically driven.

To summarise this section, the overall poor preparedness of students for postgraduate study may be illustrated through an example provided by P3. They indicate that at some institutions students who have applied for further study at the Master's level are required to write a research methodology entrance assessment even though they already have successfully completed a postgraduate diploma or Honour's degree at NQF8. An academic record is perceived to no longer be an authentic indicator of a student's learning, in part due to the challenges discussed above. This provides a clear

indication of quality perceptions of NQF8 qualifications, predominantly related to research methodology modules at advanced diploma and postgraduate diploma levels. This is a clear challenge that highlights the need for transformation of the curriculum.

### 6.4.3. Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> learning and tourism research methodology

The theory of Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> thinking and its application to learning was investigated during the interviews. Interviewees described their perceptions of its application in relation to the tourism research methodology curriculum. Table 6.21 provides an insight into the main codes identified in relation to the four quadrants of the Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> model as discussed in Section 4.2.2.

**Table 6.21: Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> learning and the research methodology curriculum**

Main theme	Codes
Poor alignment to Whole Brain <sup>®</sup> learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current curriculum not actively aligned.</li> </ul>
Quadrant A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly aligned to logic and analytics.</li> <li>• Theoretic and factual.</li> <li>• Primarily quantitative in nature.</li> </ul>
Quadrant B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controlled processes in assignments.</li> <li>• Detailed templates and assignment structure.</li> </ul>
Quadrant C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topics chosen lack empathy.</li> </ul>
Quadrant D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theoretical nature of curriculum lessens creativity.</li> <li>• Lack of creativity.</li> <li>• Allowing creativity may increase motivation.</li> <li>• Using videos in classes improves learning.</li> </ul>

Although interviewees believe that there is a beneficial potential for a Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> alignment in the research methodology curriculum, this is not currently the case as the theory is not being fully realised. The research methodology curriculum at both advanced diploma and postgraduate diploma/Honour's is considered highly theoretical, content-based, and structured. It was also evident from the terminology

used during the interview that although the participants supported the theory of Whole Brain® learning, they only passively tried to implement it in the curriculum. There was no proactive learning task design or assessments aligned to Whole Brain® learning. Some believed that as students are required to complete research reports and proposals as summative assessments, they should be using their Whole Brains®. However, common words and phrases used to describe learning opportunities included; *show them, tell them, give them, explain to them*, which are all indicative of lecturer-led learning task design that aligns to a factual and detailed approach, which aligns more with Quadrant A and B. For this reason, there was unanimous agreement by interviewees that the curriculum is highly aligned with Quadrant A and partially with Quadrant B, with very little alignment to Quadrant D and the least with Quadrant C.

It was also noted in the interviews that the research methodology curriculum has a bias towards quantitative research, which by nature is structured, factual, and analytical. This may be one of the reasons for the skewness towards Quadrant A. This, in itself, disadvantages those students who may be more comfortable with a qualitative research methodology that aligns predominantly with social lived experiences, feelings and emotions (Quadrant C).

P2 indicated that a primary Quadrant A thinking student may find a quantitative learning approach more effective; however, at the end of the day, the requirement of completing a holistic research report requires such a student to also be creative and a synthesiser in the process of presenting findings and writing conclusions and recommendations. This is opposed to writing a pure research proposal at advanced diploma level where a detailed structured template is used to guide a summative assessment, which lessens the need for creativity, self-reflection, and emotions.

The current research methodology curriculum, especially at advanced diploma level, is highly content and theory-based, which is factual, logical, and critical of a certain point of view. This, by nature, is a mirror image of undergraduate learning. Students



are not specifically empowered to read critically, voice their own opinions, or use intuition to solve problems, indicating a lack of Quadrant C and D application.

Although the above reflections may seem to portray a poorly aligned curriculum, there have been initiatives undertaken by participants to make use of Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> learning in the curriculum. For example, P2 mentioned that in their case, they use videos and songs during learning opportunities. Students are required to watch an online video as preparation for a class discussion or are requested to come up with a song to encapsulate what they have learned. This allows for the accommodation of more relative and experimental learning. I am of the view that these actions not only activate Quadrant C thinking but also promotes visual and musical intelligences in learning (as described by Gardner, 2011).

P3 mentioned that Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> principles are sometimes used in learning opportunities, but students are not always able to comprehend them, and as a result, the achievement of these outcomes are not always successful. As an example, P3 mentions that they requested the class to integrate the literature, however, the students did not know what to do; they were unfamiliar with the concept. Then P3 used a group brainstorming session and requested groups to develop and draw mind maps and pictures to illustrate how they saw the relationships between various sets of literature. This exercise employed Quadrant C and D learning and was deemed by P3 as successful.

#### **6.4.4. Innovations used to transform the curriculum**

Having described the perceived purpose of the module and the challenges in practice, interviewees were requested to provide some insight into how they have innovated their professional practice in relation to the tourism research methodology curriculum. This section and Table 6.22 provide the results pertaining to this area of questioning.



**Table 6.22: Innovations to transform the curriculum**

Main theme	Codes
Roleplaying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In group interpret a task or literature.</li> <li>• Introductions through role-play.</li> </ul>
Rubrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear, well-structured rubrics to guide students.</li> </ul>
Exposure to technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data analysis software.</li> <li>• Artificial intelligence software.</li> </ul>
Gamification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing games in class.</li> <li>• Promoting fun.</li> </ul>
More applied resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move away from generic textbook.</li> <li>• Use of videos.</li> </ul>
Walking the talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying the 'language' of research methodology to practical life situations.</li> </ul>

Roleplaying was the first theme identified in terms of innovative learning task design adopted by participants. In these learning opportunities students are required to act out various scenarios which allow for creativity, intuition and kinaesthetic learning and the activation of emotions to enhance learning. P1 used roleplaying in which they required students to envisage a scenario where they had to introduce themselves to the rest of the class as a research concept. These introductions allowed for collaborative interactions, fun and excitement and a move away from a theoretical or textbook-led learning experience.

The interviewees revealed that although rubrics may align to predominantly Quadrant B learning as they are structured, sequential and controlled, the effective design of rubrics may lead to learning opportunities for students with other thinking preferences. P3 felt that well designed rubrics introduced to students early in the year allow for assessment parameters to be set. Students are then given intellectual freedom and allowed to complete their tasks and assessments within these parameters. I believe that this may allow students to constructively use thinking preferences and intelligences within their cognitive comfort zones to authentically develop their research competencies.

As revealed earlier, Generation Z is considered a technologically conscious cohort being increasingly willing to learn how to use computer-based technology and social media platforms. During the interviews it became evident that there is a need for a curriculum that is therefore also aligned to these trends, one that encompasses technology to which a Generation Z student may have a greater level of connexion. In tourism research methodology there are both qualitative and quantitative software packages available for data analysis and in some HEIs they have been incorporated into the curriculum for example SPSS. Not only do these software packages allow students to familiarise themselves with the software through demonstrations but it also allows for practical learning when used for real-life data analysis in the curriculum. Although this is deemed a necessary inclusion in the curriculum, P2 cautions against designing learning opportunities using these programmes that may be pitched at too high a level and which may cause an opposite effect. With this comment I deduce that the interviewee recommended that these software products should be constructively used in relation to the exit level outcomes of the curriculum. P2 mentions that;

*“I wanted to change it this year that the outcomes of some of the modules, especially for statistical analysis as it is way too advanced for the students as it is expected from the (Honour’s) student to do a factor analysis on SPSS. It’s not necessary for a student to be able to do a factor analysis and t test at an honours level. They should be able to do descriptive statistics and understand that there are more advanced things (functions.).*

P3 mentioned that artificial intelligence has been used by students to do data analysis, interpret and write up assessments while all the student does is guide the process. This I believe is indicative of inauthentic learning as the student was not constructively engaged in the learning task. Interviewees were of the view that students should be made aware that artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT do exist and through this process students also learn that lecturers are aware of artificial intelligence and its capabilities. Processes should be put into place where students are empowered to acknowledge where, when and how they are to use artificial intelligence in their projects and the programmes should be adequately referenced. *“So almost look at it as a tool and not a threat, and something that the student needs to learn, because that*

*is just that it's part of their world. They are moving into this world, so somehow incorporating it, but making them aware of the ethical issues of just using that"* (P3). Although the emergence of artificial intelligence was identified as a challenge in the tourism research methodology curriculum, it also emerged as an opportunity. Artificial intelligence is an emerging technology and HEIs need to adapt their policies and curricula accordingly (Xu & Babaian, 2021). Artificial intelligence can be used to as learning tools and it is possible to identify when artificial intelligence was used. Students should learn how to use it so as to let them learn that lecturers are able to identify when it has been used. This allows for improved chances of students acknowledging when these technologies were used and how. P5 mentioned the following in this regard; *"So I do include it in class now, I tell them about ChatGPT and show them how it works, and because everyone has access to it, our university has a policy surrounding ChatGPT, so we are allowed to use it. It's not like it's off the table, but if you're going to use it in an unethical way, I'm going to find out and strange enough, if you use ChatGPT yourself you start to picking it up (when used by students.)*. They also mentioned that ChatGPT, for example, provides fake references and citations in text and this is one way to determine whether it was used. Another way of identifying if it was used is *"obviously if their writing has improved too much"* and there is a clear discrepancy between authentically written text and text generated by artificial intelligence platforms.

The challenge of boredom, low motivation and general student disinterest in the module have led some participants to use strategies such as gamification in order to promote fun and more effective collaborative engagement among students. I believe this to be a constructive strategy in moving from a Quadrant A-aligned current curriculum to Quadrant C thinking. P2 provided the following description of their innovative strategy:

*"What I do when they walk into the first class of research methodology and I try to make it as fun for the students as possible. So, we tend to play games in the class to make things simple. So, we take a, difficult concept and we play a game with them and it becomes something simple to them then and it also helps them to remember these things in the exams. So, I always tell them when you study, think about the game*

*that we played or think about the song, which tends to help them quite a lot. So yeah, I just tried to make it as fun as possible for the students.”*

As with the need to make the curriculum more fun and engaging for students and to move away from the high levels of theory, there was also an innovative strategy identified in the interviews that relate to moving away from an over-reliance on textbooks and to include a more diverse resource base for learning, such as YouTube and online resources. Textbooks were also considered predominantly generic with very little application to tourism.

Interviewees were of the opinion that as tourism research methodology is a subject that involves numerous technical concepts, terms and processes, there is a need to make the curriculum more ‘digestible’ for students, this links to the problem of writing and reading skills. Not only do students struggle with the technicalities of the subject, but the language used during learning opportunities in itself is a challenge where cultural bias, norms and values may also cloud effective communication. P 6 mentioned the following in this regard:

*“Research has got its own language, and until we understand, that our students struggle to learn because of language barriers, and that is equally applicable to research to say, if we are saying we are struggling for this and we have to, they need to get used to it.”*

I reflect here on the viewpoint of Werner (2013) who promotes the notion of student-centred teaching wherein the student becomes a partner in the learning process, this together with collaborative engagement in learning opportunities allows for the development of interpersonal skills (Gardner, 2011) and for collaborative discourse and meaning making allowing for more authentic learning and better prepared students for postgraduate study (Ruhanen, Axelsen & Bowles, 2020). This may be achieved by means of practical application for these concepts and theories to everyday life situations to enhance the relatability of the learning process. P6 refers to

Africanising the curriculum: “*we need to apply some contextual standards when we deliver research methodology in our own (and students’) context to which students can relate*”. P6 refers to “*speaking the language*” of research methodology not only at advanced or postgraduate diploma level but in undergraduate curricula as well. A language is not learned in one year; it is learned over time. As other subjects are offered on multiple articulated levels, students have the advantage of time to master the concepts used in those modules. Research methodology often does not have this advantage, and as such, there is a need for students to master certain concepts of research methodology early in their study career so that by the time they join a research methodology cohort, they are able to ‘speak’ elementary research methodology.

#### **6.4.5. Fundamental changes required to transform the curriculum**

From interviews with participants, it became apparent that the tourism research methodology curriculum had been developed to promote the development of students for possible further study or an academic career. As a result, the curriculum does not sufficiently cater for those students seeking to develop themselves in their professional careers, as is the case for students in an advanced diploma, or to develop themselves as researchers within their own professional practice, as may be the case in the postgraduate diploma. As highlighted previously in the section on curriculum challenges, there is a misalignment between student expectations and perceptions of the research methodology curriculum. Students that have an ambition to grow professionally in their vocation may be disappointed and demotivated having to learn about academic research which may not be applicable in their careers. For this reason, a change to the curriculum was suggested that would promote a dual-stream approach. This would imply learning about both pure (academic) research and applied research to support the development of both groups of students or as Tribe (2002) notes the development of the philosophical practitioner. Table 6.23 provides an outline of these results as well as others pertaining to fundamental curriculum changes.

**Table 6.23: Fundamental changes to transform the research methodology curriculum**

Main theme	Codes
Dual-stream approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One stream for pure research.</li> <li>• One stream for applied research.</li> </ul>
Continuous assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More practical assessments.</li> <li>• Effective collaborative learning opportunities.</li> </ul>
Changes to summative assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied research project in advanced diploma.</li> <li>• Research proposal in postgraduate diploma.</li> </ul>
More authentic assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied assessments.</li> <li>• Lower reliance on testing and only in advanced diploma.</li> </ul>
Peer review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased creativity.</li> <li>• Increased excitement.</li> <li>• Collaborative learning opportunities.</li> </ul>
Student as collaborator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring back excitement.</li> <li>• Allow student to take ownership of learning.</li> </ul>
Improved alignment with undergraduate learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citation and referencing skills should form part of undergraduate curriculum.</li> <li>• Incorporating academic articles in undergraduate curricula.</li> </ul>
Practical application to the real world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include real-life case studies from industry.</li> <li>• Include real-life industry problems that require solving.</li> <li>• Include real-life community problems that require solving.</li> </ul>
More collaboration among HEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration on curriculum development.</li> <li>• Collaborative research project.</li> </ul>

Continuous assessment and "*more regular and formative assessments*" were considered the ideal mode of assessment for the curriculum. In this form of assessment, allowance is made for continued monitoring of student progress, permitting more flexibility in learning task design and assessment. Therefore, I believe a more constructive alignment of learning and assessment is achieved. Continuous assessment allows for collaborative learning and assessment. In contrast, exams were not identified as an ideal assessment design by any participants. This could be due to the challenges identified by participants related to the theoretical nature of the module and the problems with theoretical testing.

The interviewees were of the view that with a continuous assessment curriculum, there is still a need for a final assessment with a high weight that integrates all learning in the modules. This would be in the format of a final assignment in both advanced and postgraduate diploma. In terms of the advanced diploma, it was recommended that the final assessment be in the form of a research report. P3, for example, indicated: "*I think research methodology needs to be report writing. There needs to be writing*". Students are required to learn about the fundamentals of research methodology and to apply this practically, as indicated by participants in the section on the purpose of the module. However, in many cases, students are required to complete numerous theoretical tests and develop only a research proposal (mostly collaboratively) at this stage. The research proposal does not cater to the effective development of academic writing nor does it allow for practical application of learning to a real-life situation, for example, conceptualisation, learning about how to collect data, how to analyse data, and synthesise results.

It was suggested, by participants, that these assessments in the advanced diploma be changed to accommodate minimal testing, a number of smaller assignments aligned to a real-life research project, either academic or applied, which culminates in a final report. This report could be in the form of a technical report, mini dissertation or article. From this foundational learning through practical experience, a student may be more able to authentically develop themselves in preparation for the development of a real-life research proposal in the postgraduate diploma. This authentic research proposal may then be used for access to further study, i.e., a Master's degree.

In terms of developing a research report and a research proposal it is essential to involve the student in the learning process. Allowing the student to take ownership of the learning process brings forth the benefits of an internal motivation to succeed as described by Chicoine (2004) and Mihans et al. (2008). P2 mentioned that for a long time, students have been told what to do, what to learn and which topics to work on in their assignments and as stated before this lecturer-led approach leads to a lack of



critical thinking and demotivation. P2 provides some insight into a problem they had and how an intervention had a positive outcome;

*“(I wondered) isn't there something we can do to get the student interested? I think the first thing that you (the lecturer) have to go back to is the topic. Find something that a student is really interested in. I've had a case where a student wanted to do something (project) on comics and he was just not interested in the event (topic) that he was allocated. So, he did something on comics, and the student just excelled and got to love research. So, there is a way of working with these students to actually help them, and they might even continue doing research if they find something they love.”*

The use of peer reviews as collaborative learning opportunities was highlighted in interviews as an innovative change required to the curriculum. Different students have different learning preferences and as such there is a benefit in providing opportunities for students to learn from one another as opposed to lecturer-led instruction. For example, P3 mentioned that *“it's almost sometimes as if the peers explain to them better in terms that they better understand. So, I think that interaction between the different methodologies helps a lot and then also for them to present their learning to one another provides the opportunity for them to revise (reflect).”* From the interviews it was also evident that peer reviews allow for increased creativity, in terms of experimentation to improve evidence of learning, increased excitement and collaborative learning. Peer reviews also allow for the empowerment of students which leads to a greater self-awareness and thus students taking ownership of their learning. Including students as collaborators in the learning process was also deemed essential. By allowing student to implement their own projects and to identify research projects from own experience tends to build an emotional affiliation to the learning process. In my view, the points raised here align to greater opportunities for Quadrant C and Quadrant D inclusion in a curriculum where intrapersonal engagement and the inclusion of student as co-creators of their own meaning making and a freedom to be creative and innovative may lead to improved constructive alignment and authentic learning.



A transformational strategy identified during the interviews was the incorporation of research methodology outcomes in the undergraduate curriculum. In the undergraduate curriculum, students are required to complete assignments for which research is necessary, and therefore, the competencies associated with citing and referencing should be included in an undergraduate curriculum. Including this outcome in the undergraduate curriculum, allows for sufficient time for students to learn and develop these competencies. This way, when they pursue their advanced diploma, lecturers and students are spared time and effort to 'catch up' and have more time for effective learning and the development of better prepared postgraduate students.

P4 mentioned that at their institution, an introduction to research module was included at the third year (Diploma) level, allowing students to familiarise themselves with basic research concepts, citation and referencing. Although this was provided by a participant as a practical example, the general consensus was that, as research is a general requirement for problem-solving, and problem-solving serves as a function of management, and tourism is a discipline of the management sciences, basic research concepts should be introduced earlier, along with citation and referencing techniques.

From the interviews I extrapolated that there is a greater need for practical application in the curriculum and its current overly theoretical base. This implies learning opportunities that align to the needs of the industry and of local communities and other stakeholders in tourism. The benefits that may be derived from this may be not only beneficial to these stakeholders but may also be empowering for students in their own profession and personal lives. P4 summarises this point succinctly:

*“I think we need to be even more practical...more engaged with the community and because at the end of the day, research should filter back to the communities and the difference that it can make in communities. So, at this point, I feel like our curriculum doesn't really do that. We can actually use those students to do actual projects and investigate actual problems in our own communities but I feel like we often sit the pot miss (don't achieve it) with our research. Is it really quality? Is it really making any impact? In that case (we may) also show the students, this project of yours can make*

*a difference in someone's life or in society or in industries. Maybe even more practical and not that theoretically biased. If I look at our curriculum level, we are very theoretically-based and not a lot of practical, and that is something that might be even work, bring in integrated (applied) learning into or service learning into research and because it would form part of practical learning skills that they can use (in real-life).”*

The final fundamental change to the curriculum was for an enhanced collaboration among HEIs. There are numerous HEIs offering NQF7 and tourism qualifications which all have research methodology as a module. Similarly, there seem to be common challenges among these institutions and some lecturers have developed innovations in this regard from which we can collaboratively learn. P1 mentioned a need for greater collaboration on curriculum development and perhaps collaborative research projects in which these students could be engaged and learn from one another.

## **6.5. RESULTS FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS**

The results in this section made use of a constructivist exploratory qualitative research approach by means of a Delphi data collection technique. The constructivist approach was deemed most suitable as this theory puts forth that the existence of a single objective reality may not always be suitable (Given, 2008). As is the case with this study, there is a need to further deliberate on what is known by means of social interaction with a group of participants. This allows for better interpretive understanding (*Verstehung*) of the real world by the researchers. The target population of this study included a group of international experts. The inclusion criteria of this group of experts was that each participant had to be a lecturer of tourism research methodology as integral part of a postgraduate qualification in tourism at NQF level 8 such as a postgraduate diploma or Honour's degree. At least two years of experience in lecturing the aforementioned module was also required as an inclusion criterion.

In order to recruit participants an invitation was distributed on TRINET (An international mailing list for tourism academics). A total of 15 responses were received from potential participants. However only ten participants actively contributed to the study. Contributions were received from participants in South Africa (2), Poland (1), United Kingdom (1), Portugal (1), Greece (1), New Zealand (2) and Australia (2). I acknowledge the inclusion of two South African participants in this panel. I was not able to recruit any African participants, although I attempted to do so unsuccessfully. The two South African colleagues however are non-South African permanent residents with experience on the African content, which I deemed beneficial to expand participant geographical representativeness.

A survey link was distributed to all participants by means of Survey Monkey and they were requested to provide input on the following question *“As a lecturer of research methodology modules, describe your ideal student as they may present themselves at the completion of their studies. What characteristics, features, knowledge attributes or skills should such a future postgraduate student possess, and why?”* Results were analysed thematically and the evidence was presented as a collective response to the question. The evidence was then redistributed to all participants in the form of a MS Word document by email in the second round in order to allow the participants to make additional comments, adjustments, deletions or changes. Upon receipt of the returned mails, the responses were incorporated into the final report. Data collection took place during April to September 2023 and consensus was achieved after two rounds. Participants were asked to provide answers to 10 questions to which the subsections in this section are aligned with.

#### **6.5.1. Graduate attributes of undergrad tourism students at the completion of their studies**

After a two round Delphi study with ten participants, seven main themes of graduate attributes were identified. The results were grouped into 7 main themes. These themes and associated codes are presented in Table 6.24.

**Table 6.24: Attributes of an undergraduate student**

<b>1. Knowledge and understanding</b>	
Firm understanding of the content taught and thus have a firm grip on the discipline.	
Knowledge of the most recent trends and developments in the industry.	
Good understanding of the tourism economy's components and sectors.	
Knowledge about the profile, the typology, the needs and preferences of tourists.	
Familiarity of key management concepts.	
Command of at least one foreign language.	
Technical and computer skills.	
Acquire a global perspective, global awareness.	
<b>2. Vocational skills and preparedness</b>	
Ability to acquire new skills as part of self-directed learning within the workplace.	
Readiness to join workforce as a valuable team member while taking responsibility for their work.	
Ability to adapt to different needs of the industry.	
Experience in the tourism industry as part of the learning process.	
Application of theoretical concepts to real-life situations.	
Multitasking skills.	
Customer service aptitude.	
<b>3. Critical thinking skills</b>	
Critical thinking and reasoning.	
Ability to adapt to a diverse and fluid workplace.	
Ability to balance short-term demands with medium- and longer term strategic possibilities.	
Ability to think beyond the obvious and to value the opinions of others	
Focussed, yet open to change.	
<b>4. Values</b>	
Responsibility.	
Caring for safety.	
Friendliness.	
Intellectual curiosity.	
Mutual respect	Empathy.
	Self-awareness, informed understanding of themselves and the work/employment/career they wish to pursue.
	Understanding of cultural differences, cultural sensitivity.
	Open to people.

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A passion for the industry that encourages long-term commitment.

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Leadership.

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### **5. Communication skills**

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Ability to communicate effectively in a range of contexts (Oral, written and visual).

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Improved soft skills such as communication, presentation, interpersonal skills and writing skills.

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The ability to construct a persuasive, reasoned argument or opinion.

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### **6. Lifelong learning**

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Readiness to constantly improve competence.

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Openness and willingness to engage in lifelong learning.

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### **7. Entrepreneurial drive**

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Abilities and creativeness to start own business.

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Business acumen; develop, implement and evaluate business plans.

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Ability to analyse market conditions and trends to make sound decisions.

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The attributes listed above were deemed by the participants to be essential for an undergraduate student upon the completion of their studies. The first theme that emerged was related to ‘knowledge and understanding’, this is also the only theme that related to content, more specifically fundamental knowledge required for workplace readiness. These included a firm understanding of the content taught and thus leading to a firm grip on the discipline. This implies knowledge of fundamental concepts related to the tourism industry as well as knowledge of the most recent trends and developments in the industry, a good understanding of the tourism economy’s components and sectors and knowledge regarding the profile, the typology, the needs and preferences of tourists. Familiarity of key management concepts were also identified as vital as well as technical and computer skills. Command of at least one foreign language was also identified as important, however, a concern was raised that in many cases English was seen as a foreign language, as previously identified by Uysal and Seçilmiş (2019:69). Therefore, mastering of a home language and basic comprehension of a *foreign* language aligned to the needs of the tourism industry, should rather be pursued. In the case of South Africa, English is often a secondary language thus essentially requiring the learning of a ‘third’ language that is not an indigenous language or English. Students should also develop the ability to acquire a global perspective and, global awareness.

Vocational skills and preparedness were identified in literature as core themes in undergraduate curriculum design in both vocational diplomas and academic bachelor programme (Oktadiana & Chon, 2017). In terms of the Delphi results this included the ability to acquire new skills as part of self-regulated learning within the workplace, readiness to join the workforce as a valuable team member while taking responsibility for their work. Therefore, experience in the tourism industry as part of the learning process is required. There is also a need for an ability to adapt to different needs of the industry, through the industry's multiple sectors by means of an agile curriculum that allows students to potentially move between the various tourism sectors as they develop in their careers. There is a need for students to be able to apply theoretical concepts (as covered in the first theme) to real-life situations in the world of work. Students should master the ability to multitask and to develop a customer service aptitude.

Critical thinking consists of two core elements, these include critical thinking skills and critical thinking disposition (Zhang & Lambert, 2008) therefore in order for critical thinking to be effective the students firstly need to have a desire to pursue it (Dehghanzadeh & Jafaraghaee, 2018). The Delphi panel identified critical thinking and reasoning, a need for the ability to adapt to a diverse and fluid workplace, the ability to balance short-term demands with medium and longer term strategic possibilities as desired attributes. There is also a need for students to think beyond the obvious and to value the opinions of others and the need for greater student focus and the desire to be open to change as key competencies required to develop critical thinking skills. These specifically refer to the skills as identified by Zhang and Lambert (2008) and do not directly denote the disposition to critical thinking. I believe that although these skills are sought after, a curriculum firstly needs to provide a nurturing environment for these critical thinking skills to be developed so that a critical thinking disposition is developed in order to inspire a student to want to learn.

Sheldon, Fesenmaier and Tribe (2011) highlight the five TEFI values that should be embedded in a tourism curriculum in order to authentically develop 21<sup>st</sup> century

graduates, these include: ethics, stewardship, knowledge, professionalism and mutual respect. In this study these TEFI values did not reveal themselves outright, however 10 augmented values were identified, these include the value of introspective responsibility within a student towards their own learning during formal education which transcends into the real world of work and in the environment post formal studies. This sense of responsibility is entwined with a further internally directed value of self-awareness and reflexivity which should promote an informed understanding of themselves and of the career they wish to pursue.

One TEFI value did, however, reveal itself quite strongly and that was the value of *mutual respect*. Within this value, Sheldon, Fesenmaier and Tribe (2011) reveal several important elements of which, in this study, empathy, self-awareness, informed understanding of oneself and the work/employment/career a student wishes to pursue, understanding of cultural differences, cultural sensitivity and openness to people were revealed during the Delphi study. As tourism is a social industry there is an applied and cognitive need to understand people and their needs, which may differ from that of the person providing the service. In order to effectively deal with these circumstances a humanistic approach is required for which mutual respect, and especially empathy is required. The value of empathy may assist students additionally in managing the human dynamics of the real world of work considering the turmoil and social disruptions of the current age (Calloway-Thomas, Arasaratnam-Smith & Deardorff, 2017). The panel were of the view that curricula should promote nurturing environments which may include collaborative learning and increased humanistic engagement in order to promote mutual respect and strive to break down barriers that discourage the learning of empathy such as inculcating stereotypes and lecturer-led teaching which may have a subjective bias.

Thomas and Havdhaugen (2022) found that student success rests highly on the value of passion which also aligns to Zhang and Lambert's (2008) view of student disposition. They found that passion has a strong effect on a student's desire to acquire a 'professional identity', and this motivates them to pursue further study and to overcome the challenges that they may encounter. This is in contrast to a student's identity, which it seems plays little or no role in decisions to pursue professional higher



education programmes. Therefore, I believe that the passion to become something greater overrides the student's current identity as a student. This need for a passion for the industry serves as a key motivator for a student's professional development and was identified by the panel as a pertinent value in this study.

Xu et al. (2022) highlight the need for enhanced development of leadership abilities by students, especially in the post COVID-19 landscape. With the unpredictability of the natural environment, due to climate change and human actions, as well as socio-political undercurrents affecting economic sustainability there is a need for resilient leadership. These leadership values should be developed among students to prepare them for their professional careers.

The panel revealed that communication has been recognised as a vital attribute not only as a basis in the process of effective learning but also as a requirement for the needs of the tourism industry. In this study the ability to communicate effectively in a range of contexts including oral, written and visual mirror the findings of Tankovic, Kapeš and Benazić (2023) in terms of the pivotal needs for these skills in the industry. In addition, the panel felt that there is a need to not only develop communication skills but also for improved soft skills that relate to communication such as presentation, interpersonal skills and writing skills. These communication skills should lead to improved abilities to construct a persuasive, reasoned argument or opinion.

The attribute of lifelong learning is acknowledged by the panel, but with certain criticisms. While it is considered a desirable outcome, some participants view it as a *catch phrase* often included in curricula without robust processes in place to measure or assess it. The challenge lies in evaluating lifelong learning among students after graduation, and participants expressed difficulties in effectively judging this attribute. However, panellists have suggested that there are opportunities to instil a disposition for lifelong learning within the curriculum. One proposed approach is the inclusion of action research methods in the curriculum. By incorporating action research, the curriculum could contribute to the development of a mindset for continuous



professional development, both during the academic learning journey and in the post-graduation phase. Action research emphasises practical problem-solving and reflection, aligning with the concept of ongoing learning and improvement.

The need for entrepreneurial drive emerged as a critical requirement in an undergraduate tourism curriculum. Previous research has shown that the effect of curricular and extracurricular activities on intentions, attitudes and behavioural control are core components of developing entrepreneurial intentions in tourism, there are in effect very little positive results on the development of entrepreneurial competencies (Arranz, Ubierna, Arroyabe, Perez & de Arroyabe, 2017) and as such there is a need for career transformation in this regard. One participant mentioned the following in this related to this theme:

*“..by definition entrepreneurs do not always follow rules, prevailing trends or make what others might consider ‘sound’ decisions. This section should include the word passion. An entrepreneur needs to have the passion to make changes, do something new because such individuals, true entrepreneurs, are disruptors. Tourism education should ideally help to bring out or open up an individual to possibilities they might not have considered, career wise and (in) terms of aspiration.”*

From the above descriptions it is evident that only one theme was revealed by the panel which pertained specifically to knowledge whereas the other six themes related to applied skills and competencies. The results, therefore, demonstrate that there is a high need for competency-based learning required in the undergraduate curriculum as opposed to content-based curriculum design.

### **6.5.2. Competencies that should be in place in order for an undergraduate tourism student to successfully pursue postgraduate studies**

The section provides the results pertaining to the following question; ‘Which competencies are essential and should absolutely be in place in order for an undergraduate tourism student to successfully pursue postgraduate studies?’. The results show a clear link between these attributes and the vocational needs of the

workplace. In this section participants were requested to reflect a bit further and they were requested to identify the competencies deemed essential to be in place in order for an undergraduate student to pursue postgraduate study. The following competencies were identified in Table 6.25.

**Table 6.25: Competencies of an undergraduate tourism student**

<b>1. Intrapersonal competencies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to learn independently.</li> <li>• Ability to work independently.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Interpersonal competencies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to work in a team.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Analytical skills</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered analytical skills to solve problems.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Discipline knowledge</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have mastered specialist tourism knowledge.</li> <li>• Knowledge of scientific methodology and ability to conduct research.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Communication competencies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to communicate and write well.</li> <li>• Reading for understanding in order to be able to contextualise and adapt what is written.</li> <li>• Ability to write academically.</li> <li>• English language skills.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Lived experience and commitment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perseverance and motivation (prior knowledge and experience in industry a prerequisite).</li> <li>• A student should have work experience.</li> <li>• A student should have life experience and a level of academic maturity based on previous lived experience.</li> <li>• A commitment towards the chosen course of study.</li> <li>• Ability to conduct research.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Work ethic</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptability, flexibility and time management skills.</li> <li>• Strong work ethic and resilience.</li> <li>• Ability to cope with failure.</li> <li>• Ability to accept constructive criticism.</li> </ul>

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### **8. Logical and critical thinking**

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- Ability to think critically.

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- Ability to think logically.

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- Ability to search for relevant information.

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- Intellectual curiosity.

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From the list above is evident that there are a number of attributes deemed essential for undergraduate students to successfully pursue postgraduate study. These 23 attributes could be grouped into 8 main themes. These desired competencies or attributes require undergraduate students to successfully develop their interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies which are considered core abilities for the success of a constructivist curriculum (Weimer, 2013). As with the focus group interviews, knowledge pertaining to the discipline is required as well as analytical skills. A number of competencies aligned to communication were identified. All these competencies coupled with lived experience and commitment, a strong work ethic and an ability to think logically and critically in a student should lead to a desired student prepared for postgraduate study.

#### **6.5.3. Whole Brain® thinking and its application in tourism research methodology**

The Delphi study revealed insights into the incorporation of Whole Brain® learning in research methodology teaching. Participants acknowledged the importance of all four quadrants (A, B, C, and D) in a tourism research methodology curriculum, recognising that time constraints might lead to a predominant focus on A and B, with the hope that students will utilise C and D in more extended projects.

To engage the left hemisphere of the brain, panellists suggested implementing group work and collaborative activities. Group discussions and assessments can encourage brainstorming, fostering interactive learning experiences. For the right hemisphere, visual aids such as PowerPoint slides, mind maps, flowcharts, and diagrams were

proposed. These visual tools aim to help students visualise connections between concepts, promoting spatial and visual processing.

To activate the frontal brain, self-assessment activities were suggested by the panel. Case studies aligned with real-world scenarios in tourism were recommended to allow students to apply theoretical constructs in practical situations. These case studies can facilitate discussions on various research scenarios and methodologies, encouraging students to seek information from databases, collect data and write research reports. Presenting these reports in class provides opportunities for developing writing, presentation, and communication skills, as well as fostering peer discussions and therefore Quadrant C. Overall, the incorporation of Whole Brain® learning involves a balanced approach that addresses the diverse cognitive processes associated with different brain hemispheres.

The panel revealed that Some students may be more comfortable with either qualitative or quantitative research approaches which may align to various thinking preferences, for example Quadrant A and B align more to quantitative methodologies whereas Quadrant C and D align more to qualitative approaches. The theory could be used as a tool to mix these approaches and for students to learn about all research approaches outside of their comfort zones. Implementation of these strategies may assist students to engage with their studies in a more integrated manner, thereby engendering deeper learning, critical thinking and reflection and better retention.

Delphi participants also indicated the following order of preference of facilitating Whole Brain® learning:

- ACBD;
- ACDB;
- ABCD.

From the above it is apparent that globally the Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> learning theory is not fully implemented in curriculum design. It is seemingly inadvertently implemented and where it is included in curriculum design, this is done with a bias towards Quadrant A and B, partially C and least Quadrant D. This implies a curriculum that seemingly neglects innovative and experimental thinking preferences and those students who may prefer qualitative research approaches, which may be a contributing factor to challenges such as critical thinking.

#### **6.5.4. Effective ways to incorporate constructivism into the research methodology curriculum**

The Delphi panel was provided with the definition of constructivism by Kurt (2021) “*The constructivist theory is based around the idea that learners are active participants in their learning journey; knowledge is constructed based on experiences. As events occur, each person reflects on their experience and incorporates the new ideas with their prior knowledge*”. After which they were requested to provide a description on how this concept related to their respective research methodology curricula. The panel indicated that it is vital for students to have basic foundational knowledge of research methodology on which to base their learning in order to combine theory with practice. This includes theory, philosophy, epistemology, ontology and research paradigms. Constructivism entails learning by doing and this is also applicable to research methodology curricula as only knowing theory is insufficient. This refers to the ‘content-driven curriculum’ as defined by Biggs (2022:1), which does not allow for active participation (Loughlin et al., 2021) which is essential for constructive learning.

The insights from the Delphi panel highlight efforts to make the research methodology curriculum more relatable to the real world of the tourism and research profession. Acknowledging the messy nature of the real world, where rational behaviour is not always guaranteed, emphasizes the importance of preparing students practically, moving away from purely theoretical solutions to actively addressing real-world challenges.

The recognition that students come from diverse backgrounds with varying values, principles, and perceptions underscores the need for a student-oriented approach. Incorporating inquiry-based learning opportunities, collaborative learning, debates, class discussions, and peer reviews can contribute to a more student-centred learning environment. However, there is still a need for a shift from content-focused teaching to effective constructivist approaches, where students take ownership of the learning process to develop competencies rather than just mastering content.

Another constructive approach proposed, involves students conducting real-world research and writing a final report instead of relying on theoretical testing. This report should encompass critical scientific elements, including a discussion of methodology, active project implementation, and conclusions. Emphasising academic writing skills, appropriate citation, and referencing formats, this approach allows students to take ownership of their learning through practical application but leans toward academic research over applied or business research. I believe that balancing this emphasis could enhance the curriculum's alignment with both academic and practical dimensions, thus enabling PPE.

#### **6.5.5. Blended learning**

The Delphi panel emphasised the effectiveness of face-to-face, in-person contact for teaching research methodology modules, considering physical classes as trustworthy and conducive to greater student participation. The concept of face-to-face instruction was expanded beyond the traditional classroom setting to include locations outside the university campus, such as tourist attractions, hotels, or physical landmarks, seen as excellent *laboratories* for learning and applying research methods.

While acknowledging the reality of online teaching in the post-COVID-19 world, the panel highlighted both innovative opportunities and challenges associated with this mode of instruction. Online teaching offers flexibility and access to various resources, promoting immersive learning experiences. However, issues such as poor student

participation and unethical behaviour, where students may log in but not actively engage or use online resources to produce inauthentic evidence of learning, were noted. Successful online research methodology modules require highly motivated and engaged students, institutional technological support, and equipment. The importance of moving beyond didactic teaching methods to encourage critical thinking, questioning, and self-challenge was emphasised.

The flipped classroom approach, combining online platforms and face-to-face classes, was recognised as a dynamic and interactive andragogical approach that could benefit from online learning technology. However, the current state of blended learning was described as often being a response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, lacking comprehensive and holistic development. Overcoming challenges associated with online learning and enhancing the development of blended learning curricula were identified as crucial for their effectiveness.

The participants therefore agreed that physical face-to-face learning environments are currently still the preferred approach. However, should online resources and platforms be better developed and the lecturers be better capacitated to use these resources, then a blended approach may be a more ideal approach. Purely online was not identified as the preferred approach, primarily due to the low levels of student engagement on these platforms that result in lecturer-led teaching.

#### **6.5.6. Transforming assessment**

Assessment opportunities are designed to enable a clear constructive judgement to be made as to how well those learning outcomes have been attained (Biggs, 2014). Assessment is therefore a core pillar of curriculum design and participants were requested to reflect on which assessment methods in an undergraduate curriculum are considered more effective for preparing students optimally for postgraduate studies.

The Delphi panel expressed the importance of employing a variety of assessment methods in research methodology modules. However, there was a concern that assessments in the field often heavily rely on tests, which were deemed ineffective. This reliance on tests may be attributed to an alignment with content knowledge assessment rather than assessing students' abilities and competencies.

Formative assessments, according to the panel, could encompass a range of methods such as tests, collaborative assignments, presentations, analysis of case studies that require the implementation of concepts and theories, class discussions, and literature searches and writing. Final summative assessments were suggested to take the form of a comprehensive research report. This report, serving as a final summative assessment, would demonstrate a student's conceptualisation, planning, and execution of a real-life research project. The format of the report was proposed to be flexible, such as a visual portfolio, business or consultancy research report, or an academic article. Notably, it was emphasised that the final assessment need not be in the traditional dissertation format, which might be more suitable for postgraduate studies. The effectiveness of assessments that require students to engage with and observe tourism in real-life settings, such as visiting a hotel or tourist attraction, was highlighted by the panel.

Although not referred to by name, the panel revealed a need for assessment transformation in order to make assessments more authentic. These suggestions voiced by the panel have highlighted the need for a greater practical and meaningful understanding of subject matter (Wiggins, 1998) that has real world relevance, requires students to develop skills, is based on performance, allows for feedback (continuous evaluation) and opportunities and reflection, thus supporting Adams-Becker et al's (2018) characteristics of authentic assessment.



### **6.5.7. Promotion of lifelong learning among students**

Slabbert et al., (2019) and Wong et al., (2022) both advocate for the development of a culture of lifelong learning among students as this serves as an internal motivation for learning during formal study but also inculcates the desire to learn beyond the proverbial classroom to other environments such as professionalism, further study and in one's personal life in general.

The Delphi panel expressed the sentiment that the phrase "lifelong learning" has, in some contexts, been overused and may have lost its meaningfulness. While the desire for lifelong learning is acknowledged, participants highlighted challenges in its measurement and achieving consensus on its implementation, particularly beyond formal learning environments.

To promote the concept of lifelong learning within a curriculum, the panel suggested several strategies. One approach involves exposing students to role models, including lecturers who actively demonstrate lifelong learning. It was emphasised that lecturers play a crucial role in instilling this concept by acknowledging that they are there for the students, and students are not there solely for the lecturers. Additionally, students should be informed about career development opportunities, and learning tasks should be aligned with real-world work issues and challenges.

Another strategy, suggested by the panel, involves introducing students to current research and emphasising the rapid pace of change in various fields. They believe that students need to be provided with opportunities to empower themselves to continually seek improvement and enhance their competencies. Incorporating real-world aspects of the tourism industry and life, in general, can contribute to developing students into better versions of themselves. The curriculum should be dynamic and open to continuous improvement, providing opportunities for students to question the nature of learning, teaching, and their roles and responsibilities throughout life.

This perspective also extends to the lecturer profession, where educators should expose themselves to industry developments and continuously seek to enhance their professional competencies, possibly through approaches like action research. The notion of lifelong learning, when embedded in both student and lecturer experiences, contributes to a curriculum that reflects the dynamic nature of knowledge and skills needed in the real world.

In order to promote lifelong learning, learning opportunities should be made exciting by using creative methods, such as rewarding the most improved student, or to those making the most critical observations during a learning opportunity and many other incentives, perhaps through gamification. This may probably trigger a deliberate effort to do more and as a consequence, the learning continues beyond the classroom, and this becomes a habit on its own which continues even beyond the studies.

Learning is a personal experience and as such students should understand that what they choose to learn (or choose not to learn), how and in what contexts they learn it is filtered by their own beliefs and prejudices, their own world view and life experiences. Recognising that students bring their own beliefs, prejudices, worldviews, and life experiences to the learning process is crucial. This acknowledgement aligns with the principles of constructivism, emphasising that learners actively construct their understanding of the world based on their unique perspectives.

The panel was of the view that learning does not happen in a vacuum and that making mistakes is integral to the learning process reflects a “growth mindset”. Embracing challenges, persisting through difficulties, and learning from mistakes contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject matter. However, I critique the need for deeper understanding of subject matter as this may dilute the effectiveness of constructive alignment by moving a curriculum back to a content-led outcome as opposed to competency-driven outcomes.

From the latter perspective, I believe constructivist collaborative learning opportunities to be beneficial as it allows for learning to take place in an environment that accommodates peer learning and peer review. This collaborative environment encourages reflection not only on individual biases (intrapersonal skills) and beliefs but also on the diverse perspectives present within the group (interpersonal skills). The perception of the panel is that as students engage in collaborative learning experiences, they develop skills that extend beyond the classroom, preparing them for the complexities of the real-world tourism market. The emphasis on reflection, mutual respect, and learning from diverse perspectives aligns well with the demands of an industry characterised by cultural diversity and varied socio-cultural backgrounds.

#### **6.5.8. Major challenges and shortcomings in the curriculum**

The panel is of the view that research methodology is being curriculated in tourism qualifications much later than it should be. Aspects of the discipline manifest themselves in some modules, but it's all too uncoordinated and as such, when it matters, the research module is often so crammed with information that one is not sure if the students are getting enough time to appreciate all the available options in research. There is a difficulty in explaining complex concepts as well as a difficulty among students to understand practical application. Additionally, students have limited mathematical and or analytical skills which compromise their ability to develop their research skills holistically. Therefore, there is not enough time to complete the syllabus.

The second challenge identified by the panel is that students come into the module with preconceived ideas of the module being a horrible one and that only a few can pass. This mirrors the view of Humphreys (2006) and Schultze (2009) regarding the negative preconceptions of research methodology and the associated lack of motivation to learn. The panel believe that this mental block results in attitudes being negative, students not being motivated and there is the difficult task of working on content and attitudes simultaneously. Poor student interest, results in the challenge to make research interesting. Research reflects the notion of lifelong learning, and

because students may not be interested or aware of the importance of curiosity and lifelong learning they do not see research as interesting or exciting.

The panel also perceived that in the research methodology curriculum, text books generally give the impression that research is straightforward and that all a student has to do is follow these steps/processes and magically everything works out. The reality is rather messier and more incomplete. Although textbooks may serve as valuable resources in the learning process the overreliance on these resources may result in reverting to a content-driven curriculum. Additionally, textbooks are not always deemed advantageous by students due to the availability of more dynamic online resources. The aforementioned also highlighted by Jhangiani et al. (2018), especially considering the digital astuteness of Generation Z students (Jaleniauskiene & Juceviciene, 2015).

The panel indicated that there is a drive by some universities to have high rates of success and therefore pushing students to pass, promoting quantity over quality. Here I am reminded of the view of Echols, Neely and Dusick (2018) who state that curricula driven by content-based outcomes as opposed to competency-based outcomes are often deemed easier to complete and assess in a lecturer-led environment, which may fulfil the financial sustainability need of many HEI in today's neoliberal economy (Bolak, Cavaliere & Duffy, 2021). The panel are concerned that this may lead to students gaining access to further study even though they may not authentically have mastered adequate knowledge, skills and attributes required for further study. This may result in what Airey (2014) refers to as 'under-prepared students' that lead to a poor ability to successfully learn at higher levels and the production of poor-quality research.

Another challenge, identified by the panel, is that by the time one is lecturing a research methodology module with students, they are likely working on some research project with different supervisors. This often leads to a lot of contradictions in what you

teach as a comprehensive research methodology module and what the specific supervisor prefers as an individual researcher. This confuses the student and the student often questions who knows more, the lecturer or their supervisor? Yes, contradictions can occur, but it is how these are handled that matters because a graduate will encounter contradictions in the workplace and in life in general. Giving students the impression that there is only one way of doing something/research is not helpful. Acknowledging differences and then, through discussion, allowing a student to make up their own mind, is important here. This I believe highlights the need for critical thinking and interpersonal intelligence development.

A key challenge is getting across the importance of understanding the self in relation to research methodology and the relationship with concepts associated with the theory and philosophy of knowledge. Many, but not all, students come to the classroom thinking that research is all about the method/s, believing that all they need to learn is how 'to do it'. When they are first introduced to the theory and philosophy of knowledge, it can seem daunting, so how this aspect of methodology is taught is important. The challenge is that not all students will 'get it'. This does not really matter because sometimes distance, experience, and maturity can lead to 'light bulb' moments of insight later on in life. The aforementioned perspective by the panel once again reveals the importance of developing competencies in a curriculum as opposed to mastering content alone. In addition, the panel's notion that 'not all students will get it' reveals a seeming acceptance of selected learning preferences as opposed to the development of a curriculum that not only accommodates the mastering of competencies but also multiple learning preferences.

The panel revealed that different cohorts can be challenging because what 'works' one year may not be so effective the year after because the student body is different. This means it is often challenging to think in the moment of how to amend the learning, content and teaching approach to a different mix of students. In addition, lecturers may themselves have a poor and sufficient understanding of research methodology which may be a challenge. The aforementioned perspective I believe links to Roberts' (2019)

notion of 'passive learning' in which curricula are merely repeated from year to year, perhaps due to lack of innovation as a result of poor lecturer capacity. This results in an inflexible curriculum that is not resilient to the needs of students and therefore unauthentic learning permeates which in itself results in student being inadequately prepared for the profession and further study.

#### **6.5.9. Constructivist opportunities to enhance the quality of the tourism research methodology curriculum**

The Delphi panel were requested to provide insight into possible opportunities which exist that would enable an enhancement of the curriculum. The following points were raised in this regard:

- Short learning modules such as micro credentials for lifelong learning should be developed and offered. This would cater to those possible working students seeking to study further at opportunities convenient to them.
- There is a need to embed the research methodology module into other modules through collaboration among staff members. This may reduce the 'silo effect' in the overall curriculum as well as an opportunity to develop research knowledge application in other subject disciplines.
- Allow different people to lecture different aspects of the module to promote a diversity of views and provide confidence to students. This may assist in creating an environment in which students may be exposed to different perspectives as well as a more rounded Whole Brain® learning approach.
- There is a need for greater internationalisation of education, more seminars and international cooperation. There is a need for transformative education discourse, as proposed by Higgs (2016), which implies enhanced localisation of knowledge without losing the quality advantage of international benchmarking.

- Incorporating real-life situations and practical examples and application is a strong learning motivator. Using real world data sets may enhance learning. As research methodology is often seen as a 'boring' and 'overly theoretical' subject, making the curriculum more digestible for students in terms of learning is vital. Making use of relatable examples and datasets that allow for practical hands-on problem-solving both individually and collaboratively may allow for greater constructivist authentic learning
- Showcasing the value of valid and novel research to students. As with the point above, realistic and relatable application of the curriculum is required not only to make the curriculum more palatable for students but also to ensure that innovative critical thinking takes place. This may assist in promoting constructivist learning in the development of innovative problem-solving techniques and novel research concept development for postgraduate study.
- Promoting critical thinking among students by including exercises that challenge students to evaluate research studies critically. This practical approach is divergent from the lecturer-led concept-driven learning approach. Exposing students to challenging problems-based learning allows for learning to be collaborative, constructive, contextual and self-directed (Dochy et al., 2005) that also promotes active engagement and more authentic learning and critical thinking to deal with real-life problems not only in research but also the world of work (Chicoine, 2004).
- Making complex methodologies accessible through a carefully planned teaching approach. As research methodology has a general poor reputation among students it is vital to articulate in such a way that authentic learning is promoted of these perceived complex concepts.
- Research methodology provides the opportunity for students to improve their reading and writing capacities and sharing of learning instead of memorising concepts. The incorporation of applied problem-solving strategies in the curricula have the potential to enhance student academic communication through peer discussions in collaborative learning

opportunities as well as presentation and writing skills in the form of research report writing.

- The research methodology module offers opportunities to open students' eyes to possibilities they may not have considered before. These possibilities are important for enhancing the value of a research curriculum as it provides invaluable information when reflecting on what works and what does not work and why.
- One way to enhance the quality of the curriculum is to constantly reflect in order to ensure that it meets and extends the benchmarks that exist in specific modules. Research methodology should not be seen as an isolated module. The quality may be improved by talking and involving all colleagues teaching in the qualification to gain a holistic understanding of the student's journey before starting the research module. The whole qualification from first year to final year should be seen holistically.
- Another way to enhance the quality of the curriculum is to ask students for their opinions and feedback through surveys and small group discussions preferably facilitated by a person not lecturing the module. The 'student voice' as alluded to by Broomen, Darwent and Pimor (2015) is a key element of any curriculum. It is known that as students become learning partners they are constantly pushed and challenged to try new methods in the learning environment, which coupled with active reflection (Weimer, 2002), provide an opportunity for greater authentic learning also opportunities for the facilitator to develop professionally.
- Peer review through the observation of teaching is extremely useful in finding out what works, why and what needs to change. This feedback should be applied to transforming the curriculum.
- Having two lecturers is better than one when facilitating research methodology. Two lecturers enable differences in opinion and may nurture debates, allowing students to provide alternative points of view. Although I believe this to be a rational solution to the problems in the curriculum we face, it may not always be practically implementable considering university



resources and capacity. However, tactically, this may be achieved through the use of guest lecturers or lecturers partnering within a course offering to work as a collaborative facilitation unit that allows for potential collaborative action research measures that may benefit the continued development of not only the curriculum but also of the lecturers themselves professionally. Having more than one lecturer may also provide the possibility for students to perceive multiple perspectives related to various research approaches.

### 6.5.10. Desired attributes for postgraduate students

In section 6.5.1 and in Table 6.14 insight is provided into graduate attributes required for an undergraduate student as perceived by the Delphi panel. In this section the results pertaining to the graduate attributes required by postgraduate students are provided. The results have been grouped into 7 main themes which are indicated with their respective codes in Table 6.26.

**Table 6.26: Graduate attributes of postgraduate students**

<b>1. Knowledge and understanding</b>
Students should master the in-depth knowledge and skills appropriate for postgraduate study.
Clear understanding of the different research designs, data collection methods, data analysis techniques.
Clear understanding of research ethics so as to design research that is ethically sound and culturally sensitive.
In-depth understanding of the tourism economy and tourism society.
An understanding of the value of research.
<b>2. Research design skills</b>
Ability to critique research.
Ability to develop and implement their own research projects.
Understanding of various research approaches and having the ability to identify research gaps which should enable students to conceptualise research projects independently.
<b>3. Critical thinking and self-reflection skills</b>

A critical thinker able to do independent research.

Ability to critically question what they know, including the role of the curriculum in the workplace.

Ability to work independently as well as part of a group.

#### **4. Values**

The motivation and determination to undertake postgraduate study.

Self-awareness.

Be an open-minded and independent thinker.

Possess intellectual curiosity.

Empathy.

#### **5. Communication skills**

Report writing and presentation skills so as to explain and visually present complex data to a non-expert audience.

Ability to communicate so as to transfer knowledge and skills.

#### **6. Lifelong Learning**

A passion for learning and a commitment to ongoing professional development.

Enabling a self-starter who understands the role and purpose of education.

#### **7. Analytical skills**

Mathematical skills.

Ability to analyse basic datasets both quantitative and qualitative.

The results pertaining to the attributes of an undergraduate student provide a perspective from the Delphi panel wherein attributes are greatly aligned with the needs of the workplace. In the table above, however, there is a much stronger inclination towards attributes aligned to research, both in terms of knowledge and skills.

Firstly, graduates are expected to master knowledge related to the subject matter, i.e., content-aligned outcomes. This includes the mastering of in-depth knowledge and skills appropriate for postgraduate study. It also encompasses an understanding of different research designs, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, research ethics for designing ethically sound and culturally sensitive research, and an in-depth understanding of the tourism economy and tourism society, as well as an understanding of the value of research.

As a pivot away from a purely content-aligned set of outcomes, the panel also revealed the need for competency-based attributes. The first of these revolves around the ability of the student to develop research design skills. This implies the ability to critique research, develop and implement their research projects, understand various research approaches, and identify research gaps. This should enable students to conceptualise research projects independently. This set of attributes reveals that a curriculum should enable practical and applied learning rather than purely conceptual learning, thus supporting the authentic learning viewpoint of Slabbert et al. (2009) and Adams-Becker et al. (2018) in which real-world applied learning is crucial.

The need for critical thinking and self-reflection skills were unanimous among all panel participants. The panel is of the view that a student should be provided with learning opportunities to develop their abilities to think critically and to conduct independent research, with an emphasis on the ability to work independently and collaboratively as part of a group. There is also a need for students to be able to critically question what they know, including the role of the curriculum in the workplace. I am of the view that these desired skills are developed during collaborative learning opportunities that allow for intellectual risk to be encouraged (as alluded to by Chicoine, 2004) so as to stimulate interpersonal deliberation and to build a sense of community among students.

The values identified by the panel that should be embedded in a curriculum to better prepare students for postgraduate study align to the values of self and outward values as determined by Bouwer et al. (2022). The values aligned to *self*, include the motivation and determination to undertake postgraduate study accompanied by self-awareness and the ability to be an open-minded and independent thinker with intellectual curiosity. Outward values are those aligned to others which the panel revealed to be empathy.

As with undergraduate attributes, communication skills were deemed essential attributes in this case. Students wishing to pursue postgraduate study should have the ability to write research reports and to master presentation skills so as to explain and visually present complex data to a potential non-expert audience. These communication skills are essential as a core function of research is to transfer knowledge and skills.

Lifelong learning, as depicted in Section 6.5.1, is often desired as curriculum outcomes but is frequently perceived as unrealistic and overused, as these attributes are often difficult to measure in a post-formal education realm. However, two primary lifelong learning outcomes were identified in this regard. The first pertains to developing a passion for learning and a commitment to ongoing professional development. The second pertains to creating an enabling environment in which a self-starter understands the role and purpose of education. The panel believes that the curriculum itself needs to provide a nurturing and enabling environment in which the student can see the value of education, and in doing so, also appreciate the value of continuous professional development and further learning.

The final set of attributes required by a postgraduate student relates to those associated with analytical skills. Students should be able to analyse basic datasets, both quantitative and qualitative. This implies not only learning about the theoretical aspects thereof, but also applied learning utilising actual datasets. Using real data, especially numeric data, may also contribute to enhanced mathematical skills.

## **6.6. REFLECTION ON MY PRACTICE**

In this study, I have analysed data obtained from students, colleagues from my own institution, colleagues from other institutions, and international experts. I have reported on these results in the previous sections of this chapter. As this study makes use of a constructivist action research approach, it is also necessary for me to present my own lived experiences and to report on these actions from my professional context.

As revealed in Section 4.2.2, my Whole Brain® thinking preferences are predominantly skewed towards Quadrant A. Upon reflection, I have realised that this greatly influenced my professional scholarly practice, especially in the manner in which I deal directly with students and my ability to be an effective facilitator of learning. This section will provide a reflective insight into my professional practice and the actions I have taken over the course of the past few years to explore innovations to enhance my practice.

### **6.6.1. Facilitating learning**

As an associate professor, my responsibilities involve numerous tasks including facilitating and assessing learning as a lecturer, assessing, postgraduate supervision and administration. In this section I reflect specifically on the role I play as a facilitator of learning in the ADTM and PDTM research methodology modules. Consequently, I focus on some exemplars of methods of facilitating learning, which I considered innovative. I am of the view that designing such innovative learning opportunities will contribute to transforming my scholarly practice.

#### **6.6.1.1. Building towers**

At the commencement of each academic year, a new cohort of research methodology students (ADTM and PDTM) arrives in my first class. Generally, I would use the first class as an orientation session to introduce myself and the module 'content' by discussing the study guide. I then dismiss the class, usually after a brief time, as students do not have textbooks at this stage, and I believed that I was unable to begin with classes. Upon reflection, it came to the fore that there is limited time to complete the syllabus, as alluded to by colleagues in the Delphi panel in Section 6.5.8. The introductory class would be an ideal opportunity for students to orient themselves around some basic concepts of research methodology. As I would be using collaborative learning opportunities as integral parts in the curriculum, this time also

provides the ideal opportunity for the cohort to get to know one another through an ice-breaker session.

In the first class, I provided students with two main tasks. Firstly, all students were required to introduce themselves to the group and briefly indicate to the rest of the cohort why they were enrolled in either the ADTM or PDTM course. This allowed for brief introductions but also served as a barometer for me to identify the main motivation for study so that I may use this foundation in my teaching strategy. After introductions, the second task is issued. In this task, students are required to divide themselves into groups (group size depended on the cohort size and ranged between 5-6 members per group). Each group was issued with 20 dried spaghetti sticks, a roll of tape, and a marshmallow. The task at hand was for each group to attempt to construct the tallest tower to raise the marshmallow as high as possible off the ground. The winning team gets a prize, usually the packet of marshmallows. Below are some images from a PDTM cohort in this regard.







**Image 6.1: Building towers**

Over the past 8 years of lecturing research methodology, I have experienced the same concern raised by faculty and Delphi panellists and Humphreys (2006) in relation to the module being perceived as difficult, boring and dull. The purpose of this session was not only to serve as an 'icebreaker' to allow the cohort to familiarise themselves with one another but also to incorporate an element of fun into the first class, which also served as an 'icebreaker' to the module and to myself as the lecturer. This learning opportunity also aligns to the Whole Brain® thinking Quadrant B (Planned, & organised) and Quadrant C (interpersonal and kinaesthetic) thinking preferences.

In consolidating the learning session, I align the learning opportunity with the need for strong foundations in any construction project and how that may align with the need for a strong foundation in any research project that requires effective planning, collaboration, communication, and execution.

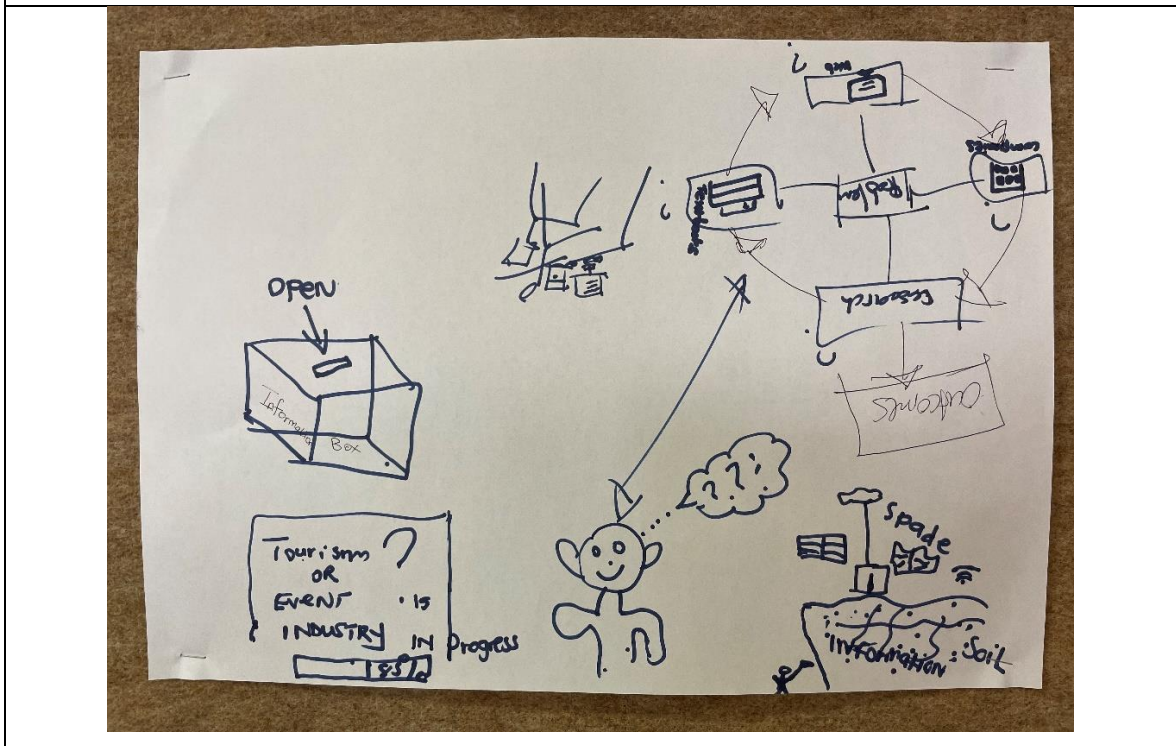
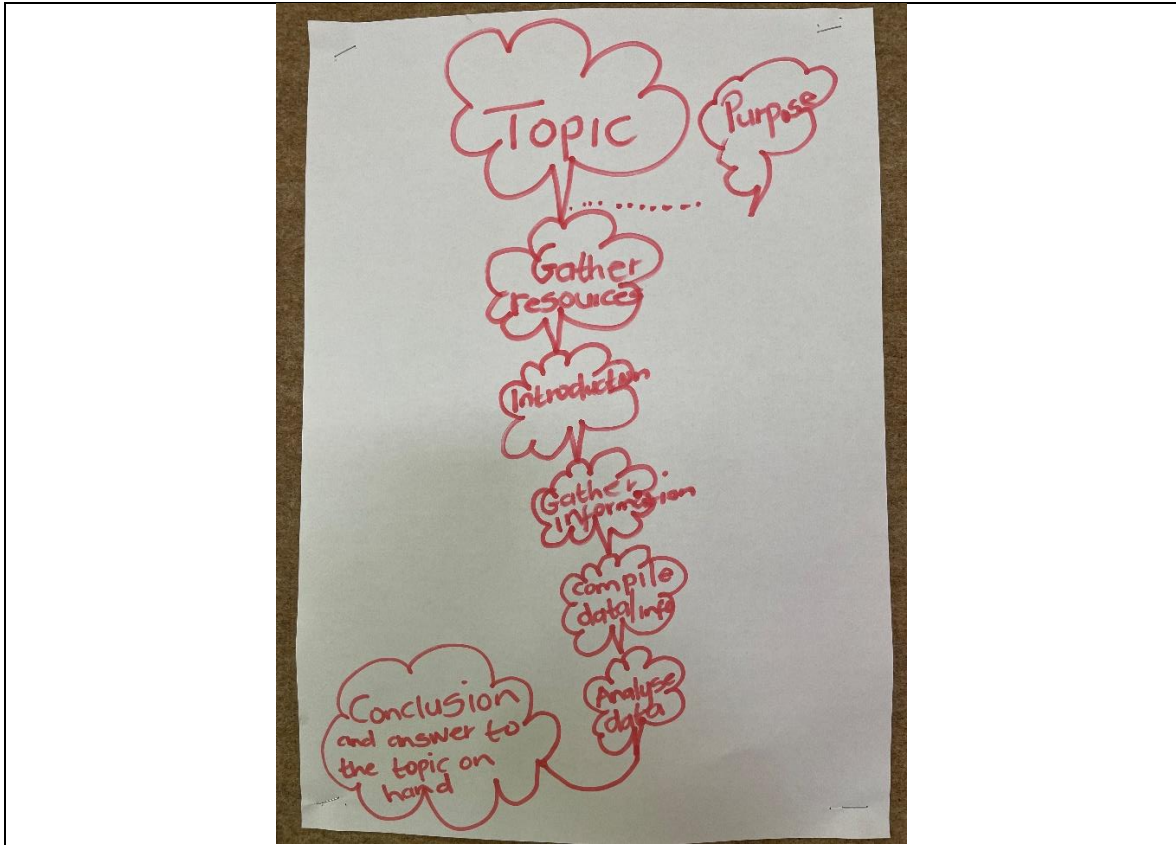
#### 6.6.1.2. Learning with visual representations

As my thinking preference is predominantly biased towards Quadrant A and partially towards Quadrant B, my classes were overly theoretical, structured, PowerPoint-based, and the textbook was my best friend. Textbooks, on the contrary, are becoming a rare commodity among students for reasons I am unable to qualify, but I assume

perhaps due to financial challenges faced by students. As a result, it became necessary to challenge my own thinking preferences to cater for students who, in all probability, have different thinking preferences than my own. My classes had to move beyond a textbook-based approach, and they needed to incorporate a more holistic Whole Brain® teaching method.

In this session, I reflect on one such strategy in which I endeavoured to engage more interpersonal, integrating, and creative thinking into the learning opportunity, to engage Quadrants C and D more effectively. In one such session, students were divided into small collaborative groups (usually 3-4) and provided with a large piece of paper and some colour markers. The task assigned to the group was to draw what research methodology is, using images and no full sentences. Initially, this task was challenging for the group, and it seemed to take them out of their comfort zone, where previously they were told what to learn and how to learn. Here the instruction was broad and open to collaborative interpretation. The session, after a few minutes, moves from an obstinate silence to a group discussion and usually concludes with 'Picassoesque' images. The images below provide insight into one such session with an ADTM group.







**Image 6.2: Learning with visual representations**

The three images presented above relate to my first physical class with my ADTM cohort. Here students have presented, visually, how they interpret the definition of research methodology. Considering that the students at this stage students have very limited prior curriculum-based exposure to research methodology and that they do not have textbooks. Once the images were complete, the groups were tasked to consolidate their image and to construct a short definition of what they believe the term 'research methodology' means. Thereafter, groups presented their images and provided their constructed definitions to the whole class. The whole class then consolidated their learning into one definition, which was used by the cohort throughout the year. This constructivist approach allowed students to construct their own meaning and not only resolves one of the issues associated with a lack of textbooks but also empowers students to appreciate their ability and liberty to think critically in a learning environment that is open to deliberation. These images and the subsequent constructivist developed definitions also provides me with an indication that this knowledge did not have to be taught but was collaboratively constructed by students by means of critical reflection.

### 6.6.1.3. Smarties class

A challenge that I have encountered in the research methodology curriculum of both the ADTM and the PDTM is the difficulty that students encounter with regards to the learning outcome associated with population and sampling. For RTM107V the outcome is stated as follows; 'the learner must be able to propose appropriate sampling techniques and compile sample designs for research projects within the field of management sciences'. For RTM108G it is as follows, 'Critically review information gathering, synthesis of data, evaluation and management processes in specialised contexts in order to develop creative responses to problems and issues. The assessment criteria are: 'qualitative samples and sampling techniques are evaluated and appropriate samples and sampling techniques are proposed'. In essence, both these outcomes are very similar, requiring students to propose appropriate sampling designs. However, authentic learning in this regard has always been a challenge evidenced by means of poor success rates in assessments designed around these outcomes, perhaps due learning opportunities and resources that are overtly fact-based, structured and factual, thus appealing predominantly to Whole Brain® Quadrant A thinkers.

As an innovative strategy I utilised what students have dubbed the 'Smarties class' to facilitate the learning of population and sampling methods. In this class each student was individually provided with a piece of paper and a packet of smarties (a chocolate confectionary candy). In this class we delved into the various sampling strategies which were then applied to the 'sample' of smarties allocated to students. Images of one of these classes are provided below.



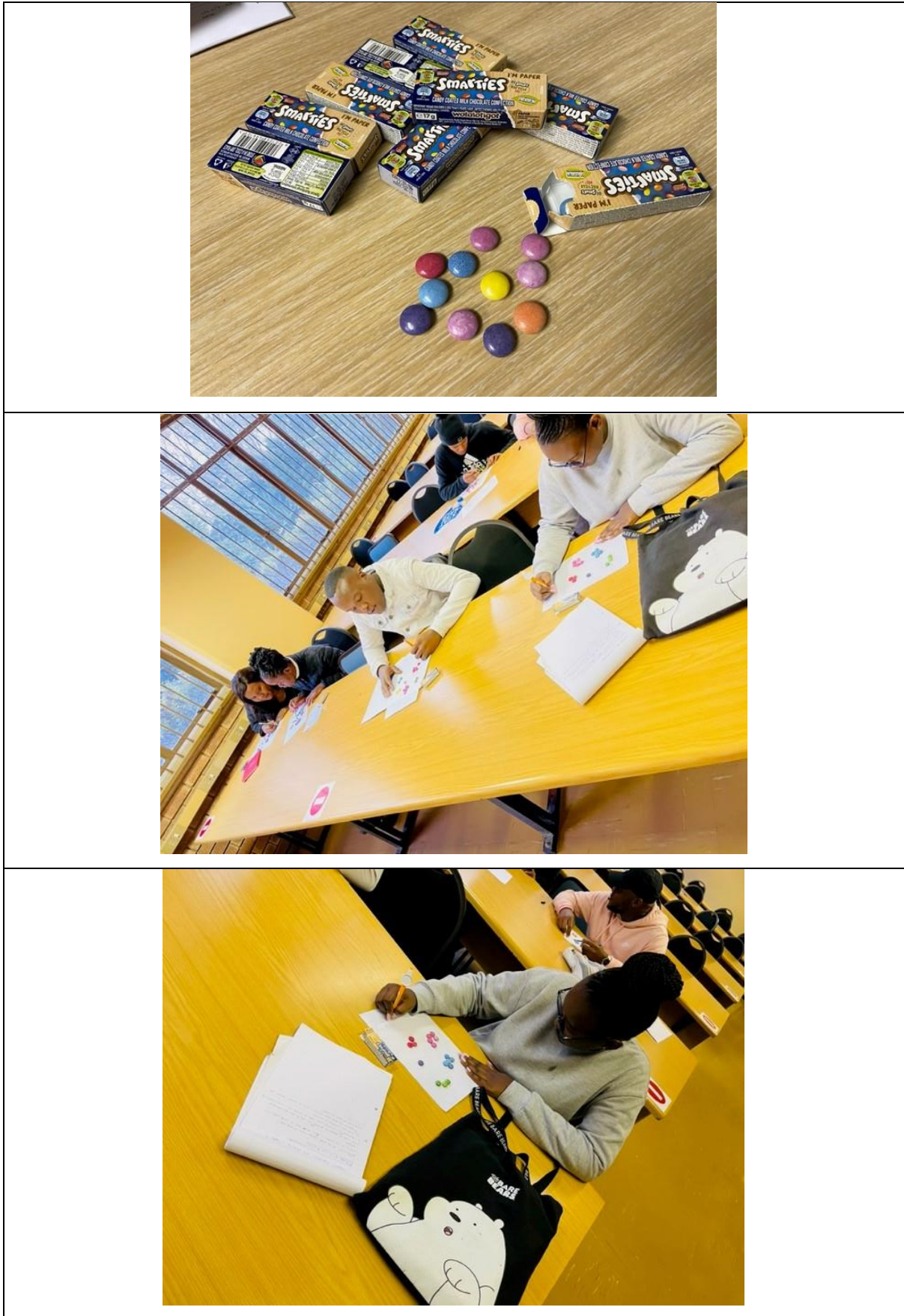


Image 6.3: Smarties class

The images above reveal a ADTM class engaging in a Smarties class, in the examples students have clustered the smarties by colour and are calculating the sample sizes of each colour in relation to the total number of smarties per packet (population). Other tasks revolve around how to randomly and non-randomly select smarties based on structured approaches (random) and personal preference (non-random). The learning also engages mathematical and intrapersonal thinking as well as Whole Brain® Quadrant B (organised and detailed) and D (Intuition and Synthesis).

The encouraging results of the Smarties class are evident in assessments, where there is evidence of an enhanced applied understanding of sampling. Students are able to provide practical examples when answering test questions, and examples from the class exercise are sometimes referred to. The success of the Smarties class has also been demonstrated as I was approached by the TUT Directorate of Research, Innovation, and Engagement (R&I) to facilitate the same session with postgraduate students from the entire institution. This demonstrates that this strategy is not only applicable to ADTM or PDTM students but may be transferred to other environments.

#### 6.6.1.4. Learning by numbers

As alluded to in Section 6.6.1.3, students find it challenging to constructively learn about population and sampling. Apart from the Smarties class, another strategy that I have used in this regard involves the utilisation of applied and active learning tasks related to not only population and sampling but also basic statistical analysis.

To further enhance the learning opportunities related to population and sampling, I have made use of a set of magnetised plastic numbers that are placed on a flat surface, either on a table, the floor, or on a whiteboard, where these numbers were arranged randomly (see Image 6.4 as an example of stratified random sampling). Students were then placed in pairs, and various tasks associated with sample selection are given to the pairs. These tasks demonstrate the various approaches to random and non-random selection of a sample.





Image 6.4: Learning by numbers

In addition to the selection exercise, ADTM students were also provided with a short survey that they were required to complete individually. An MS Excel spreadsheet was then projected on a display screen, and each student were requested to enter the responses to their questionnaire into this sheet by means of codes. Students were then placed into pairs and tasked with calculating measures of central tendency, such as determining means, mode, median, and ranges. Additionally, students were tasked with analysing their survey regarding determining the question designs, for example, assessing ratio, nominal, ordinal, Likert scale questioning. Students were also requested to design their own survey questions in class that would meet the criteria for survey design. These learning opportunities encapsulate mathematical, interpersonal learning by means of interactive collaborative learning. Although the guidelines associated with populations, sampling and basic statistics may be highly analytical and quantitative (Quadrant A) this learning opportunity allows for the learning of sequential processes (Quadrant B), interpersonal and physical (kinaesthetic) activities (Quadrant C) as well as intuition and creativity in finding solutions to problems (Quadrant D).

The current ADTM and PDTM curriculum does not require students to actively implement a research project. The unfortunate effect of this is that students do not gain insight into applying their knowledge in the current highly content-driven curriculum. This results in students not authentically learning these foundational elements of research methodology. The two strategies that I have implemented are structured accordingly and allow for a degree of practical application of research design, data collection, and data analysis based on a real-world (a realistic mini class survey) setting that all students are able to associate with. Students make use of constructive problem-based, collaborative, and independent learning approaches. I have found that students have a greater understanding of these concepts, and they are able to employ these concepts to a greater degree in class discussions and assessments.

#### 6.6.1.5. Facilitating learning virtually

The COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on the higher education landscape globally, especially for those institutions where physical classroom-based learning environments were the norm, and TUT was no exception. I was a month into the curriculum with my 2020 ADTM and PDTM cohort when overnight all classes were halted. After a few weeks of the initial hard lockdown, I, together with my colleagues, were faced with the daunting task of adapting the curriculum so that the academic functions of the university could proceed as best as possible. One immediate strategy the university embarked on was to move physical teaching to virtual online platforms for which the university implemented a new LMS to cater for this requirement. I had to familiarise myself with the new platform, and my physical curriculum had to be adapted to cater to the needs of online learning.

Initially, the online teaching strategy seemed successful, but in due course, some problems revealed themselves. Although online class attendance was high, students were hesitant to engage and effectively became passive viewers as opposed to active participants. Online assessments revealed themselves as ideal environments for unauthentic assessments, where students became increasingly inclined to plagiarise in assessments by copying and pasting from online sources.

To counter these challenges, I utilised a few innovative strategies. One such strategy was aimed at inducing student participation by means of collaborative group activities. Platforms such as MS Teams have a functionality that allows for the creation of virtual 'breakout rooms'. In online sessions, students would be divided into random groups and given a problem or problems to solve. As a facilitator, I would move between these virtual rooms, observe student interaction, and occasionally ask questions to encourage constructive discourse. Generally, after a group session, a member of each group provides feedback, and a class discussion is initiated to consolidate learning. Even though this action resulted in greater online participation, there were still students that failed to participate and then simply only logged in for class attendance purposes. In addition, another challenge is due to poor bandwidth with many students; camera



functionality was not always possible, and therefore assessing body language was not always possible.

Since the upliftment of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and the return to physical teaching the dependence on virtual learning has decreased significantly. I have however, found that a hybrid approach works effectively for my ADTM and PDTM cohorts. A number of students are employed, especially in the PDTM group and with the latter group, some students also reside in geographic locations far from campus, including different provinces. A hybrid approach allows for greater accessibility and class attendance as those students living far away are able to attend virtually and reduce their requirement to physically coming to campus. With physical classes I am able to implement kinaesthetic and physical learning opportunities, subsequent online sessions serve as effective platforms to consolidate learning.

#### 6.6.1.6. Facilitating learning off campus

The Delphi panel revealed that off-campus teaching and learning opportunities are perceived as bringing forth advantages for a curriculum by providing an environment for first-hand experience within a practical learning environment. The higher education landscape in South Africa is subject to arbitrary disruptions, in the form of student protests. As these protests are often violent, HEIs such as TUT may subsequently close off campuses until such disruptions are resolved. These disruptions also affect the learning environment where valuable learning time is lost.

As a mitigating strategy due to these disruptions, my students in 2020 indicated that they wished to continue with classes despite the disruptions; however, such a learning environment would need to be off-campus. Our class thus took place at the Pretoria National Botanical Garden, which was accessible to students as it is close to campus and offered discounted entrance fees for students. The images below provide insight into the class that took place in 2020, and by the numbers on the floor one is able to conclude that this was a 'learning by numbers' session. The images depict students

completing an individual problem-solving exercise, and on the right, the students posing for a picture with the plastic numbers as described in Section 6.6.1.4.



**Image 6.5: PDTM Class at a botanical garden**

Although this class was planned to mitigate the effects of disruptions, the benefits thereof were revealed to be broader. Learning tasks were designed based on the botanical garden as a case study which allowed for a real-world application, allowing for greater relatability and authentic learning. The environment of the garden also allowed for quiet spaces for individual reflection and for students to be in a natural environment. In 2021 I intentionally included an outdoor class at the botanical garden in the timetable, however, this was not done in subsequent years, once due to poor weather and another time due to a public service strike. I hope to include this off-campus class in future, at either this same location or another similar location.

### **6.6.2. Assessment opportunities**

With the modules RTM107V and RTM108G being generic modules within the faculty, I have limited flexibility in the number and types of assessment opportunities. The current assessment plan is presented in Table 6.27:

**Table 6.27: Current assessment plans for research methodology**

Research Methodology (RTM107V)				
Assessment type	Focus	Date	Marks	Weight
Multiple choice test	Theoretical online assessment.	March	50	10
Test 1	Theoretical test based on selected chapters.	June	50	10
Test 2	Theoretical test based on selected chapters.	August	70	15
Test 3	Theoretical test based on selected chapters.	October	70	15
Assignment 1	Group assignment involving the writing of a literature review for a research proposal.	June	50	10
Assignment 2	Group assignment involving the completion of an academic research proposal.	November	100	40
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>
Advanced Research Methodology (RTM108G)				
Written test	Theoretical test.	April	50	10
Assignment 1	Written research abstract.	March	50	10
Presentation 1	Research abstract presentation	March	50	10
Assignment 2	Individual assignment involving the writing of a literature review for a research proposal.	June	100	20
Assignment 3	Individual assignment involving the completion of an academic research proposal.	October	100	40
Presentation 2	Proposal presentation.	November	50	10
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

As per the assessment policy of TUT (TUT, 2020), for a continuous assessment module of a year, there needs to be a total of 6 assessments. Table 6.26 indicates that for both RTM107V and RTM108G this is being implemented. Differences exist between these modules in the form of tests, where RTM107V relies on 4 theoretical tests while for RTM108G this is reduced to only 1 and the latter also includes two assessments based on presentations.

Similarities exist between the two modules in the form of the assignments that are effectively duplicated. Both years are required to compile a literature review assignment and a summative assessment in the form of a research proposal, albeit in RTM107G these are completed in collaborative groups as opposed to in RTM108G

where this is done as an individual assessment. RTM107V students are not required to practically plan, execute, implement a research project, or analyse realistic data sets. This effectively creates the challenge where students are required to compile a research proposal for a 'fictitious' research project but never learn how these projects are executed in real-life. This challenge is transferred to RTM108G the following year when students are once again required to complete a proposal without having authentically learned about the practical foundational aspects of research design. This reiterates the call from all three qualitative samples for the need for the constructive development of foundational research competencies for postgraduate study.

Although I do not have the liberty to amend the assessment plan for these modules, I do have the ability to influence learning task design at micro level and the design of the tests. I have, therefore, implemented a constructively aligned curriculum in my modules so as to effectively link learning tasks with assessment criteria. The high number of tests in the ADTM module is challenging though, as by nature these assessments are theoretical and may promote conceptual learning as opposed to authentic constructivist learning. To bridge this challenge, I have designed test questions that are applied to case studies, utilised problem-based assessment techniques requiring students to utilise the theory they have learned to solve applied problems. The use of marking rubrics is also employed in assignments and in some test questions requiring synthesising answers and utilising multiple sources of data and for critical reflection.

## **6.7. SUMMARY**

Embarking on the journey of developing a curriculum for tourism research methodology is much like preparing for a cross-country expedition. Just as a seasoned traveller meticulously plans routes, considers diverse terrains, and equips themselves with the right tools, a curriculum developer navigates the educational landscape with foresight and precision. The path may be winding, presenting unforeseen challenges and diverse learning landscapes. Each set of results presents a unique destination which when integrated into a curriculum, becomes a well-crafted map, ensuring that

students not only reach their academic waypoints but also cultivate the skills to explore the uncharted territories of knowledge acquisition with confidence and proficiency.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONSOLIDATING THE LANDSCAPE

#### 7.1. INTRODUCTION

The conclusion of a research study is comparable to the moment a weary traveller reaches the summit of a mountain after a challenging ascent. As the researcher navigates the intellectual terrain, each step represents an exploration of knowledge, and every hurdle mirrors the twists and turns of a winding path. Just as the traveller reflects upon the breath-taking vista from the mountaintop, the conclusion of the research offers a panoramic view of insights gained. Which in the case of an action research study, may also reveal further paths of scholarly investigation or further mountains to conquer. The summit, like the conclusion, becomes a vantage point where the researcher marvels at the distance covered (reflection), embraces the challenges faced (conclusions), and contemplates the profound landscape of newfound understanding that may lead to further study (recommendations). In both instances, the conclusion marks not only the end of a journey but the beginning of a richer, more enlightened perspective.

Before I present this concluding chapter, it may be informative to revisit the study's main and secondary research questions. Firstly, this study sought to answer the question "In the context of a constructivist action research process, what would a transformed curriculum look like that better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study? I have, by means of a constructivist action research approach, provided innovative and constructive transformational recommendations in this regard which are presented in this chapter.

During the journey to answer the above main research question, secondary research questions needed to be answered, along the way, these were as follows:

- What are the learning preferences of selected students?
- What are the learning experiences of selected students?

- What are the further study ambitions of sampled students?
- Which graduate attributes are deemed essential for postgraduate students as perceived by peers, domestic colleagues and international experts?
- What are the lived experiences of faculty colleagues in relation to transforming the tourism research methodology curriculum to better prepare undergraduate students for postgraduate study?
- What are the perspectives of international colleagues in relation to transforming a curriculum to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study?
- What are the perspectives of South African colleagues in relation to transforming a curriculum to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study?
- What is my lived experience in relation to my professional practice to transform the ADTM and PDTM curriculum?

The answers to these questions were presented in Chapter 6. In this chapter, I consolidate my learning journey by presenting the conclusions of the research, I present my meta-reflection, I propose constructive recommendations for transformation, I reflect on the way forward, the limitations of the study and a consolidated conclusion is presented to close the chapter.

## **7.2. THEORETICAL CONSOLIDATION**

Chapter 2 and 3 provide a comprehensive theoretical discussion pertaining to tourism research methodology and curriculum transformation in this discipline. The conclusions drawn from these two literature review chapters are presented in this section.

### **7.2.1. The landscape of tourism research methodology**

The following conclusions have been drawn from Chapter 2:



- Tourism is a relatively new field of academic study, especially in postgraduate curricula.
- Tourism is a dynamic and constantly evolving industry; therefore, curricula need to be consistently updated.
- Curricula are developed to indicate specific exit level outcomes that students need to achieve.
- Many tourism curricula are highly content-based and fail to adequately develop student competency.
- In addition to traditional exit level outcomes, graduate attributes are also desired but are often not actively promoted.
- A range of graduate attributes have been identified, most aligning with the vocational needs of the industry and, to a lesser degree, towards self-development and the achievement of lifelong learning.
- Although graduate attributes are desired, they are often difficult to assess, and as such, they are not actively pursued in a curriculum or may be overlooked by lecturers.
- Passive education has become a major challenge in tourism curriculum development; in such cases, curricula have become static and are no longer agile to the needs of authentic learning and the industry.
- There is a predisposition for tourism curricula to be quantity focused in achieving throughput rates, and in such cases, quality may be forfeited in preference for quantity.
- Poorly prepared students who do not adequately and authentically master curriculum exit level outcomes and graduate attributes are known to be provided access to further study. The consequence of this is the creation of expectations among students of heightened ability, which may lead to disappointment when they are required to apply their learning in further study, as well as the promotion of poor-quality research that makes a minimal contribution.
- Tourism curricula are often criticised for being estranged from the authentic needs of the industry. This leads to curricula that carry very little benefit to the vocational needs of the industry resulting in poorly prepared graduates



who are not ready for the metamodern world of work. This may also lead to poorly aligned research that holds no beneficence to the industry or academic discipline due to poorly prepared graduates.

- Current curricula are often inefficient in the development of leadership attributes among tourism students.
- Higher education is governed in South Africa by DHET and through associated public entities.
- All qualifications in South Africa should be aligned to the HEQSF and the NQF with NQF level 7 and 8 qualifications providing articulation opportunity to NQF level 9 equivalent such as Masters qualifications.
- All HEIs have their own internal processes designed for the development, management and quality control of qualifications and their associated curricula.
- Internal curriculum development processes permeate on macro, meso and micro levels respectively, and should involve a number of stakeholders including lecturers and students.
- Stakeholder engagement is a vital part of curriculum design in order to ensure that so called 'fake knowledge' is not promoted. In essence, curricula that hold no benefit to students, the profession and society as a whole should be transformed or removed.
- At micro level, lecturers have greater autonomy in developing the learning environment in order to implement the curriculum. Lecturers should not be seen as the only stakeholders at this level as students should be active participants in this process as they provide constructive input in curriculum transformation from a user perspective.
- A transformative discourse in curriculum development is not possible without actively incorporating the input of students.

### **7.2.2. Curriculum development and the learning landscape**

The following conclusions have been drawn from Chapter 3:

- Higher education curriculum development is a legislative and policy-driven process in South Africa with multiple role players, including DHET, CHE (and HEQC), and SAQA. The prescriptions laid down by these organisations inform policy within specific HEIs. Although these processes are structured and often seen as static, there are opportunities for manoeuvre, and for curriculum designers to develop agile curricula, which should become increasingly agile as one moves from macro to micro level.
- Tourism, as a field of study, is relatively contemporary when compared to other more established disciplines, even in the field of management sciences.
- Tourism higher education is predominantly driven by the vocational needs of the industry, and as such, most qualifications offered in higher education in South Africa are aligned to the equivalent of NQF levels 5 to 7, primarily in the form of diplomas. However, there is an increased drive for the development and offering of postgraduate tourism qualifications at NQF levels 8 to 10, which are now offered at 14 HEIs in South Africa.
- A common module among all postgraduate qualifications in tourism, is the module ‘research methodology’, which aims to prepare students for research in a postgraduate qualification. These modules are offered on NQF level 7 and 8 and at TUT are included in the ADTM and PDTM qualification.
- The ADTM and PDTM are new qualifications at TUT, developed to align with the HEQSF.
- A curriculum may be seen as the total experience that a student undergoes during their learning journey. This includes exit level outcomes, learning tasks, assessment, and the learning environment.
- Philosophic practitioner education is one approach in which the vocational needs of the industry and the liberal educational needs of the academic discipline are bridged.
- Although undergraduate curricula may be highly aligned with vocational needs, there needs to be a steady progression towards liberal education as a student vertically articulates towards postgraduate study.

- Tourism curricula should strive to find an equal balance between what a student is required to know as foundational expertise; how they act to develop the competencies required for the vocational needs of the industry; and what students are expected to become. The notion of being is impractical in the metamodern world as this implies a definite end to the learning process. The learning process should be continuous and lifelong and thus a continuous process of becoming. As such the knowing, acting and being model of Barnett and Coate (2005) may be modified to consider the notion of knowing and mastering competencies, acting and becoming.
- Philosophic practitioner education calls for a curriculum that allows for vocational and liberal action and reflection in order to empower a student to develop holistically, allowing for greater professionalism and an improved ability to cater to the needs of the constantly changing tourism industry.
- In the post-modern and emerging metamodern society, there is an increased call for curricula to break away from the shackles of content-driven learning. One movement in this regard is for the adoption of constructivism and constructive alignment in curriculum and instructional design.
- Thorough constructive alignment determines exit level outcomes, empowering students to take control of their own learning. The lecturer undertakes the role of a facilitator in this learning.
- Constructivism, more specifically social constructivism, is a fundamental aspect for the attainment of authentic learning in the neoliberal realm of tourism research methodology.
- In the constructively aligned research methodology curriculum, learning achievements are determined during the learning journey and are competency based as opposed to content-driven curriculum where learning achievements are 'measured' at the end.
- For learning to be constructive, students need to be exposed to challenging real-world of work problem-solving. This should engage students' creativity and innovation, and in the process, the student becomes a co-creator in the learning process.

- Research, in essence, is based on the foundation of solving problems, both theoretical and academic but also practical and applied. Problem-solving learning tasks should allow for a greater application of creative and conceptual cognitive abilities that should lead to improved critical thinking abilities.
- In the neoliberal and metamodern society of today, tourism research methodology curricula should embrace technological developments in higher education and the tourism industry landscape. Curricula can no longer be dependent on purely physical, classroom-based learning environments. Blended learning through the inclusion of virtual learning environments, such as online classes and learning platforms like university learning management systems, should be included in curricula.
- The Generation Z student has access to multiple realms of easily accessible information through numerous public platforms and channels such as the internet and social media. The higher education landscape needs to adapt to these technological disruptors, and curricula need to accommodate trends in this regard, or else HEIs may lose their relevance in the metamodern world. Without a constructively aligned curriculum, in essence, they are irrelevant and may be considered custodians of ‘fake knowledge’.
- Promoting a critical thinking disposition among students, empowering them with a desire and internal motivation for critical thinking, is essential. Although critical thinking skills are deemed essential in any research methodology curriculum, without a disposition to want to develop these skills among students, critical thinking may end up being an unachievable graduate attribute.
- In order to promote a critical thinking disposition, students need to be motivated to want to learn. The challenge with research methodology is that it is often perceived as a ‘boring’ module and suffers from students with a generally adverse predisposition to the module which affects the motivation of these students to want to learn. Research methodology curricula need to therefore be designed with the student in mind.

- Opportunities exist for greater student involvement in curricula, which may improve the disposition to learn. These include the promotion of the interactive learning environment by means of the flipped classroom, blended learning, collaborative learning, and active and interactive education.
- As learning should be a continuous process that involves continuous reflection on the part of the student, critical reflection is a vital component of philosophic practitioner education. With constructive alignment, the learning process should be a continuous process of reflection as opposed to an activity reserved for the end of the learning journey. In essence, the curriculum should be designed to promote lifelong learning within students who pursue continuous professional development post-completion of studies.
- Within a curriculum, continuous critical reflection may be promoted through peer assessment, self-evaluation, and through the fostering of meta-cognitive skills.
- The learning environment is a social setting where a sense of community is fostered among students and lecturers.
- Although learning may take place collaboratively, learning fundamentally is a solo journey. Independent learning should be experience-based, resulting in a positive internally driven motivation to learn. This may be achieved through a curriculum that is relevant to the real world of work, pragmatic, interactive, aligned to professional practice, includes authentic and progressive assessment with timely and constructive feedback, is self-directed, and is hosted in an environment that is conducive to learning and facilitated professionally.

### **7.3. EMPIRICAL CONSOLIDATION**

The empirical results presented in Chapter 6 are consolidated in the form of research conclusions which will be presented in this section in four parts; conclusions from the

student survey, faculty colleagues, South African colleagues and finally international colleagues.

### 7.3.1. Conclusions from student survey

The following conclusions have been drawn from the survey among ADTM and PDTM students:

- In terms of demographics, PDTM students were, on average, 10 years older than ADTM students. ADTM students in the sample had a greater inclination to further their studies directly after the completion of their diploma, while almost half of PDTM students resumed their postgraduate studies after a period of study interruption. Reasons for this were not investigated in this study, but it may be assumed that these students first spend a period working in the industry after which they return to higher education.
- The ADTM is a qualification designed to serve as a developmental opportunity for students to advance within in their professional careers, whereas the PDTM is designed to prepare students for possible postgraduate study. The PDTM is not designed as a pure vocational qualification and employs a curriculum with increased alignment towards liberal education. The results of the student survey revealed that the primary reason that students pursue ADTM and PDTM studies is in order 'to get a job'. It may, therefore, be assumed that students are unable to acquire employment in the tourism industry with their vocational diplomas (for reasons not examined within the scope of this study) and therefore seemingly wish to improve their employability by continuously studying further, potentially making themselves even less employable.
- Students seeking to improve their employability, who pursue ADTM and PDTM, are obliged to complete research methodology modules, which are currently aligned primarily towards academic research. This alignment may affect the disposition of students who generally may not have a positive

perception of the module or do not clearly comprehend how academic research methodology may be beneficial to their needs for employment.

- In terms of work elements, the ADTM sample revealed that they perceived their planning, interpersonal, problem-solving, innovating, and teaching and training skills as strong. For the PDTM cohort, they felt that they were strong in administrative, planning, interpersonal and writing skills. This reveals skills that students perceive as having mastered for which opportunity exists for inclusion in curriculum design.
- ADTM respondents revealed that they perceived their analytical, technical and financial skills as requiring improvement. While the PDTM cohort deemed analytical, innovation and financial skills as requiring improvement. These skills therefore are currently inadequate at this stage and will require development within a curriculum.
- For the ADTM respondents, academic search engines as well as general search engines were deemed useful learning technologies. Respondents also were inclined to find the physical classroom as a beneficial learning environment. For the PDTM cohort, they reciprocated the ADTM perception of academic search engines as well as general search engines. This cohort, however, also found benefit in audio and video recordings (YouTube, iTunes, etc.).
- Social media was deemed the least beneficial learning technology by both sample groups, followed by the university's library facilities. ADTM students found less benefit in online class technology such as MS Teams, while PDTM students found the classroom learning environment not beneficial.
- In terms of Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> learning, Quadrant A was the dominant quadrant of the Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> thinking approach for both cohorts with high preferences for logical, analytical, factual, critical and rational thinking.
- For the ADTM respondents Quadrant C was the next highest preferred quadrant with spiritual, emotional and verbal thinking preferences.
- For the PDTM cohort, the second preferred thinking style was Quadrant B although the differences between this and the other two remaining quadrants were minimal.

- The PDTM cohort perceived themselves as less innovative, although these skills are required for the creative development of research solutions. Therefore, these skills, which are developed in Quadrant D thinking, should be actively engaged in curricula.
- A *t*-test revealed that there were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of Whole Brain® thinking profiles and as such I can regard them as similar.
- In terms of day or night preferences, ADTM students indicated a preference leaning more towards daytime activity whereas PDTM students had a slightly heightened preference for evening.
- In terms of extroversion/introversion and the *t*-tests conducted between these two groups, all students were deemed ambivert and as there were no significant differences between both groups they can be regarded as similar.
- In terms of student intelligences, the ADTM cohort ranked naturalistic, interpersonal, and spatial intelligence the highest, while the PDTM cohort ranked intrapersonal, naturalistic, and interpersonal intelligences as the highest. In both cases, logical-mathematical and bodily-kinaesthetic were ranked the lowest. Therefore, both cohorts were inclined to better learn collaboratively and with a focus on the environment. However, mathematical tasks were deemed challenging and they were not partial to learning using physical tasks.
- At the micro level of curriculum development, lecturers have a greater influence on learning task design, and therefore, the perceptions of students are fundamental components of this process. ADTM students felt that in a learning environment, they were responsible for their own learning. This aligns with the central theme in constructivism, where students are required to take ownership of their learning. In addition, students preferred a structured, step-by-step method for solving problems, and they believed that their lecturers were professional in their practice.
- Similar to the ADTM respondents, the PDTM cohort also felt that their lecturers were professional in their practice and that they preferred a



structured, step-by-step method for solving problems. They believed that thorough planning and organisation of time were mandatory for solving difficult problems and that learning opportunities should deal with real-life situations. The PDTM cohort also believed that they were responsible for their own learning.

- In terms of the learning environment, ADTM students indicated a general aversion towards online learning environments. ADTM respondents rated online learning, providing opportunities to collaborate and learn with classmates, as low. Students also indicated a greater preference for physical classes as opposed to online classes.
- The PDTM cohort indicated a greater preference for independent learning, believing that the best ideas (creativity) are an active process.
- ADTM respondents indicated a generally strong willingness to study further and pursue the PDTM. The reasons were primarily driven by the belief that a PDTM qualification would make them more desirable in the job market, although some revealed that they would first want to gain some work experience before studying further. The primary barrier for further study seems to align with financial challenges. Most PDTM students indicated their desire to pursue Master's study driven by the need to develop professionally and for a possible career in academia.

### **7.3.2. Conclusions from faculty colleagues**

The focus group interview with faculty colleagues revealed the following conclusions:

- The primary purpose of a research methodology module is for students to develop a variety of skills pertaining to the planning, conducting, and reporting of research. This research should lead to the development of critical thinking, evidence-based problem-solving, data analysis, oral and written communication skills and an ability to apply these skills in an ethical manner that promotes the generation of new knowledge.
- Colleagues revealed that their main challenges with the research methodology curriculum pertained to a negative predisposition of students

towards the module. Students have been predisposed to content-based theoretical lecturer-led classes and unauthentic assessments in their undergraduate studies and find it difficult to learn constructively. Students also see the module as boring and are therefore not motivated to learn. The current cohort of Generation Z students finds it difficult to relate to the current curriculum.

- There is a need for practical application in the curriculum as opposed to a structured theoretical content-based curriculum.
- The curriculum should not only promote student development as academic researchers but also for the development of research skills related to professional contexts in the neoliberal real world of work.
- There is a call for research methodology not to be seen as a strictly higher-level module in terms of its placement in modules on NQF 7 and above. Central outcomes of research methodology should be introduced to students at undergraduate level.
- Research methodology curricula should be holistically aligned to all other module curricula in the qualification so as to avoid a curriculum developed in a silo isolated from other modules.
- The use of tests should be kept to a minimum and more practical competency-based assessments must be used.
- Continuous evaluation is seen as a more authentic assessment strategy as opposed to theoretical exam-based assessment. Multiple types of assessments should be used.
- In the advanced diploma students should be practically exposed to a research project that applies all the learning outcomes as a summative assessment. In the postgraduate diploma, students should be able to develop an authentic Masters research proposal based on the competency-based exit level outcomes mastered in the advanced diploma.
- To demonstrate authentic and constructive learning, students should also be assessed on their ability to disseminate research in the form of presentations and report writing.

- Although colleagues see the benefit of a Whole Brain® learning-aligned curriculum, there is no active incorporation thereof in the curriculum. However, the perception was that the curriculum is greatly skewed towards Quadrant A and B thinking styles, neglecting Quadrant C and D.

### 7.3.3. Conclusions from South African-based colleagues

The following conclusions may be drawn from the individual interviews with South African colleagues:

- Colleagues generally believed that the research methodology curriculum's purpose was to teach students various aspects related to the discipline that they are expected to know. The use of words here is an evident general indication of the lecturer-led nature of the curriculum. Students are expected to learn what they are taught and this is greatly skewed to knowledge (content) as opposed to mastering an ability or competency.
- The curriculum is designed to prepare students for postgraduate study in order to solve practical community and industry problems and not just academic problems. This aligns to the nature of PPE whereby the curriculum should be balanced between the vocational and liberal needs of society and the industry.
- Challenges perceived by South African colleagues emanate in two broad domains. The first of these is associated with retrospective challenges in the undergraduate curriculum. There is a distinct belief that students are not adequately prepared or authentically assessed at undergraduate level in terms of reading and writing abilities. The deficiencies of these skills lead to students having difficulty in successfully attaining tourism research methodology learning outcomes.
- The second domain of challenges pertains to the curriculum itself which is deemed content heavy, too rigid which affects micro level curriculum agility, assessment challenges. The rigidity of curricula does not make them agile and therefore there is no agility in the curricula to adapt and embrace rapid advancements in information and communication technology for which the

Generation Z cohort paradoxically finds great affiliation. This may be the cause behind low levels of motivation to learn by students and lecturers.

- An area of concern for South African colleagues was associated with the pressures placed on universities to seemingly produce graduates as opposed to promotion of constructive student development due to neoliberal pressures. There is a belief that assessments and quality standards are occasionally forgone in order to push through graduate numbers which in the process dilutes the quality of graduate learning.
- No participants were aware of the theory of Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> learning and as such there was limited active application of the theory in the curriculum. The curriculum is perceived as greatly skewed to stringent methodological theory, structure and quantitative methodology, implying a bias towards Quadrant A thinking styles, neglecting the other thinking styles.
- Participants provided innovative contributions to enhancing the curriculum through the use of roleplay in learning opportunities so that students are exposed to multiple interpersonal perspectives related to various learning tasks. Rubrics allow for greater agility and flexibility in assessments. Students should be exposed to new technologies, especially those related to artificial intelligence, not only for them to understand the utility of these technologies but also that they learn that lecturers are subsequently also aware of these technologies. Gamification has been used as a tool to challenge students to learn and to bring forth a sense of fun to learning. There is a move away from textbook-based learning by incorporating more applied resources that a student may find useful in practice such as websites, online resources and smartphone technology. Finally, participants also found *walking the talk* useful; essentially the lecturer should practice the competencies and vernacular of the subject discipline which should lead to the demonstration effect for students.
- A dual-stream approach to the curriculum has been recommended, especially at advanced diploma level. Currently the curriculum is primarily aligned to liberal education within a vocational qualification. Students may perceive a greater benefit and buy-in into the curriculum should they be able to garner a professional advantage in the employment market, there

should be practical application to the real world. Advanced diploma research methodology should embrace the theory of PPE by proportionately aligning the curriculum to both liberal and vocational requirements.

- Continuous assessment is deemed as the most suitable form of assessment mode for research methodology. Continuous evaluation is also deemed a more authentic approach to assessment whereby students are provided multiple competency-based assessments with constructive feedback and reflexive opportunities. Final assessment should be in the form of a research report for advanced diploma and a full research proposal at postgraduate diploma level.
- For constructivist learning, collaborative learning as well as associated peer review opportunities are deemed beneficial to authentic learning. The student should be actively involved as a collaborator in the learning process so as to engender an environment of ownership in learning and to bring forth opportunities to make the learning environment more relatable and fun.
- Opportunities should be investigated to include foundational tourism research methodology learning outcomes into undergraduate curricula, especially outcomes related to academic writing and communication skills.

#### **7.3.4. Conclusions from international colleagues**

The Delphi panel provided valuable international perspectives in tourism research methodology curriculum development, the following conclusions may be drawn in this regard:

- International colleagues were of the view that undergraduate students that wish to pursue further study are required to master a set of attributes in order to provide a constructive foundation for the scaffolding of further learning. The first of these attributes are related to the learning and understanding of fundamental concepts related to tourism research methodology developed at undergraduate level. As undergraduate tourism

qualifications are primarily vocational, there is a conjecture that these students have been exposed to the real world of work and this vocational experience may serve as a beneficial reflexive resource on which further learning may be based.

- Critical thinking skills are deemed as fundamental learned skills in an undergraduate curriculum that should be carried and developed further in advanced and postgraduate diplomas. However, although they are desired, there is a clear deficit in that actual attainment of these preferred attributes.
- The values identified as graduate attributes of undergraduate students align with the mutuality values of TEFI wherein a mutual respect for diversity, equity, inclusion, humility and collaboration are sought.
- Undergraduate students are required to have developed effective communication skills, have an entrepreneurial drive and be overt to lifelong learning.
- In order for an undergraduate student to successfully embark on a postgraduate learning journey they would need to master a number of competencies including interpersonal, intrapersonal, analytical, academic communication, have lived experiences within the vocational environment of the industry and a commitment to learn as well as a strong resilient work ethic.
- In terms of Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> thinking, there was very little proactive implementation of the theory in practice. However, the panel revealed that due to the current content driven nature of tourism research methodology curricula Quadrant A was most applied in curriculum design.
- In terms of constructivist curriculum design for tourism research methodology the panel believed that a student entering a curriculum at an equivalent NQF7 or NQF8 level should have learned the core foundational concepts associated with the subject discipline. This is necessary as a constructive learning scaffolding would be needed to build upon this foundation. For constructivism to be realised learning needs to be applied and relatable to the real world of work. A constructivist curriculum needs to

acknowledge and incorporate a student-orientated approach, involve collaborative competency and inquiry-based learning tasks.

- In terms of blended learning the Delphi panel alluded to a preference for physical classes as opposed to online classes. However, should the online infrastructure of a HEI be of adequate quality, then a flipped classroom approach may be most suited to transformed tourism research methodology curricula.

#### **7.4. MY META-REFLECTION**

Reflection is a fundamental aspect of an action research design. So far in this study there have been opportunities for reflection before practice, during and of my practice. I now reflect on my reflection as meta-reflection, as it plays a crucial role in shaping teaching practices and enhancing the effectiveness of higher education practitioners. This process involves a conscious and thoughtful consideration of one's teaching methods, strategies, and interactions when developing and executing a curriculum. By engaging in meta-reflection, I have gained valuable insights into my teaching practices, identified areas for improvement, and refined my approaches to better meet the needs of my students.

The impact of meta-reflection on teaching practice is profound. It empowers me to move beyond the routine execution of learning opportunities and delve into a deeper understanding of the dynamics within the learning environment of my students. Through thoughtful analysis and self-awareness, I can assess the success of my facilitation methods, evaluate student engagement, and adapt my approaches to cater for diverse learning styles.

Meta-reflection encourages a continuous cycle of improvement, fostering a culture of lifelong learning (Du Toit, 2018) within my own scholarly professionalism. It prompts me to question the rationale behind my decisions, explore alternative strategies, and consider the broader implications of my instructional choices. This self-awareness not

only contributes to my personal and professional growth but also cultivates a dynamic and responsive teaching environment.

Furthermore, meta-reflection fosters a more empathetic and student-centric teaching approach. By understanding the impact of my actions on student learning, I am able to transform my teaching methodology to create inclusive, supportive, and engaging learning environments for my students. This process encourages a commitment to ongoing development, adaptability, and a genuine dedication to the educational journey of each student.

In this section I provide a synopsis of my meta-reflection related to my own professional practice and the tourism research methodology curriculum.

- I acknowledge that the module research methodology generally does not enjoy a positive preconception by students. Which is supported by the perspectives of faculty, South African and international colleagues. This preconception generally rests in the notion that the module is overly theoretical and technical, boring and not applicable to practice. As a result, I have used the building towers exercise in my initial class each year. This class, not only serves as an effective ice-breaker session for students to get to know one another (and reciprocally for me and the students to get to know one another) but also as an opportunity to instil the element of fun, which is especially beneficial to break the negative preconception of boredom.
- With my Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> learning profile being skewed towards Quadrant A and B, the learning opportunities I previously developed for my students did not ideally suit all thinking styles. For this reason, I investigated alternative learning task designs in order to cater for different thinking styles and intelligences. In some of the learning opportunities that I design, for both RTM107V and RTM108G, students are requested to draw various concepts



in groups and to develop their own definitions and descriptions of concepts. This has allowed for greater relational and experimental learning among students. It has also empowered students with the ability to think beyond the textbook and to realise that critical thinking and opinions are welcomed. Many students, who previously learned textbooks by rote, now have learned how to present their own understanding of concepts.

- My Smarties class brings forth opportunities for the activation of kinaesthetic, visual, intrapersonal and logical mathematical learning. This class, breaks away from the unexciting, structured, PowerPoint led class design to one where the learning of fundamental research methodological concepts related to sampling and statistics are made enjoyable. The positive results of this session are demonstrated by enhanced application of test answers, indicating authentic learning and when students from previous cohorts that I have engaged with still associate smarties with my sampling class.
- Previously, the textbook-lead learning opportunities failed to engage authentic learning as students were not able to effectively apply their theoretical learning to practical problems in assessments. This was especially the case with the learning of sampling methodologies. The learning by numbers learning task has enhanced visual-spatial, interpersonal and logical-mathematical learning. In addition, the creative nature of this class has allowed students to feel free to experiment with different methods to achieve the learning outcomes. The experimentation with various methodologies has improved critical thinking and the application of these conceptual methodological concepts into practice has allowed for greater reflexivity which is evidenced in the greater application of test answers which were previously based purely on recall.
- The RTM107V and RTM108G curriculum is currently presented in hybrid mode, offering learning opportunities both in the traditional classroom setting but also online. My major challenge with online class is although the attendance rates are higher than physical classes, there is poor class engagement. I have used two approaches to try to alleviate this challenge. Requiring students to present during online classes has resulted in greater

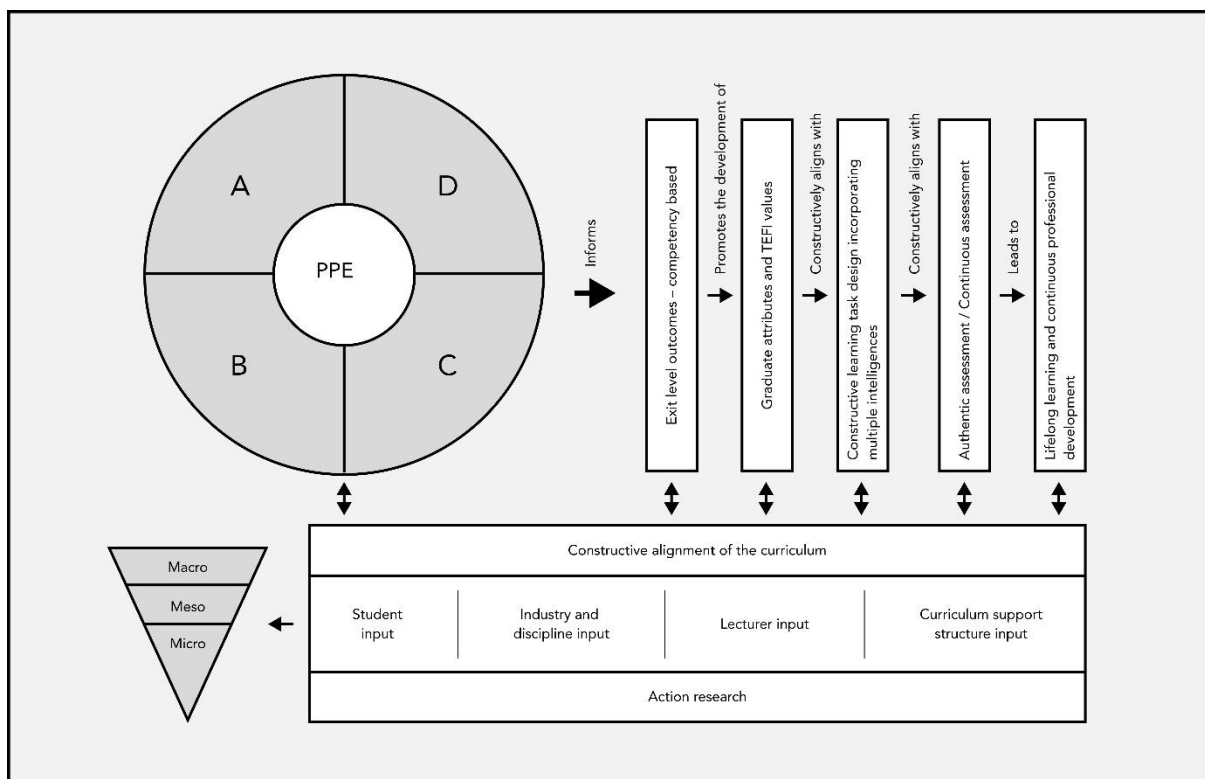
engagement as the uncertainty of who will present when keeps students engaged. Secondly, I have used the 'breakout room' function in online classes. This allows for students to be placed into smaller virtual collaborative groups and through problem-based learning are required to engage with a challenging task, which after a period of collaborative engagement the group then presents to the larger group. This peer discussion has allowed for a discussion that takes place in the so-called *student voice* which I feel enhances the relatability of the learning.

- Relatability and real world application are essential for effective constructive alignment. This is especially pertinent in modules such as tourism research methodology that have a generally adverse preconception.
- I have found great benefit in off campus learning opportunities. The session at in the botanical garden, provides an environment that is removed from the distractions of campus and in a natural environment that allows for greater Whole Brain® Quadrant C and D engagement within a naturalistic learning environment. Learning is applied in a natural setting and the quietness and openness of the garden allows for both effective interpersonal (collaborative) learning and intrapersonal reflection.
- A challenge I face over which I have limited influence is assessments in the curriculum of both RTM107V and RTM108G. The assessments are determined at meso level and instructed to micro level. I feel that the high reliance on testing leads to greater recall-based learning which degrades the achievement of competency-based learning. I feel that lecturers at micro level curriculum design should have greater autonomy to develop learning opportunities and assessments that cater to the needs of unique cohorts of students and the specialised needs of each discipline.
- Throughout my learning journey I have used analogies and metaphors as constructive descriptions to enhance the relatability of complex and intricate conceptions in this thesis. These stories, I believe, have made the information more relatable and comprehensible. I have realised that storytelling may be a constructive approach to affect authentic learning for convoluted curricula such as research methodology. With this in mind, I

believe that storytelling as a constructive approach to learning task design should be further investigated the succeeding cycle of my action research process.

### 7.5. TRANSFORMING THE CURRICULUM

Constructivism is a learning theory that suggests learners actively construct their understanding of the world through their experiences and interactions. In the context of research methodology as a subject, applying constructivist principles can enhance authentic learning in several ways. In this section I present innovative solutions to transform the tourism research methodology curricula at TUT in order to better prepare undergraduate students for postgraduate study. I summarise my curriculum transformation perspective in Figure 7.1 and my recommendations for transformation are presented in Table 7.1 and discussed thereafter.



**Figure 7.1: My curriculum transformation perspective**

In Figure 7.1, I visually present the envisioned transformational process for the tourism research methodology curriculum. In order to promote authentic learning, a constructivist Whole Brain® learning foundational philosophy is required. Included in this foundation is the need for philosophical practitioner education that incorporates a fair balance in both vocational and liberal domains of learning in tourism. This foundation informs the exit level outcome design at macro level curriculum development. Graduate attributes, which have previously not been dynamically encompassed in curriculum design should be determined and linked to the exit level outcomes so that an effective constructive alignment may be achieved that connects the exit level outcomes, graduate attributes, learning opportunities and assessment. Should this constructive alignment be effectively designed the attainment of lifelong learning in the student may be galvanised. During the entire process the principles of constructive alignment need to be adhered to together with consistent, active and constructive input from stakeholders such as students, industry (advisory boards and industry engagement), lecturers and relevant institutional curriculum support structures. The lecturer serves as a vital convener of these stakeholders, performing a leading role in the design, development and implementation of this curriculum. By means of action research approaches by curriculum designers, there is opportunity for consistent improvement in practice, scholarly discourse and ultimately the curriculum. This process will provide constructive support to curriculum and instructional design on macro, meso and micro level.

**Table 7.1: Recommendations to transform the tourism research methodology curriculum**

Transformative focus	Description	Constructive application to research methodology
Nomenclatures and custodianship	Clear distinction of tourism research methodology as a stand-alone module.	Recommendation to change the naming of the modules RTM107V and RTM108G to include the name 'tourism' so as to provide a clear distinction between these modules and others in the faculty, i.e. Tourism Research Methodology and Advanced Tourism Research Methodology.
	Discipline aligned curriculum	The process of tourism research methodology curriculum design should be placed into the custodianship of the department, lecturers and students. This will allow for a more pragmatic approach to curriculum design that breaks away the generic, faculty driven process.
Curriculum outcomes	ADTM Outcomes	<p>Move to competency-based outcomes.</p> <p>ADTM to be seen as a transitional qualification serving as a bridge between vocational undergraduate learning and liberal postgraduate learning.</p> <p>Outcomes aligned to PPE with both academic and applied vocational research outcomes. Outcome aligned towards the development of a final research report based on a vocational research project.</p> <p>Revise the purpose of the module to:</p> <p><i>The purpose of this module is to provide an environment for students to advance their understanding of tourism research methodology through the development of competencies and skills related to vocational and academic research skills in tourism management. Through the practical development and implementation of an applied research project the</i></p>

		<p><i>student is able to develop skills related to the logical development of a research strategy, detailed and organised execution of this strategy, creative problem-solving and holistically integrating results in the form of a well communicated final mini research report.</i></p>
	PDTM Outcome	<p>Move to competency-based outcomes.          Academic research outcomes directed towards the development of an authentic Master's research proposal.          Revise the purpose of the module to:  <i>Conduct a holistic fact-based and detailed analysis of literature on a realistic tourism research concept. Develop and demonstrate competency in integrating literature to identify an authentic research problem or innovative research concept. Develop and demonstrate competency in developing a detailed, logical and integrated research strategy. Develop and present an authentic Masters research proposal to an audience of peers.</i></p>
Graduate attributes	Attributes that students perceive as well developed.	<p>Constructivist approaches to learning task design such as collaborative learning opportunities seem well suited to both the ADTM and PDTM cohorts as the attributes of planning, interpersonal skills, problem-solving and teaching and training others are deemed well developed by students.</p>

	Attributes that are perceived as requiring development by students.	In order to ensure a holistic learning approach is achieved the attributes that require development need to be actively engaged with in learning task design, especially those related to mathematical, innovation, integration and financial skills.
Technology and the curriculum	Technology used in learning environments should engage the Whole Brain <sup>®</sup> thinking preferences of students.	ADTM students find benefit in the inclusion of internet technologies, more specifically academic search engines, general search engines in curricula in a classroom-based environment. PDTM students find benefit in the inclusion of internet technologies, more specifically academic search engines, general search engines in curricula in a virtual learning environment. University library infrastructure was not considered as useful implying a need for university libraries to transform their operational models.
Holistic alignment of curriculum	Constructive meso and macro curriculum engagement	Although lecturers operate predominantly at micro level curriculum and instructional design, the resolutions by meso and macro curriculum task teams have a direct top-down effect on lecturers. One such problem is the misalignment of modules in a qualification where learning opportunities are developed in silos and are poorly integrated. Lecturers and students should be active participants providing valuable input towards meso and macro curriculum design processes in HEIs.
Curriculum needs from students related to philosophical practitioner	A curriculum that is equitably aligned among the vocational needs of the industry and liberal education.	Applied industry-directed problem-based learning opportunities and assessments.

education-aligned curriculum		Agile liberal academic research approach as the foundation for achievement of desired competencies.
Active engagement	Constructivism encourages students to be active participants in the learning process.	Students should actively engage with research methodology concepts, designs and methods. Instead of passively receiving information, they should actively participate in the construction of knowledge through hands-on experiences.
Meaningful and relatable context	Constructivism emphasises the importance of meaningful contexts for learning.	In ADTM link research methodology with a career path, relating professional practice to learning opportunities. For ADTM and PDTM research methodology is often abstract and theoretical. Constructivism allows students to apply competencies in real-world scenarios. They can design and conduct actual research projects, making the learning experience more authentic and relevant. Curricula should be designed so as to include relatable concepts, tasks, narratives and stories that apply to Generation Z.
Collaborative learning	Constructivism supports collaborative learning where students learn from each other.	Students can collaborate on research projects, sharing insights, perspectives and methods. This mirrors the collaborative nature of research in the academic and professional spheres.
Constructive problem-based learning	Constructivism promotes problem-based learning where students tackle real-world issues.	Instead of simply memorising research methods, students can engage in problem-based scenarios, identifying research questions, selecting appropriate methods, and addressing challenges commonly encountered in research projects.



Reflection, iteration and meta-cognition.	Constructivism encourages reflection on learning experiences and iterative refinement of understanding.	Research is an iterative process, and constructivism supports students in reflecting on their research decisions, outcomes, and challenges. This reflective practice enhances their understanding and ability to improve research skills over time.
	Foster reflective practices and meta-cognition to enhance self-awareness and self-regulation.	Incorporate regular opportunities for students to reflect on their learning processes, research decisions, and problem-solving strategies. Encourage meta-cognitive skills that help students become aware of their own thinking and learning approaches.
	Enhance professionalism	Consider strategies such as action research for professional development embedded into ADTM curriculum.
Autonomy and ownership	Constructivism empowers students to take ownership of their learning.	Students are aware that they are responsible for their own learning journey. Students become active researchers, making decisions about their research projects, selecting methodologies, and taking responsibility for the entire research process. This autonomy fosters a deeper understanding of research methodology.
Integration of prior knowledge	Constructivism acknowledges the importance of integrating new knowledge with existing understanding.	Students bring their prior knowledge into the research methodology learning process. They integrate existing knowledge with new research methods, creating a more cohesive and comprehensive understanding of research.
Whole Brain <sup>®</sup> transformed curricula	Understanding the thinking preferences of a cohort of students allows for the development of	This study revealed that both sample cohorts' Whole Brain profiles were skewed towards Quadrant A and C. The results from the faculty, South

	learning and assessment opportunities that fulfil the need for authentic and constructive learning.	African and international colleagues also confirm a similar alignment related to the current curriculum. As a curriculum developer I take cognisance of the need for the development of Quadrant A and C learning task design and assessments. Actuating Quadrant B and D learning task design and assessments will need to be explored in further action research processes in order to create an organised, planned and holistic learning environment.
Analytical approaches (Quadrant A)	Integrate logical and analytical tasks that appeal to the left hemisphere of the brain.	Empower students to apply data analysis techniques, statistical methods and logical reasoning. Provide opportunities for students to engage in structured, logical processes involved in research design and analysis as certain principles of research are structured and sequential. Include learning tasks requiring analysis of research data and statistics.
Practical applications (Quadrant B)	Emphasize practical, hands-on experiences that connect theory to real-world applications.	Include practical exercises such as designing and conducting actual research projects, fieldwork, or case studies. Engage students in applying research methods to authentic scenarios.
Relational approaches (Quadrant C)	Facilitate learning through social interactions, collaboration, and group activities.	Encourage teamwork on research projects, group discussions, roleplaying, storytelling and peer review sessions. Incorporate collaborative elements into assignments to promote knowledge sharing and diverse perspectives. Utilise innovative physical learning tasks for example ' <i>building towers</i> ' or practical learning games. Make learning opportunities enjoyable and engaging.

		Invite current or former Masters or Doctoral students as guest lecturers in class to provide peers to interact with current students so as to provide a learning environment in which current students may have a greater sense of relatability.
Creative approaches (Quadrant D)	Include activities that stimulate creativity and imagination, tapping into the right hemisphere of the brain.	Encourage creative thinking in problem formulation, research design, and interpretation of results. Use visual aids, online resources, artistic expression (musical and visual learning tasks) mind mapping, and brainstorming sessions to foster innovative approaches to research.
Varied learning task designs	Employ a mix of teaching methods to cater for different learning preferences. Engage multiple senses in the learning process.	Use a variety of instructional approaches, including lectures, discussions, hands-on activities, multimedia presentations, and technology-based learning. Provide options for students to choose methods that align with their preferences.
		Naturalistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and spatial intelligence are considered most constructive by students for inclusion in curriculum design. Implying a need for learning opportunities that relate to a constructivist learning environment such as classroom design that allow for collaborative learning and for a curriculum that relates learning to natural settings.
		Incorporate visual aids, auditory resources, and tactile experiences into the curriculum. Utilise multimedia presentations, hands-on experiments, and interactive technologies to appeal to different sensory preferences.

		Consider multiple lecturer engagement either have two or more lecturers for the module or make use of guest lecturers to encourage students to learn incorporating multiple perspectives and creating an environment where students may see the advantage of voicing their own, perhaps diverse perspectives, allowing for authentic learning.
Learning environment	Develop an environment that encourages authentic constructively aligned learning.	On ADTM level physical classes are preferred that are during the day.
		On PDTM level online classes are preferred that are late afternoon or in the evening.
		Incorporate at least one off-campus learning opportunity in the tourism field.
Holistic approaches	Integrate holistic learning experiences that connect different elements and provide a comprehensive view.	Emphasise the interconnectedness of research components. Guide students in understanding how each phase of research contributes to the overall study. Encourage holistic thinking in problem-solving and decision making.
		Align the research methodology curriculum to other modules in the qualification in order to allow for students to integrate learning. Develop micro level collaborative action learning group among lecturers involved in each qualification.
Constructive assessment methods	Use diverse assessment methods that accommodate various cognitive styles.	Allow for a range of assessment formats, such as written reports, presentations, practical demonstrations, and collaborative projects. Offer flexibility in how students demonstrate their understanding of research concepts.

		<p>Less reliance on theoretical testing and greater incorporation of multiple assessment methods.</p> <p>Implement authentic assessment principles of real-world relevance; application of skills; open ended input; performance-based assessment; incorporate opportunities for reflection and provide timeous and constructive feedback.</p> <p>Authentic assessment should allow for a more agile learning approach which encourages quality-based and not quantity-based throughput.</p> <p>Summative assessment for ADTM should be in the format of a real-world research report based on an authentic research project executed by the student.</p> <p>Summative assessment for PDTM should be in the form of an authentic Master's research proposal.</p>
Emotional engagement	Recognise the role of emotions in learning and create an emotionally positive learning environment.	<p>Promote a supportive and encouraging atmosphere in which students feel comfortable taking intellectual risks. Acknowledge the emotional aspects of the research process, such as dealing with uncertainties and setbacks.</p> <p>Learning tasks incorporating peer review may provide an opportunity to realise that in reality research is a process of trial and error and the drive for continuous improvement. Setbacks are central elements of real-world research.</p>
Graduate attributes at completion of studies	Apart from exit level outcomes a tourism research methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge and competencies associated with the fundamental constructs of research methodology.</li> </ul>

	<p>curriculum should incorporate the development of graduate attributes required for postgraduate study.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to apply research design competence.</li> <li>• Ability to think critically and self-reflect.</li> <li>• Develop values deemed necessary for postgraduate study.</li> <li>• Ability to communicate effectively and academically.</li> <li>• Ability to demonstrate analytical skills.</li> <li>• Desire for lifelong learning.</li> </ul>
<p>Promotion of lifelong learning</p>	<p>Constructive Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> curriculum to develop lifelong learning</p>	<p>Investigate the possibility of developing a curriculum that accommodates the achievement of micro credentials by encouraging students to advance their formal higher education studies.</p> <p>By virtue of the underlying purpose of constructivism and Whole Brain<sup>®</sup> learning which seek to empower students to take ownership of their learning, collaboration with others and reflexivity, curricula ought to empower and motivate students to seek continuous professional development and an innate desire to continuously learn in the post formal higher education environment.</p>

Table 7.1 provides a descriptive presentation of tactical constructive actions that may be taken to improve the tourism research methodology curriculum to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study. By applying constructivist principles, research methodology as a subject can be transformed into a dynamic, authentic learning experience where students actively engage with the complexities of research, collaborate with peers, and develop a deep and meaningful understanding of research processes and principles. By incorporating these Whole Brain® learning principles into a research methodology curriculum, educators can create a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment that caters to diverse cognitive preferences and enhances the overall learning experience for students.

## 7.6. THE WAY FORWARD

Upon my reflection I acknowledge the major challenge my colleagues and I face with regard to the general under preparedness of undergraduate students progressing to postgraduate study. Not only are these students underprepared but they are pursuing further study with misguided intentions, hoping that further study will assist in their vocational career aspirations. As a curriculum developer at NQF7 and above, have limited direct input in relation to the curriculum development at NQF5 and 6 at meso and macro level. I do however practice my profession in a collaborative environment and I foresee a further role in my action research journey that will involve a collaborative research project related to improving the integration of research methodology outcomes in undergraduate curricula. Action research has proven itself to be a practical and beneficial approach to continuous enhancement of my own professional practice. In addition, the collaborative contributions by interviewees and focus group participants has hopefully also created an environment within which colleagues have been empowered to reflect on their own professional practice and to investigate possibilities for improvement. The lessons learned and recommendations developed should lead to applied transformation within the curricula which in turn allow for the identification of potential future areas of investigation.

The recommendations emanating from this study may be used as input in the programme review process which occurs periodically in order to review and revise

existing qualifications. The input from the diversity of participants in this study has allowed for constructive benchmarking, both domestic and international.

The lessons learned during this research journey have been used to revise my own professional practice through action research. This process has allowed and will allow for continuous innovations in my practice that require application and reflection. This study has provided me with a deep and meaningful investigation of my own scholarly practice. During this intrapersonal learning journey, I identified opportunities for curricular transformation which were duly implemented and reflected upon. This has revealed opportunities for further refinement and improvement. This study has identified numerous further challenges in the curriculum and opportunities for transformation which will feed into the subsequent cycles of my persistent action research journey to improve my scholarly practice.

In order to disseminate the results and contributions of this study various conduits will be used. Internally, within my own practice this will involve engagement with faculty colleagues to guide decision-making for curriculum task teams at macro and meso curriculum design levels. Other channels will incorporate conferences and academic articles. One full paper entitled; *Exploring the desired attributes of postgraduate tourism students by means of an international Delphi study* has already been accepted for inclusion in the Council for Australasian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) conference in Hobart, Australia from 6-9 February 2024.

A full journal article entitled; *Exploring the desired attributes for undergraduate tourism students to pursue postgraduate study* has also been submitted to the journal *Transformation in Higher education*.

## 7.7. LIMITATIONS

Although I attempted to complete this study as effectively as possible, no research is textbook accurate and hence I do acknowledge certain challenges that I experienced. Firstly, the study dealt with a small sample size for a quantitative study where larger samples are preferred for richer data analysis. The target population size was not in



my control and I had to manage the data accordingly. A larger sample would be preferred for future research of this nature.

Data collection from South African colleagues was also challenging. One would expect scholarly colleagues in the same discipline to be willing to make time available to advance practise, however, some colleagues were reluctant to participate. This was also the case with the Delphi study where participant recruitment was a challenge.

The COVID-19 pandemic dealt the hardest blow to this study, especially during the years 2020 and 2021. During 2020 my professional practice was focussed primarily on sustaining the academic project of my department and assisting colleagues and students complete their respective curriculums on time. Time and effort were also needed to learn new technologies, especially those associated with online teaching and assessment. Although this allowed me to innovative my scholarly practice, I had to effectively postpone the PhD intermittently.

The specialised nature of the focus of the study should also be noted as a research limitation. The research focus was on the research methodology modules within the ADTM and PDTM at TUT. This therefore deems the results of this study case specific and not generalisable to other qualifications. Although the lessons learned from this case may be transferred to other possible areas of investigation.

## **7.8. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Apart from my own continuous action research journey to promote my scholarly practice, the following further areas for further study have been identified:

- The development of a framework to constructively judge the development of graduate attributes.
- Collaborative action research projects at micro curriculum level to examine effective ways to enhance authentic learning of Generation Z students in higher education.
- Further constructive investigations into making research methodology more fun and engaging for students.

- With the recommendation that tourism research methodology curricula should move away from an over reliance on testing to more varied forms of assessment there is a need for further investigation into practise in this regard. I deem it necessary to further investigate possibilities to enhance authentic assessment using alternative assessment methodologies to testing and assignments.

## 7.9. CONCLUSION

In 2019 I embarked on a learning journey to improve my professional practice. This involved transforming the tourism research methodology curriculum at TUT. This investigation, hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, lasted a bit longer than expected however, in hindsight, it provided novel opportunities for an action research investigation of my own practice. Engagements with colleagues provided the possibility of learning from their lived experiences which allowed me to confirm many of my own preconceptions and concurrently, it revealed a rich insight into novel and innovative teaching practice in varied global contexts.

The implications of this research extend beyond academic discourse, offering practical applications for curriculum development of not only tourism research methodology, but also transferrable to other disciplines. Throughout this academic journey, a commitment to rigorous methodology, intellectual curiosity, and a dedication to advancing my own professional practice and knowledge has been paramount. The challenges encountered along the way have served not only as obstacles but as opportunities for growth and refinement of the research process.

I stand at the culmination of this scholarly odyssey, it is evident that the pursuit of knowledge is an ever-evolving quest. This thesis not only encapsulates the current state of understanding within the realm of tourism research methodology but also acts as a catalyst for further exploration and refinement of ideas.

In closing, I extend my deepest gratitude all the students and participants that provided valuable input towards the study. This journey has been both challenging and rewarding, and I look forward to witnessing the impact and contributions this research will make to the academic community and beyond. May this thesis serve as a stepping stone for future scholars and practitioners.

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## APPENDIX A: Student Information Leaflet



Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde  
Lefapha la Thuto

### INFORMATION LEAFLET AND INFORMED CONSENT

#### PROJECT TITLE: A TRANSFORMATIVE CURRICULUM TO PREPARE UNDERGRADUATE TOURISM STUDENTS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY

Primary investigator: Prof UP Hermann (PhD Curriculum and Instructional Design and Development candidate)

Study leader: Prof PH Du Toit, Department of Humanities Education, University of Pretoria

Dear Potential research participant,

You are invited to participate in an online survey that forms part of my PhD CIDD studies. This information leaflet will help you to decide if you would like to participate.

#### 1. WHAT IS THE STUDY ALL ABOUT AND WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS THAT MAY COME FROM THE STUDY?

The primary focus of this study is to answer the following question:

By means of an action research process, how would a transformed curriculum look like to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study?

#### 2. ARE THERE ANY CONDITIONS THAT MAY EXCLUDE YOU FROM THE STUDY?

You will not be eligible to participate in this study if you are not registered for the following module Research Methodology and/or Advanced Research Methodology in an NQF 7 (Advanced Diploma) or NQF 8 (Postgrad Diploma/honours) aligned qualification in South Africa.

#### 3. WHAT WILL YOU BE REQUIRED TO DO IN THE STUDY?

The procedure involves completing an online survey that will take approximately 20 minutes. Your responses will be collected anonymously, and the data will be treated confidentially. The researcher undertakes not to engage in any activities aimed at identifying participants' personal information, for example, name, surname or IP address.

I also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

#### 4. WHAT ARE THE COMPENSATION, RISKS AND YOUR RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT IN THIS STUDY?

**No award clause-** Since participation in the study is voluntary, please note you will not receive any monetary awards or awards of any kind. You will not be paid to participate in the study. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks. You may decline to answer any of the questions and withdraw at any stage without any penalty. This study will in no way affect or influence your marks for RTM107V/RTM108G and will not be counted towards any formal assessments. Participation is voluntary.

#### 5. WHICH RESEARCH INSTRUMENT WILL BE USED?

The questionnaire is based on an adapted instrument developed by Herrmann (1991) and Ancora Learning (2019).

- Ancora Learning. (2019). Whole Brain Technology, Thinking Preferences and the HBDI™ Retrieved from: <http://ancoralearning.com.au/learning-tools-models/>
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#### 6. HOW WILL CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY BE ENSURED IN THE STUDY?

All data collected will be treated as confidential and your anonymity will be protected in any reports or publications produced as a result of the questionnaire. No questions pertaining to any personal identifiable information will be requested and all responses received will be delinked from your email addresses to ensure anonymity.

#### 7. HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee at UP has approved the formal study proposal. This study has received ethical clearance with reference number. **EDU133/20**.

#### 8. WHO CAN YOU CONTACT FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE STUDY?

If, at this stage or in future, you have any further queries about the project, please feel free to contact me at [hermannup@tut.ac.za](mailto:hermannup@tut.ac.za)/tel (012) 382-3528 or the study leader, Prof PH Du Toit at [pieter.dutoit@up.ac.za](mailto:pieter.dutoit@up.ac.za). For questions regarding the ethical aspects of the study, you can contact the chairperson Prof Funke Omidire at [edu.ethicsadmin@up.ac.za](mailto:edu.ethicsadmin@up.ac.za) .

#### 9. DECLARATION ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT

The researcher declares that he is the subject coordinator for the modules which this study focusses on. The results of the study will benefit the development of postgraduate students both at TUT and at other institutions. The results of this study will not be used by the researcher for any personal material gain. The information received during the project will only be used for research purposes and will not be released for any academic assessment, study progress and/or disciplinary purposes.

**The Desktop data usage clause-**I grant the University of Pretoria permission to use the data provided for this study, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy application to this study will be binding on future research studies.

**Covid 19 clause-** Due to Covid-19, and to minimise the spread of infection, the research will be conducted online or through various other media platforms.

**Confidentiality clause-** in line with the POPI Act; none of your names or personal information will be used in the report of my study. Because confidentiality is important we expect that any information that will be provided is also private and that it would not be discussed with anyone.

#### **10. CONSENT AND WORDS OF APPRECIATION**

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Clicking on the "agree" button indicates you agree that you have read the information above and voluntarily agree to participate in the research study. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

Thank you

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## APPENDIX B: Faculty colleagues information leaflet



Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde  
Lefapha la Thuto

### INFORMATION LEAFLET AND INFORMED CONSENT

#### PROJECT TITLE: A TRANSFORMATIVE CURRICULUM TO PREPARE UNDERGRADUATE TOURISM STUDENTS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY

Primary investigator: Prof UP Hermann (PhD Curriculum and Instructional Design and Development candidate)

Study leader: Prof PH Du Toit, Department of Humanities Education, University of Pretoria

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in an online focus group interview that forms part of my PhD CIDD studies. This information leaflet will help you to decide if you would like to participate.

#### 11. WHAT IS THE STUDY ALL ABOUT AND WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS THAT MAY COME FROM THE STUDY?

The primary focus of this study is to answer the following question:

By means of an action research process, how would a transformed curriculum look like to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study?

#### 12. ARE THERE ANY CONDITIONS THAT MAY EXCLUDE YOU FROM THE STUDY?

You will not be eligible to participate in this study if you are not involved in the facilitation of research methodology modules at Advanced Diploma/Postgraduate Diploma and /or honours degree level.

#### 13. WHAT WILL YOU BE REQUIRED TO DO IN THE STUDY?

The procedure involves participating in an online focus group interview with a group of South African academic colleagues that facilitate research methodology modules at Advanced Diploma/Postgraduate Diploma and /or honours degree level. It is anticipated that this session will last about one hour and will focus on aspects relating to the planning, facilitation and assessment of these modules. The responses you provide will be treated confidentially. The researcher undertakes not to engage in any activities aimed at identifying participants' personal information, for example, name, surname or IP address.

I also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching



purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

#### **14. WHAT ARE THE COMPENSATION, RISKS AND YOUR RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT IN THIS STUDY?**

**No award clause-** Since participation in the study is voluntary, please note you will not receive any monetary awards or awards of any kind. You will not be paid to participate in the study. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks. You may decline to answer any of the questions and withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

#### **15. WHICH RESEARCH INSTRUMENT WILL BE USED?**

A focus group discussion consisting of 10 outcomes has been designed by the researcher related to research methodology curriculum design in tourism.

#### **16. HOW WILL CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY BE ENSURED IN THE STUDY?**

All data collected will be treated as confidential and your anonymity will be protected in any reports or publications produced as a result of the questionnaire. No questions pertaining to any personal identifiable information will be requested and all responses received will be delinked from your email addresses to ensure anonymity.

#### **17. HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?**

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee at UP has approved the formal study proposal. This study has received ethical clearance with reference number **EDU133/20**.

#### **18. WHO CAN YOU CONTACT FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE STUDY?**

If, at this stage or in future, you have any further queries about the project, please feel free to contact me at [hermannup@tut.ac.za](mailto:hermannup@tut.ac.za)/tel (012) 382-3528 or the study leader, Prof PH Du Toit at [pieter.dutoit@up.ac.za](mailto:pieter.dutoit@up.ac.za). For questions regarding the ethical aspects of the study, you can contact the chairperson Prof Funke Omidire at [edu.ethicsadmin@up.ac.za](mailto:edu.ethicsadmin@up.ac.za).

#### **19. DECLARATION ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT**

The researcher declares that he is the subject coordinator for the modules which this study focusses on at the Tshwane University of Technology. The results of the study will benefit the development of postgraduate students both at TUT and at other institutions. The results of this study will not be used by the researcher for any personal material gain. The information received during the project will only be used for research purposes and will not be released for any academic assessment, study progress and/or disciplinary purposes.

**The Desktop data usage clause-**I grant the University of Pretoria permission to use the data provided for this study, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy application to this study will be binding on future research studies.

**Covid 19 clause-** Due to Covid-19, and to minimise the spread of infection, the research will be conducted online or through various other media platforms.

**Confidentiality clause-** in line with the POPI Act; none of your names or personal information will be used in the report of my study. Because confidentiality is important we expect that any information that will be provided is also private and that it would not be discussed with anyone.

## **20. CONSENT AND WORDS OF APPRECIATION**

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

By responding to the invitation Email and indicating your willingness to participate, you do so voluntarily and may exit the study at any point should you so wish.

Thank you

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## APPENDIX C: South African colleagues information leaflet



Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde  
Lefapha la Thuto

### INFORMATION LEAFLET AND INFORMED CONSENT

#### PROJECT TITLE: A TRANSFORMATIVE CURRICULUM TO PREPARE UNDERGRADUATE TOURISM STUDENTS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY

Primary investigator: Prof UP Hermann (PhD Curriculum and Instructional Design and Development candidate)

Study leader: Prof PH Du Toit, Department of Humanities Education, University of Pretoria

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in an online interview that forms part of my PhD CIDD studies. This information leaflet will help you to decide if you would like to participate.

#### 21. WHAT IS THE STUDY ALL ABOUT AND WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS THAT MAY COME FROM THE STUDY?

The primary focus of this study is to answer the following question:

By means of an action research process, how would a transformed curriculum look like to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study?

#### 22. ARE THERE ANY CONDITIONS THAT MAY EXCLUDE YOU FROM THE STUDY?

You will not be eligible to participate in this study if you are not involved in the facilitation of research methodology modules at Advanced Diploma/Postgraduate Diploma and /or honours degree level.

#### 23. WHAT WILL YOU BE REQUIRED TO DO IN THE STUDY?

The procedure involves participating in an online interview with a group of South African academic colleagues that facilitate research methodology modules at Advanced Diploma/Postgraduate Diploma and /or honours degree level. It is anticipated that this session will last about one hour and will focus on aspects relating to the planning, facilitation and assessment of these modules. The responses you provide will be treated confidentially. The researcher undertakes not to engage in any activities aimed at identifying participants' personal information, for example, name, surname or IP address.

I also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching

purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

#### **24. WHAT ARE THE COMPENSATION, RISKS AND YOUR RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT IN THIS STUDY?**

**No award clause-** Since participation in the study is voluntary, please note you will not receive any monetary awards or awards of any kind. You will not be paid to participate in the study. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks. You may decline to answer any of the questions and withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

#### **25. WHICH RESEARCH INSTRUMENT WILL BE USED?**

An interview guide consisting of 10 outcomes has been designed by the researcher related to research methodology curriculum design in tourism.

#### **26. HOW WILL CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY BE ENSURED IN THE STUDY?**

All data collected will be treated as confidential and your anonymity will be protected in any reports or publications produced as a result of the questionnaire. No questions pertaining to any personal identifiable information will be requested and all responses received will be delinked from your email addresses to ensure anonymity.

#### **27. HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?**

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee at UP has approved the formal study proposal. This study has received ethical clearance with reference number **EDU133/20**.

#### **28. WHO CAN YOU CONTACT FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE STUDY?**

If, at this stage or in future, you have any further queries about the project, please feel free to contact me at [hermannup@tut.ac.za](mailto:hermannup@tut.ac.za)/tel (012) 382-3528 or the study leader, Prof PH Du Toit at [pieter.dutoit@up.ac.za](mailto:pieter.dutoit@up.ac.za). For questions regarding the ethical aspects of the study, you can contact the chairperson Prof Funke Omidire at [edu.ethicsadmin@up.ac.za](mailto:edu.ethicsadmin@up.ac.za).

#### **29. DECLARATION ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT**

The researcher declares that he is the subject coordinator for the modules which this study focusses on at the Tshwane University of Technology. The results of the study will benefit the development of postgraduate students both at TUT and at other institutions. The results of this study will not be used by the researcher for any personal material gain. The information received during the project will only be used for research purposes and will not be released for any academic assessment, study progress and/or disciplinary purposes.

**The Desktop data usage clause-**I grant the University of Pretoria permission to use the data provided for this study, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy application to this study will be binding on future research studies.

**Covid 19 clause-** Due to Covid-19, and to minimise the spread of infection, the research will be conducted online or through various other media platforms.

**Confidentiality clause-** in line with the POPI Act; none of your names or personal information will be used in the report of my study. Because confidentiality is important we expect that any information that will be provided is also private and that it would not be discussed with anyone.

### **30. CONSENT AND WORDS OF APPRECIATION**

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

By responding to the invitation Email and indicating your willingness to participate, you do so voluntarily and may exit the study at any point should you so wish.

Thank you

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## APPENDIX D: Delphi panel information leaflet



Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde  
Lefapha la Thuto

### INFORMATION LEAFLET AND INFORMED CONSENT

#### PROJECT TITLE: A TRANSFORMATIVE CURRICULUM TO PREPARE UNDERGRADUATE TOURISM STUDENTS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY

Primary investigator: Prof UP Hermann (PhD Curriculum and Instructional Design and Development candidate)

Study leader: Prof PH Du Toit, Department of Humanities Education, University of Pretoria

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in an online survey that forms part of my PhD CIDD studies. This information leaflet will help you to decide if you would like to participate.

#### **31. WHAT IS THE STUDY ALL ABOUT AND WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS THAT MAY COME FROM THE STUDY?**

The primary focus of this study is to answer the following question:

By means of an action research process, how would a transformed curriculum look like to better prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study?

#### **32. ARE THERE ANY CONDITIONS THAT MAY EXCLUDE YOU FROM THE STUDY?**

You will not be eligible to participate in this study if you are not involved in the facilitation of research methodology modules at Advanced Diploma/Postgraduate Diploma and /or honours degree level.

#### **33. WHAT WILL YOU BE REQUIRED TO DO IN THE STUDY?**

The procedure involves completing an online survey that will take approximately 20 minutes. As this survey forms part of a Delphi technique, the researcher will analyse and collate all responses received and thereafter you will receive the survey results back in future for continued input until group consensus is achieved. . The responses you provide will be treated confidentially. The researcher undertakes not to engage in any activities aimed at identifying participants' personal information, for example, name, surname or IP address.

I also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching

purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

#### **34. WHAT ARE THE COMPENSATION, RISKS AND YOUR RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT IN THIS STUDY?**

**No award clause-** Since participation in the study is voluntary, please note you will not receive any monetary awards or awards of any kind. You will not be paid to participate in the study. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks. You may decline to answer any of the questions and withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

#### **35. WHICH RESEARCH INSTRUMENT WILL BE USED?**

A survey consisting of 10 questions has been designed by the researcher related to research methodology curriculum design in tourism.

#### **36. HOW WILL CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY BE ENSURED IN THE STUDY?**

All data collected will be treated as confidential and your anonymity will be protected in any reports or publications produced as a result of the questionnaire. No questions pertaining to any personal identifiable information will be requested and all responses received will be delinked from your email addresses to ensure anonymity.

#### **37. HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?**

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee at UP has approved the formal study proposal. This study has received ethical clearance with reference number **EDU133/20**.

#### **38. WHO CAN YOU CONTACT FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE STUDY?**

If, at this stage or in future, you have any further queries about the project, please feel free to contact me at [hermannup@tut.ac.za](mailto:hermannup@tut.ac.za)/tel (012) 382-3528 or the study leader, Prof PH Du Toit at [pieter.dutoit@up.ac.za](mailto:pieter.dutoit@up.ac.za). For questions regarding the ethical aspects of the study, you can contact the chairperson Prof Funke Omidire at [edu.ethicsadmin@up.ac.za](mailto:edu.ethicsadmin@up.ac.za).

#### **39. DECLARATION ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT**

The researcher declares that he is the subject coordinator for the modules which this study focusses on. The results of the study will benefit the development of postgraduate students both at TUT and at other institutions. The results of this study will not be used by the researcher for any personal material gain. The information received during the project will only be used for research purposes and will not be released for any academic assessment, study progress and/or disciplinary purposes.

**The Desktop data usage clause-**I grant the University of Pretoria permission to use the data provided for this study, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy application to this study will be binding on future research studies.

**Covid 19 clause-** Due to Covid-19, and to minimise the spread of infection, the research will be conducted online or through various other media platforms.

**Confidentiality clause-** in line with the POPI Act; none of your names or personal information will be used in the report of my study. Because confidentiality is important we expect that any information that will be provided is also private and that it would not be discussed with anyone.

#### **40. CONSENT AND WORDS OF APPRECIATION**

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Clicking on the "Begin survey" button indicates you agree that you have read the information above and voluntarily agree to participate in the research study. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

Thank you

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## APPENDIX E: Student questionnaire

Learning experience survey for senior Tourism Management students

### Section A: Demographics

#### Please tell us a bit more about yourself.

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

2. In which year were you born?

3. Which course are you currently registered for?

Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management or similar field

Postgraduate Diploma in Tourism Management or similar field

Honours degree in Tourism or similar field

Other (please specify)

4. In which year did you complete your NQF7 (Diploma/National Diploma/Bachelors) qualification?






5. At which university are you currently registered to complete your Advanced Diploma/Postgraduate Diploma/Honours degree?

Learning experience survey for senior Tourism Management students

Section B: Motivations to study further

**Please provide us with an insight as to why you have decided to study further.**

6. Listed below are a few motivations for pursuing further studies. Rank these motivations from most important to least important as they pertain to you, 5 being the highest motivation and 1 being the lowest motivation. You can move the ranking by clicking on the up and down arrows.

-  For career development (Employed, seeking promotion/remuneration increase/to get a better job)
-  For my own personal development (Something I really want to achieve)
-  For academic development (Enhance my knowledge)
-  To become a postgraduate researcher (Masters/doctoral student)
-  To get a job (Unemployed, seeking employment)

Learning experience survey for senior Tourism Management students

Section C: Work element

**Rate each of the work elements below according to your strength in that activity, using the following scale from left to right: 1 = work I do least well, 2 = work I do less well, 3 = neutral, 4 = work I do well, 5 = work I do best.**

7. Analytical (relating to the careful or scientific examination of facts and information)

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

8. Administrative (Relating to the management of something such as one's work)

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

9. Conceptualising (To come up with new ideas)

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

10. Expressing ideas (Ability to voice your ideas to get others to understand)

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

11. Integration (The process of merging numerous things into one)

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

12. Writing

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

13. Technical aspects (Able to take note and implement practical knowledge of an art, or craft, or its techniques)

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

14. Implementation

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

15. Planning

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

16. Interpersonal aspects (Ability to relate and communicate with other people)

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

17. Problem solving

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

18. Innovating (Coming up with new ideas and solutions to problems)

Work I do least well	Work I do less well	Neutral	Work I do well	Work I do best
				

19. Teaching and training others

Work I do least well      Work I do less well      Neutral      Work I do well      Work I do best



**20. Organisation**

Work I do least well      Work I do less well      Neutral      Work I do well      Work I do best



**21. Ability to be creative (thinking out of the box and generating and recognising original ideas)**

Work I do least well      Work I do less well      Neutral      Work I do well      Work I do best













**22. Ability to manage finances**

Work I do least well      Work I do less well      Neutral      Work I do well      Work I do best



**23. Rank the following technologies and tools in terms of their usefulness in your learning journey. Move the options up or down in terms of usefulness. Move the most useful to the top of the matrix and move the least useful to the bottom of the matrix.**

-  Academic Internet search engines such as Google Scholar.
-  General internet search engines such as Google or Yahoo.
-  Audio and video recordings related to your subject on Youtube, iTunes etc.
-  Web-based citation/referencing tools
-  Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter.
-  Your university's online learner management system (LMS) such as Blackboard.
-  Textbooks
-  Your university's library and online library portal.
-  Physical classroom
-  Virtual meeting software such as MS Teams, Zoom etc.

Learning experience survey for senior Tourism Management students

**Section D: You and your thinking preferences**

**This section requires you to provide some insight on how you see yourself related to your thinking preferences.**

\* 24. Select eight adjectives that best describe how you see yourself.

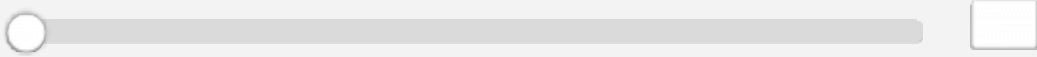
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Logical (Thought processes that have been established as leading to valid solutions to problems)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual (Believing in a higher power)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative (Coming up with new ideas)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Rational (Basing decisions on clear thought and reason)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical (Interested in or having a musical talent)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Controlled (Allowing another party/person to drive your thoughts and actions)                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sequential (Following a logical order)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematical (Using maths to make decisions)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Synthesizer (Putting facts together and coming up with my own perspective)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Symbolic (Seeing the function or meaning of an object or figure that stands for something else)                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal (Expressing yourself using words)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Dominant (Allowing yourself to dominate others)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative (Favouring established ideas)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Holistic (Seeing the whole of something, the bigger picture)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical (Examining things in detail)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Intuitive (Based on feelings rather than facts or proof)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Detailed (Separating something into smaller parts)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Quantitative (Prefer to base decisions on numbers)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional (Having feelings that are easily affected)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Reader (Reading and understanding words. making meaning of words)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spatial (Relating to the position, area, and size of things around me)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Simultaneous (Processing more than one type of mental input at a time, attend to more than one activity at a time) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical (Being particular about something)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Factual (Focusing on the accurate, objective, descriptive elements of an event or situation)                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Artistic (Taking enjoyment from or skillful in painting, drawing, music, or sculpture. Able to coordinate color, design, and texture for pleasing effects) | <input type="checkbox"/> Kinesthetic (Knowing where the parts of your body are and how they are moving in order to use them effectively)    |

\* 25. thinking about your energy level and drive, select which option best represents you.

- I am more of a day person
- I am a day and night person I
- am more of a night person

26. On the following scale, indicate to what degree you see yourself as an introverted person or an extroverted person.

Introvert
Extrovert












Reflecting on your intelligences. Rank the following intelligences from most important to least important as

### Learning experience survey for senior Tourism Management students

#### Section E: Your intelligences

they pertain to how you associate with them. You can move the ranking up and down by clicking on the up and down arrows.

-  Spatial (Ability to see the world in 3D, virtually or online)
-  Naturalistic (Ability to understand living things)
-  Musical (Discerning sounds, their rhythm, pitch etc.)
-  Logical-mathematical (Quantifying things, testing and proving hypothesis)
-  Existential (Spirituality and tackling the questions of life)
-  Interpersonal (Understanding other peoples' feelings and motives)
-  Bodily-kinaesthetic (Coordinating your body and your mind)
-  Linguistic (Ability to find words to express yourself)
-  Intrapersonal (Understanding yourself, what you feel and what you want)

### Learning experience survey for senior Tourism Management students

#### Section F: You and the world around you.

**The following statements pertain to how you perceive the world around you. Carefully read the statements provided and indicate to what extent you agree with that statement.**

27. I feel that a step-by-step method is best for solving problems.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

28. Daydreaming has provided the impetus for the solution to many of my more important problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

29. I like people who are most sure of their conclusions.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

30. I would rather be known as a reliable than an imaginative person.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

31. I often get my best ideas when doing nothing in particular.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

32. I rely on hunches or my 'gut feeling' when making decisions.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

33. I sometimes get a kick out of breaking the rules and doing things I am not supposed to do.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

34. Much of what is important in life cannot be expressed in words.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

35. I am more competitive by myself than with others.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

36. I enjoy spending an entire day alone with my thoughts.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

37. I prefer certainty and predictability.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

38. I prefer to work with others in a team rather than solo.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

39. It is important for me to have a place for everything and everything in its place.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

40. Unusual ideas and daring concepts interest and intrigue me.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

41. I prefer specific instructions to those which leave many details optional and up to me.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

42. Know-what is more important than know-how.



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

43. Thorough planning and organisation of time are mandatory for solving difficult problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

44. I can frequently anticipate the solutions to my problems.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

45. I tend to rely more on my first impressions and feelings when making judgements than on a careful analysis of the solution.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

46. I feel that rules should be strictly enforced.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

47. I prefer using online learning resources as opposed to attending classes physically.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

48. Online classes and learning provides more opportunities for independent learning as opposed to traditional classroom learning.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

49. I believe that learning opportunities should deal with real-life situations.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

50. Online learning provides greater opportunities to collaborate and learn with class mates.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

51. I believe that I am responsible for my own learning.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

52. I strive to empower myself to learn more than what is expected.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

53. I prefer to voice my own opinions as opposed to my lecturer/learning material in class and assessments.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

54. I feel that my input would be valued in the development of the curriculum which I am involved in.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

55. I am overall satisfied with the qualification that I am registered for.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

56. I believe that my lecturers are professional in their practice.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

57. My learning is strongly influenced by the availability of online technology.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

58. I strive to actively use what I have learned in practice in order to make the world around me a better place for all.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

### Section G: Your future

Once you have completed your Advanced Diploma/Postgraduate Diploma/Honours degree, you may have the opportunity to further your studies and embark on a journey to complete a Master's degree. Do you intend to pursue postgraduate studies? Briefly, in about 20 to 30 words, elaborate why you intend to do so or why not.

## APPENDIX F: Faculty colleagues focus group guide

### Focus group protocol for colleagues

Each participant will be provided with an information leaflet pertaining to whole brain thinking prior to the focus group.

The following areas of investigation will guide the moderator during the focus group interviews.

- Brief introduction by the researcher (acting as moderator) to the group.
- 9. Each participant to indicate how many research methodology modules they facilitate and how long they have been doing so.
- 10. Request the group to describe what they believe the purpose of research methodology is as a module within their respective professional environments.
- 11. Request group to describe to what extent the content of the research methodology curriculum is aligned to the purpose of the module.
- 12. Request the group to describe what challenges they face in facilitating research methodology in their professional environment.
- 13. Request the group to describe what challenges they face in assessing research methodology in their respective professional environments.
- 14. Taking into account the theory of whole brain thinking, to what extent do you believe that the research methodology curriculum is designed to accommodate whole brain thinking in students?
- 15. What innovative techniques have the participants used to facilitate the module?
- 16. What innovative techniques have the participants used to facilitate the module?
- 17. What transformation of teaching practice (changes or improvements) should be considered to enhance the curriculum?
- Formally close off focus group.

## **APPENDIX G: South African interview guide**

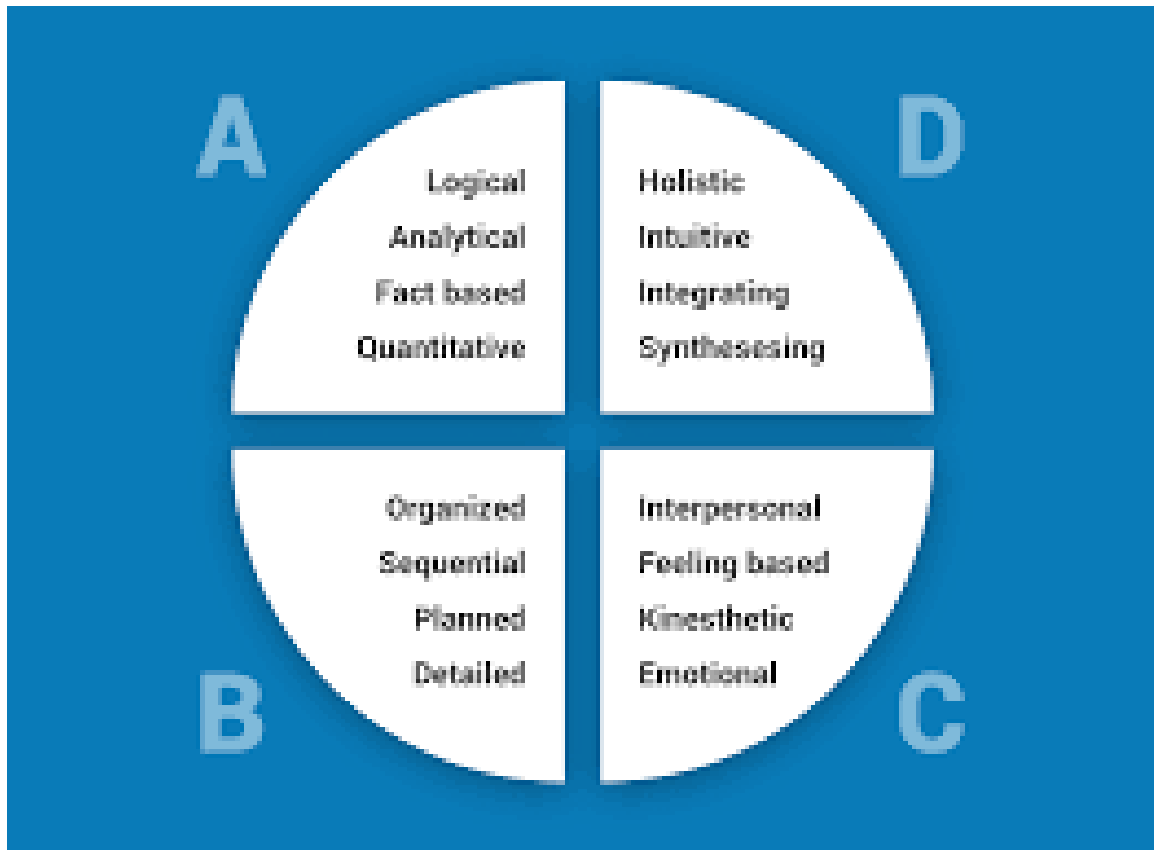
### **Interview guide for SA Experts**

Each participant will be provided with an information leaflet pertaining to whole brain thinking prior to the focus group.

The following areas of investigation will guide the interviewer during the interviews.

- Brief introduction by the researcher.
  
- 1. Each participant to indicate how many research methodology modules they facilitate and how long they have been doing so.
- 2. Request the participant to describe what they believe the purpose of research methodology is as a module within their respective professional environments.
- 3. Request participant to describe to what extent the participant perceives the research methodology module facilitated meets the aligned purpose of the module.
- 4. Request the participant to describe what challenges they face in facilitating research methodology in their professional environment.
- 5. Request the participant to describe what challenges they face in assessing research methodology in their respective professional environments.

Introduce the concept of Whole Brain thinking.



6. Taking into account the theory of whole brain thinking, to what extent do you believe that the research methodology curriculum is designed to accommodate whole brain thinking in students?
  7. What innovative techniques have the participants used to facilitate the module?
  8. What innovative techniques have the participants used to assess learning in the module?
  9. What transformation of teaching practice (changes or improvements) should be considered to enhance the curriculum?
- Formally close off interview.

## APPENDIX H: Delphi questionnaire

Dear Colleague,

My name is Prof Uwe Hermann, I am a PhD candidate, specialising in Curriculum Design and Development at the University of Pretoria. The focus of my study is to develop a transformative curriculum to better develop undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study, with a specific emphasis on the research methodology. My study makes use of a sequential mixed-methods design whereby data is being collected from students, colleagues and academic experts. As an expert in this field you are invited to participate in this Delphi study.

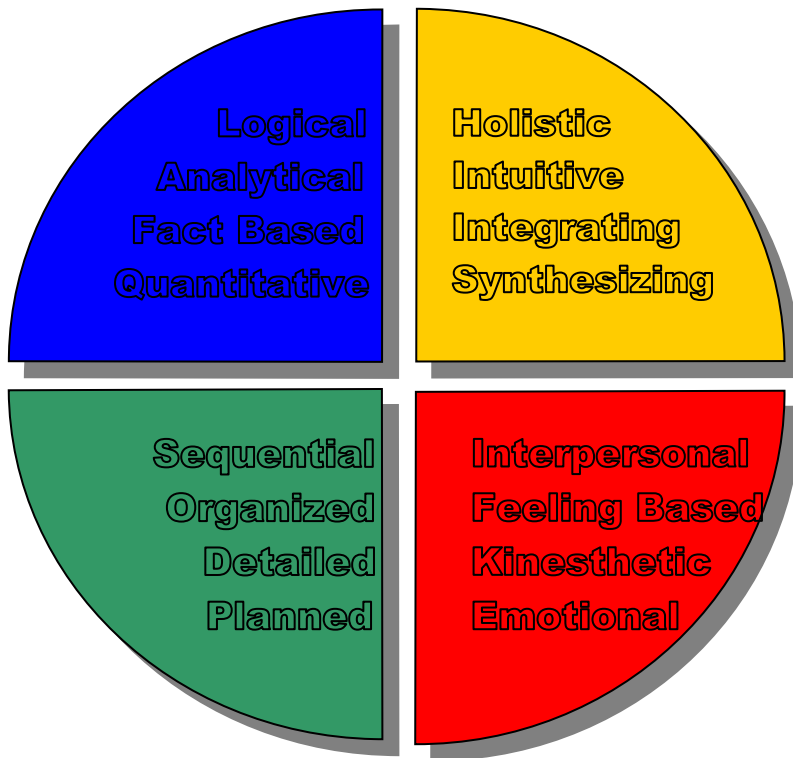
Reflecting on your experience as a lecturer and a facilitator of learning in the field of tourism research methodology, kindly answer to the following questions in as much detail as possible.

---

1 Considering graduate attributes, vocational preparedness, and competencies, related to real-life setting, how would you describe the ideal undergraduate tourism student upon completion of studies?

2 In order for an undergraduate tourism student to successfully pursue postgraduate study (Postgraduate Diploma/honours/masters), which competencies do you consider as fundamental to be in place? Please describe these as comprehensively as you can.

3 Whole brain learning, as illustrated below, proposes the enhancement of learning through the incorporation of different quadrants of the human brain. With this model it is prescribed that humans have preferred modes of thinking, which rests within the four quadrants. Preferences for specific modes of thinking that are aligned with the respective quadrants may change, either growing greater in the same quadrant or moving into another quadrant under stressful situations.



Source: <https://www.learnupon.com/blog/whole-brain-thinking/>

The whole brain model, as indicated above, proposes four modes of thinking. Quadrant A, which forms part of the left hemisphere of the brain, bases itself on logical, analytical, fact-based and quantitative thinking. Quadrant B, also part of the left hemisphere, deals with organised, sequential, planned and detailed thinking. Quadrant C, thinking deals with modes of thinking associated with interpersonal, feeling-based, kinaesthetic and emotive thinking. Quadrant D which forms part of the right creative hemisphere of the brain, deals with thinking in a holistic, intuitive, integrative and synthesised fashion.

Reflecting on your experience in higher education. Please describe your view of whole brain thinking and current research methodology curricula.

4 Please read the following excerpt.

*'The constructivist theory is based around the idea that learners are active participants in their learning journey; knowledge is constructed based on experiences. As events occur, each person reflects on their experience and incorporates the new ideas with their prior knowledge'* (Kurt, 2021).

For more info see: <https://educationaltechnology.net/constructivist-learning-theory/>

Reflecting on your own professionalism as a research methodology lecture, please elaborate on what you consider to be the most effective way to inculcate constructivism into a curriculum.



5 From your own view, how effective would you consider a blended (Hybrid) curriculum in the teaching of research methodology modules for tourism when compared to purely online and purely contact curricula?

6 Which assessment methods do you consider to be the most effective within an undergraduate curriculum to better prepare students for postgraduate study in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Please elaborate on your responses.

7 The instilling of lifelong learning is deemed an indicator of successful learning. How do you promote the notion of lifelong learning among your students?

8 Reflecting on your research methodology curriculum, please elaborate on the major challenges or shortcomings that you have experienced.

9 Reflecting on your experience as a research methodology lecturer, describe what constructive opportunities exist to enhance the quality of the curriculum.

10 As a lecturer of research methodology modules, describe your ideal student as they may present themselves at the completion of their studies. What characteristics, features, knowledge attributes or skills should such a postgraduate student possess and why?

Thank you for your participation. The researcher will now analyse all responses and be contacting you with follow up input as soon as this phase is complete.

## APPENDIX I: UP Ethics approval



Faculty of Education

Ethics Committee

7 November 2022

Dear Dr UP Hermann

The application for ethical clearance for the research project described below served before this committee on 19 October 2022:

<b>Ethics Protocol No:</b>	<b>EDU133/20</b>
<b>Principal investigator:</b>	<b>Dr UP Hermann</b>
<b>Student/Staff No:</b>	<b>04863306</b>
<b>Degree:</b>	<b>Doctoral</b>
<b>Supervisor/Promoter:</b>	<b>Pieter du Toit</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Humanities Education</b>

The decision by the committee is reflected below:

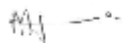
<b>Decision:</b>	<b>Approved</b>
<b>Comments:</b>	
<b>Period of approval:</b>	<b>Three years</b>

The approval by the Ethics Committee is subject to the following conditions being met:

1. The research will be conducted as stipulated on the application form submitted to the Ethics Committee with the supporting documents.
2. Proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research must be submitted where relevant.
3. In the event that the research protocol changed for whatever reason the Ethics Committee must be notified thereof by submitting an amendment to the application, together with all the supporting documentation that will be used for data collection namely; questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedules, for further approval before data can be collected. The changes may include the following but are not limited to:
  - Change of investigator,
  - Research methods any other aspect therefore and,
  - Participants.

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.

Best wishes



Prof Funke Omidire  
Chair: Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Education

Room 0-53, Level 0, Adebisi Building  
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20  
Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel: (27) 012 329 0906  
Email: [ethicsadmin@up.ac.za](mailto:ethicsadmin@up.ac.za)  
[www.up.ac.za](http://www.up.ac.za)

Faculty of Education  
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde  
Letapha la Thuto

## APPENDIX J: TUT Ethics approval



### Research Ethics Committee

*The TUT Research Ethics Committee is a registered Institutional Review Board (IRB 00005968) with the US Office for Human Research Protections (IORG# 0004997). Also, it has Federal Wide Assurance for the Protection of Human Subjects for International Institutions (FWA 00011501). In South Africa it is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-160509-21).*

March 2, 2023

Prof UP Hermann  
C/o Prof PH Du Toit  
Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria

REC Ref #: REC/2022/11/005  
Name: Hermann UP  
Student #: 04863306, UP

Dear Prof Hermann,

**Decision: Gatekeeper Permission – Final Approval**

**Name:** Hermann UP

**Project title:** A transformative curriculum to prepare undergraduate tourism students for postgraduate study.

**Qualification:** PhD Curriculum and Instructional Design and Development

**Promoter:** Prof PH Du Toit

Thank you for submitting the revised project documents for review by the Research Ethics Committee (REC), Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). In reviewing the documents, the comments and notes below are tabled for your consideration, attention and/or notification:

- **Proposal**
  - > The revised proposal is in order.
- **Information Sheet and Informed Consent**
  - > The revised Information Sheet is in order.



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- **Questionnaire**

- The revised questionnaire is in order.

The Chairperson of the Tshwane University of Technology Research Ethics Committee reviewed the revised project documents on March 1, 2023. **Gatekeeper Permission** has been granted to the project.

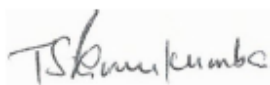
The proposed research project may now continue with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher/s will conduct the study according to the procedures and methods indicated in the **approved proposal**, particularly in terms of any undertakings and/or assurances made regarding the confidentiality of the collected data.
- 2) The proposal will be submitted to the Committee for prospective ethical clearance if there are any substantial **deviations** and/or changes from the approved proposal.
- 3) The researcher/s will act within the parameters of any applicable **national legislation, professional codes of conduct**, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Strict adherence to the following South African legislation, where applicable, is especially important: Protection of Personal Information Act (Act 4 of 2013), Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) and the National Health Act (Act 61 of 2003).
- 4) The researcher will inform the REC as soon as possible of any **adverse events** involving research participants that may have occurred during the course of the study. It includes the actions and/or processes that were implemented to mitigate and/or prevent any further injuries and/or adverse outcomes.
- 5) The researcher will inform the REC of any **new or unexpected ethical issues** that may have emerged during the course of the study, as well as how these ethical issues were addressed. The researcher must consult with the REC for advice and/or guidance in any such event.
- 6) The current ethics approval expiry date for this project is **February 28, 2025**. No research activities may continue after the ethics approval expiry date. An application for the extension of ethics approval must be submitted for projects that need to continue beyond the expiry date.

Note:

The reference number [top right corner of this communiqué] should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants.

Yours sincerely,



Prof TS Ramukumba  
Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee  
[TUTRef#2022=11=005=HermannUP]

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## APPENDIX K: HBDI Questionnaire



# HBDI

## Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument Thinking Styles Assessment

This 120-question survey form results in a profile of your preferred thinking styles. By understanding your thinking style preferences you can achieve greater appreciation how you learn, make decisions, solve problems, and communicate, and why you do these things—and others—the way you do. The survey measures preferences rather than skills. It is not a test; there are no wrong answers. You will gain the greatest understanding by answering the questions frankly and sincerely

Herrmann International  
Your HBDI Practitioner: Dr Pieter H du Toit  
Fax completed form to: (012) 4203003  
International telephone number: +27 12 4202817  
E-mail: pieter.dutoit@up.ac.za

Use of this form is subject to your agreement with the following conditions: (i) the instrument must be used in its entirety; no portion may be extracted and used separately. (ii) No change or alteration of the instrument in any way is permitted; to preserve the integrity of the instrument and its scoring methodology, the instrument must be used exactly as it is produced here. (iii) Any use of the instrument must contain the notice of copyright held by The Ned Herrmann Group. (iv) The title - Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument - is an integral part of the instrument, and must always appear on the document.

### INSTRUCTIONS

A profile of your mental preferences will be determined by your responses to the following 120 questions. Answer each question by writing in the appropriate words or numbers, or marking the boxes provided. This is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. You are only indicating your preferences. Please respond to questions as authentically as possible, keeping in mind your total self, at work and at home. When you have completed the survey form, confirm that you have answered every question. Then complete the name and address information on the back of the form, and send or fax pages 2 to 5 to Herrmann International Africa at the address on the cover.

Refer to the glossary of terms for clarification of the terms used. Save the glossary page for reference when you receive your profile results.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Analytic:** Breaking up things or ideas into parts and examining them to see how they fit together.

**Artistic:** Taking enjoyment from or skillful in painting, drawing, music, or sculpture. Able to coordinate color, design, and texture for pleasing effects.

**Conceptual:** Able to conceive thoughts and ideas, to generalize abstract ideas from specific instances.

**Controlled:** Restrained, holding back, in charge of one's emotions.

**Conservative:** Tending towards maintaining traditional and proven views, conditions, and institutions.

**Creative:** Having unusual ideas and innovative thoughts. Able to put things together in new and imaginative ways.

**Critical:** Exercising or involving careful judgement or evaluation, e.g., judging the feasibility of an idea or product.

**Detailed:** Paying attention to the small items or parts of an idea or project.

**Dominant:** Ruling or controlling; having strong impact on others.

**Emotional:** having feelings that are easily stirred, displaying those feelings.

**Empathetic:** Able to understand how another person feels, and able to communicate that feeling.

**Extrovert:** More interested in people and things outside of self than internal thoughts and feelings. Quickly and easily exposes thoughts, reactions, feelings, etc. to others.

**Financial:** Competent in monitoring and handling of quantitative issues related to costs, budgets, and investments.

**Holistic:** Able to perceive and understand the "big picture" without dwelling on individual elements of an idea, concepts, or situation. Can see the forest as contrasted with the trees.

**Imaginative:** Able to form mental images of things not immediately available to the senses or never wholly perceived in reality, able to confront and deal with a problem in a new way.

**Implementation:** Able to carry out an activity and ensure fulfillment by concrete measures and results.

**Innovating:** Able to introduce new or novel ideas, methods, or devices.

**Integration:** The ability to combine pieces, parts and elements of ideas, concepts and situations into a unified whole.

**Intellectual:** Having superior reasoning powers, able to acquire and retain knowledge.

**Interpersonal:** Easily able to develop and maintain meaningful and pleasant relationships with many different kinds of people.

**Introvert:** Directed more towards inward reflection and understanding than towards people and things outside of self. Slow to expose reactions, feelings, and thoughts to others.

**Intuitive:** Knowing something without thinking it out – having instant understanding without need for facts or proof.

**Logical:** Able to reason deductively from what has gone before.

**Mathematical:** Perceiving and understanding numbers and being able to manipulate them to a desired end.

**Metaphorical:** Able to understand and make use of visual and verbal figures of speech to suggest a likeness or an analogy in place of literal descriptions, e.g., "heart of gold."

**Musical:** Having an interest in or talent for music and/or dance.

**Organized:** Able to arrange people, concepts, objects, elements, etc. into coherent relationships with each other.

**Planning:** Formulating methods or means to achieve a desired end in advance of taking actions to implement.

**Problem solving:** Able to find solutions to difficult problems by reasoning.

**Quantitative:** Oriented toward numerical relationships; inclined to know or seek exact measures.

**Rational:** Making choices on the basis of reason as opposed to emotion.

**Reader:** One who reads often and enjoys it.

**Rigorous thinking:** Having a thorough, detailed approach to problem- solving.

**Sequential:** Dealing with things and ideas one after another or in order.

**Simultaneous:** Able to process more than one type of mental input at a time, e.g. visual, verbal, and musical; able to attend to more than one activity at a time.

**Spatial:** Able to perceive, understand and manipulate the relative positions of objects in space.

**Spiritual:** Having to do with spirit or soul as apart from the body or material things.

**Symbolic:** Able to use and understand objects, marks, and signs as representative of facts and ideas.

**Synthesizer:** One who unites separate ideas, elements, or concepts into something new.

**Technical:** Able to understand and apply engineering and scientific knowledge.

**Teaching/ training:** Able to explain ideas and procedures in a way that people can understand and apply them.

**Verbal:** Having good speaking skills, clear and effective with words.

**Writer:** One who communicates clearly with the written word and enjoys it.



## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please complete **every** question according to the directions given. Each response, including your answers to questions 1, 2, 3 and 4, provide important data. When directions are not followed or data is incomplete we are unable to process your survey, and must return it to you.

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Gender M  F

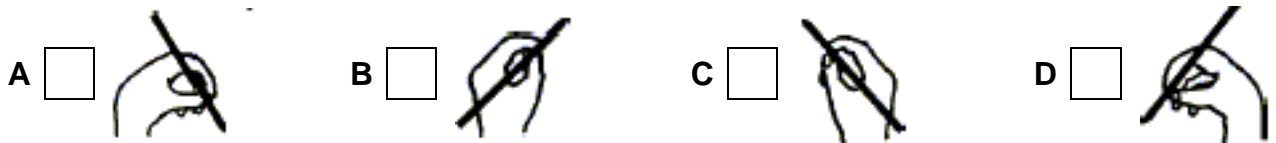
3. Educational focus or specialist subject(s) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Occupation or job title \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your work (please be as specific as possible) \_\_\_\_\_

## HANDEDNESS

5. Which picture most closely resembles the way you hold a pencil? Mark box A, B, C or D.



6. What is the strength and direction of your handedness? Mark box A, B, C, D or E.

A  Primary left B  Primary left Some right C  Both hands equal D  Primary right, some left E  Primary right

## SCHOOL SUBJECTS

Think back to your performance in the elementary and/or secondary school subjects identified below. Rank order all three subjects on the basis of how well you did: **1 = best; 2 = second best; 3 = third best.**

7  Mathematics 8  Foreign language 9  Native language or mother tongue

Please check that no number is duplicated: **The numbers 1, 2, and 3 must be used once and only once. Correct if necessary**

## WORK ELEMENTS

Rate each of the work elements below according to your strength in that activity, using the following scale: **5 = work I do best; 4 = work I do well; 3 = neutral; 2 = work I do less well; 1 = work I do least well.**

Enter the appropriate number next to each element. Do not use any number more than four times.

10 <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical	16 <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Aspects	21 <input type="checkbox"/> Innovating
11 <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative	17 <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation	22 <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching/Training
12 <input type="checkbox"/> Conceptualising	18 <input type="checkbox"/> Planning	23 <input type="checkbox"/> Organisation
13 <input type="checkbox"/> Expressing Ideas	19 <input type="checkbox"/> Interpersonal Aspects	24 <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Aspects
14 <input type="checkbox"/> Integration	20 <input type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving	25 <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Aspects
15 <input type="checkbox"/> Writing		

Please tally: Number of: 5's  4's  3's  2's  1's

**If there are more than four for any category, please redistribute.**

## KEY DESCRIPTORS

Select eight adjectives, which best describe the way you see yourself. Enter a **2** next to each of your eight selections. Then change one **2** to a **3** for the adjective which best describes you.

26 <input type="checkbox"/> Logical	35 <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional	43 <input type="checkbox"/> Symbolic
27 <input type="checkbox"/> Creative	36 <input type="checkbox"/> Spatial	44 <input type="checkbox"/> Dominant
28 <input type="checkbox"/> Musical	37 <input type="checkbox"/> Critical	45 <input type="checkbox"/> Holistic
29 <input type="checkbox"/> Sequential	38 <input type="checkbox"/> Artistic	46 <input type="checkbox"/> Intuitive
30 <input type="checkbox"/> Synthesizer	39 <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual	47 <input type="checkbox"/> Quantitative
31 <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal	40 <input type="checkbox"/> Rational	48 <input type="checkbox"/> Reader

32  Conservative

33  Analytical

34  Detailed

41  Controlled

42  Mathematical

49  Simultaneous

50  Factual

Please count: seven 2's and one 3? **Correct if necessary.**



## HOBBIES

Indicate a maximum of six hobbies you are actively engaged in. **Enter a 3** next to your major hobby, a **2** next to each primary hobby, and a **1** next to each secondary hobby. **Enter only one 3.**

51	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arts/Crafts	59	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gardening/Plants	67	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sewing
52	<input type="checkbox"/>	Boating	60	<input type="checkbox"/>	Golf	68	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spectator Sports
53	<input type="checkbox"/>	Camping/Hiking	61	<input type="checkbox"/>	Home Improvements	69	<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming/Diving
54	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cards	62	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music Listening	70	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tennis
55	<input type="checkbox"/>	Collecting	63	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music Playing	71	<input type="checkbox"/>	Travel
56	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cooking	64	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photography	72	<input type="checkbox"/>	Woodworking
57	<input type="checkbox"/>	Creative Writing	65	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reading	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	
58	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fishing	66	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sailing	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Please review: **Only one 3** and no more than six hobbies. **Correct if necessary.**

## ENERGY LEVEL

73. Thinking about your energy level or “drive,” select the one that best represents you. Mark box A, B, or C.

A  Day person

B  Day/night person equally

C  Night person

## MOTION SICKNESS

74. Have you ever experienced motion sickness (nausea, vomiting) in response to vehicular motion (while in a car, boat, plane, bus, train, amusement ride)? Check boxes A, B, C, or D to indicate the number of times.

A  None

B  1-2

C  3-10

D  More than 10

75. Can you read while traveling in a car without stomach awareness, nausea, or vomiting?

A  Yes

B  No

## ADJECTIVE PAIRS

For each paired item below, check the word or phrase, which is more descriptive of you. Mark box A or B for each pair, even if the choice is a difficult one. Do not omit any pairs.

76	Conservative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Empathetic	88	Imaginative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sequential
77	Analyst	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Synthesizer	89	Original	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reliable
78	Quantitative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Musical	90	Creative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Logical
79	Problem-solver	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Planner	91	Controlled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emotional
80	Controlled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Creative	92	Musical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Detailed
81	Original	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emotional	93	Simultaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Empathetic
82	Feeling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thinking	94	Communicator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conceptualise
83	Interpersonal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Organiser	95	Technical things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People-oriented
84	Spiritual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Creative	96	Well-organised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Logical
85	Detailed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holistic	97	Rigorous Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Metaphorical Thinking
86	Originate Ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Test and Prove Ideas	98	Like Things Planned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Like Things Mathematical
87	Warm, Friendly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Analytical	99	Technical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dominant

Please review: **Did you mark one and only one of each pair? Correct if necessary.**





Distracted

Tired

Unhappy

—

—