



## 14th National Design Education Conference 2017

Hosted by Tshwane University of Technology & Inscape Education Group

### #Decolonise!

Design educators reflecting on the call for the decolonisation of education

### Preparing Fashion Students for a Socially Engaged University Project through Zulu Proverbs

**Khaya Mchunu**

*Durban University of Technology*

#### Abstract

In this paper, I respond to the sub-question about the extent to which design educators can incorporate our context and knowledge of Africa into our design disciplines. I provide an example of a socially-engaged design project from a fashion department at a South African University of Technology (UoT) in which second-year fashion students participated. I argue that this project can be framed as an example of critical citizenship education as forwarded by Johnson and Morris (2010). I also grapple with how a diverse student body can be prepared for a design project that perceives the transformation of society as an end. In light of this, I propose Zulu proverbs as valuable resources that can be used to prepare students for such a project.

Adopting a qualitative approach, students' analyses and interpretations of selected Zulu proverbs drawn from Mayr (1912) and Nyembezi (1990) indicated that youth leadership, social responsibility and empathy may be the necessary themes for a socially-engaged fashion project of this type. While a small number of the students indicated that this approach was forgettable and unhelpful in preparing them, the majority of students perceived the use of Zulu proverbs as effective in preparing them to be agents of social good, while also offering a new framework and paradigmatic approach to socially-engaged design projects of this nature.

**Keywords:** *Critical citizenship education, Zulu proverbs, fashion design curricula, socially responsive design projects*

## Introduction

The University of Technology (UoT), from which this case study was drawn, engaged in a curriculum renewal project as a result of the Vice-Chancellor at the time declaring the main goal of the institution:

To produce globally portable citizens, able to engage effectively with knowledge generation and management in increasingly diverse and globalised workplaces, then the UoT's curriculum and pedagogy must be intentionally designed to prepare our graduates for employment, while simultaneously preparing them for critical citizenship in an emergent and still fragile democracy. (General Education Guidelines of the institution)

In order to achieve this twofold goal, the institution conceptualises its own definition for graduate attributes as:

The qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students would desirably develop during their time at the institution and, consequently, shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and as a citizen. These attributes include but go beyond the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future. (Bowden et al. cited in McCabe 2010)

Keeping within the ambit of this operational definition, representatives from all faculties succinctly identified five graduate attributes encouraged to be included in curricula, which are: 1. critical and creative thinkers who work independently and collaboratively; 2. knowledgeable practitioners; 3. effective communicators; 4. culturally, environmentally and socially aware citizens within a local and global context; and 5. active and reflective learners.

Teaching practice in the fashion department of the UoT, where the project was conducted, predominantly involves pedagogy that nurtures students into technically knowledgeable practitioners and effective communicators who work independently. Before graduating at undergraduate level, students use skills learnt during the three-year course by developing an open range, which comprises a collection of garments showcased at an annual fashion show. This achieves mainly the first goal of preparing students for employment, and while this is an important aspect of the course, I argue that there is minimal focus on preparing our students as agents of social good. Critical citizenship education is propounded as an approach to achieving this goal (Berman 2013; Boyte & Scarnati 2014; Motala 2015). Locally, critical citizenship encompasses one of the focal points of the 1997 White Paper on Higher Education for South Africa which deals with 'redressing past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities' (White Paper on Higher Education 1997).

A departmental community-engaged project was implemented for the first semester of the 2017 academic year to prepare fashion students as agents of social good. In my capacity as facilitator of community engagement at second-year level, I paired students with members of an inner-city sewing circle for the design and development of fashion products, which were manufactured by the circle to generate income for their self-help social project. The focus on socially-engaged and socially-responsible design education enjoyed special attention during the 2015 DEFSa Conference (Bolton 2015; Enslin & Cronje 2015; Chmela-Jones 2015).

With this paper, I attempt to build on and extend this exploration by taking the stance that preparing students for socially-engaged design projects is an imperative, and, moreover, that certain Zulu proverbs might be valuable tools in achieving this. In this way, I respond to the

sub-question regarding the extent to which design educators can incorporate the context and knowledge of Southern Africa in socially-engaged design projects.

The structure of this paper is divided into three main sections. Firstly, I discuss what critical citizenship education might entail by using the framework conceptualised by Johnson and Morris (2010). Secondly, I consider the integration of African proverbs in teaching practice, with a particular focus on citizenship education. The teaching approaches of four authors – Akinsola (2011); Abubakar (2011) and Grant and Asimeng-Boahene (2006) – are considered for their focus on both the epistemological and practical implications of proverbs in this endeavour. Thirdly, I provide an overview and discuss the departmental socially-engaged design project, and how three Zulu proverbs were appropriated in preparing fashion students for the project.

## A Framework for Critical Citizenship Education

In this paper, critical citizenship education implies an education which is 'expected to contribute to the promotion of social justice, social reconstruction and democracy' (Johnson & Morris 2010), this description parallels the vision of the White Paper already mentioned. Additionally, this education is 'based on the promotion of a common set of values, such as tolerance, diversity, human rights and democracy' (Constandius & Odiboh 2016, p. 2). This approach to education does not focus only on discipline-specific learning, but shifts focus across disciplines. Within critical citizenship education, the focus is on critical self-reflection, and the critical action which follows such reflection (Constandius & Odiboh 2016, p. 2).

Critical citizenship education should begin with consideration of the context in which this type of education takes place. In his insightful and philosophical article, *The coming of the ecological university*, Ronald Barnett (2011) discusses the university as constantly 'becoming' (2011, p. 446). This process of becoming has resulted in the twenty-first century ushering in the era of what he terms the 'ecological university' (2011, p. 451). This university he describes as 'an engaged university, a critical and an enquiring university and a university-for-development, acting to put its resources to good effect in promoting world well-being [which] will be active on the local and regional stages' (Barnett 2011, p. 453). Further, this university 'interpenetrates society, as society interpenetrates the university...It is aware of its interconnectedness with society and putting its resources towards the development of societal and personal well-being' (Barnett 2011, p. 453). This description is consistent with engagement, one of two threads developed as part of the strategic plan (2014-2018) of the UoT discussed in this paper. In the speech cited, the Vice Chancellor explained engagement as entailing a 'university embedded in its local context and engaging in that context'. Based on engagement being one of two strategic plans, and the need for students to become agents of social good as a graduate attribute, I make the assumption that the UoT in this study embodies elements of an ecological university which is challenged to incorporate critical citizenship in its curricula.

Johnson and Morris (2010) analyse and compare curricula which promote forms of critical citizenship. From this analysis they identify four horizontal categories of critical pedagogy: politics/ideology; social/collective; self/subjectivity; and praxis/engagement. These are coupled with four vertical categories which they assert a student develops by engaging in critical citizenship education: knowledge; skills; values; and dispositions as citizens.

These authors suggest that the framework provides a 'working, flexible model of critical citizenship, open to reinterpretation and adaptation' (Johnson & Morris 2010: 90), but that it is not mandatory to integrate all four tenets into critical citizenship curricula. This is especially recommended because critical citizenship does not have a 'clear-cut definition, as scholars perceive it differently' (Grant & Asimeng-Boahene 2006: 18). Since fashion students

from the UoT in this study used their sewing and design skills in conjunction with the skills of members from the inner-city sewing group, the two tenets, social/collective and praxis/engagement, are the most prominent for this socially-engaged design project (Table 1).

**Table 1: Two tenets of critical citizenship education by Johnson and Morris (2010).  
Tabulated by the author.**

	Knowledge		Skills	Values	Dispositions
Social/collective	Knowledge of interconnections between culture, power and transformation; non-mainstream writings and ideas, in addition to dominant discourse.		Skills in dialogue, co-operation and interaction; skills in the critical interpretation of others' viewpoints; capacity to think holistically.	Inclusive dialogical relationship with others' identities and values.	Socially aware; co-operative; responsible towards self and others; willing to learn with others.
Praxis/engagement	Knowledge of how to effect systematic change collectively; how knowledge itself is power; how behaviour influences society and addresses injustice.		Skills of critical thinking and active participation; skills in acting collectively to challenge the status quo; ability to imagine a better world.	Informed, responsible and ethical action and reflection.	Commitment and motivation to change society; civic courage; responsibility for decisions and actions.

The learning outcomes for each tenet of critical citizenship education, as detailed in Table 1, reflect the themes expressed by certain Zulu proverbs. African proverbs have previously been promoted as effective tools in delivering citizenship education (Abubakar 2011; Akinsola 2011; Grant & Asimeng-Boahene 2006), although Grant & Asimeng-Boahene (2006, p. 19) problematise the idea that 'models for citizenship within Africa remain untapped. The irony is that Africa, long acknowledged as the cradle of civilization, has been such an underutilised resource for citizenship education.' These authors further promote African proverbs as frames of reference for teaching students to become engaged local and global citizens (Grant & Asimeng-Boahene 2006, p. 18).

This social engagement project is aligned with Giroux's (2012) definition of pedagogy as 'the space that provides a moral and political referent for understanding how what we do in the classroom links to wider social, political and economic forces.' Due to the fact that fashion students at the UoT under discussion are required to apply the skills learned in lecture rooms

at levels that effect positive societal changes, which I contend is an aim of active citizenship, then such a project may need to be made culturally-specific within its context.

## African Proverbs in Contemporary Education

In this section, I present examples of how African proverbs might be adapted and applied in contemporary education. Although the use of African proverbs for educational purposes has been discussed by authors such as Owolabi (2001), Fashina (2008), and Dei and Simmons (2011), for the purposes of this paper I consider instead the views of Esther Akinsola (2011), Amina Abubakar (2011), and Rachel Grant and Lewis Asimeng-Boahene (2006), because they all provide practical ideas for teaching practice. These authors influence and inspire my own use of Zulu proverbs in preparing fashion students for their socially-engaged project by the Fashion Department.

Firstly, Akinsola's (2011) contribution to the *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices* is approached using the traditional Yoruba concept of *Omoluabi*, with the author drawing insight from this oral tradition to provide an African-based theory of knowledge and epistemology for education. In the chapter, Akinsola (2011, p. 228) discusses how different forms of *Omoluabi* oral literature like proverbs, wise sayings and folktales, are used for skills and knowledge acquisition in children; which then, according to the author, can also be applied to address the development of wide-ranging domains of learning, including those dealing with the physical, cognitive, social, emotional, psychological and moral development of individuals. In conclusion, Akinsola (2011, p. 231) provides a class exercise that may incorporate Yoruba, or other traditional African resources, in teaching, which includes:

1. Identifying between three and five indigenous learnings, and how they are transmitted in a learner's community;
2. Listing and describing an oral tradition from a learner's community;
3. Identifying practices and processes in a community that make African education comprehensive and holistic; and
4. Identifying possible ways that African education can be incorporated into curricula in the community and country (Akinsola 2011, p. 231).

Secondly, Abubakar (2011) uses Kenya's *methalis* proverbs to extract philosophical ideas on education. *Methalis* (sometimes written as *methali*), also known as *methali za Kiswahili* ('proverbs of Swahili'), are proverbs or sayings from the Swahilis living along Kenya's East Coast. Like all other oral traditions in Africa, *methalis* are widely disseminated by word of mouth (Abubakar 2011, p. 69), and like Zulu proverbs in particular are classified by category.

Abubakar's (2011, p. 70) contention is that 'in the African context, virtue training and character building are considered to be two of the most salient goals of education, where the educational process is aimed at producing an "ideal citizen".' An ideal citizen is described as an individual who values the cognitive process, in addition to social responsibility and communalism (Abubakar 2011, p. 72). This notion regarding education in the African context aligns with the ideas propounded by African communitarians, and has enjoyed discussion by such authors as Gbadegesin (1998), Gyekye (1998), and Castiano (2006).

Like Akinsola (2011), Abubakar (2011) concludes his contribution with the implications of *methalis* proverbs for contemporary education, and how they can be applied in a classroom exercise. While his approach resembles Akinsola's in many ways, Abubakar focuses only on proverbs, and the teaching ideas he proposes include:

1. Listing and describing at least two proverbs that have direct implications for classroom teaching and school learning;

2. Listing and describing proverbs that have direct implications for the conduct and behaviour of teachers;
3. Describing how proverbs could be incorporated into learning and socialisation processes to encourage specific educational outcomes (Abubakar 2011, p. 72); and
4. Conducting an exercise that begins with a statement which opens up class discussion, such as: 'The African school curriculum ought to promote social responsibility and communalism. Debate this assertion, illustrating how this applies or does not apply to students, teachers and the school community' (Abubakar 2011, p. 72).

Lastly, Grant and Asimeng-Boahene (2006), promote African proverbs as springboards for teaching citizenship education to students in urban classrooms. Their example aligns very closely with this paper, considering that this UoT is also based in an urban setting. The authors adopt the stance that when proverbs are viewed as theoretical frameworks for citizenship education, they offer culturally responsive pedagogy and critical literacy (2006, p. 17). Like Johnson and Morris (2010), Grant and Asimeng-Boahene (2006, p. 18) identify different categories for critical citizenship education, which are: virtue/morality; knowledge; responsibility; and humanity/community. Within each category, and where relationships are found, the authors place proverbs from various parts of the continent, including Botswana, South Africa and Ghana. The article closes with a catalogue of 20 teaching ideas that integrate proverbs, which, amongst others, include:

1. Arranging outside speakers to discuss proverbs that reflect the customs, religions, history or education system with the class;
2. Allowing students to discuss the local and global implications of the messages within proverbs; and
3. Searching for proverbs that relate to the essentials of citizenship education, interpreting each proverb to explain what it teaches about being a good citizen, and then identifying historical figures or community members who exemplify these proverbs (Grant & Asimeng-Boahene 2006, p. 21).

These three examples are not discipline-specific, which provides scope to integrate them creatively into any field of study, including fashion design and particularly if fashion education is used to contribute to positive social change. The incorporation of proverbs can be conceptually and practically complex in fashion design, however, and may require a design educator also willing to assume the role of a social educator whose endeavour is to incorporate knowledge from Southern Africa into their teaching. Such design/social educators would then be required to 'imagine new possibilities for knowledge production in contemporary education' (Dei & Simmons 2011, p. 97). I contend that in the case of this UoT this form of teaching and learning is just such an example of these new imaginings, and shows the potential of fashion education to contribute to society, whilst also integrating local knowledge both practically and philosophically.

## Using Zulu Proverbs in the Fashion Department's Social Engagement Project: The Case

In this section, I discuss how three Zulu proverbs were analysed with the students as preparation for their community-engaged design project. The use of Zulu proverbs was introduced as a way of 'finding an appropriate means of extracting philosophical materials from the body of indigenous African culture and making them the foundation of contemporary effort' (Owolabi 2001, p. 148). The proverbs used included the more widely-known *izandla ziyagezana* ('hands wash each other'), and the less popular Zulu proverbs,

*inkunzi isematholeni* ('the bull is among the calves') and *ukupha ukuziphakela* ('giving is to dish out for oneself').

## Ethical Considerations

While the project was timetabled as a weekly two-hour session in their curriculum, permission for the integration of a research component into this class project was sought from both the student participants and the community member participants. They were informed that it was also undertaken as research, and made aware that their interpretations of the proverbs would be recorded, and possibly used for public dissemination, such as at conferences, and publication in journals. However, this paper focuses on the student portion of the project rather than that of their sewing circle partners. During discussions concerning ethical considerations, I requested that all participating members take photographs during the learning process, and informed them that they would be requested to respond to questionnaires at the conclusion of the project. Once permission had been obtained regarding these ethical considerations, the project commenced.

## Sample and Research Methods

Twenty-three second year fashion students participated in the project, and, as already indicated, the project formed part of their community engagement, which was structured into their weekly timetable. While community engagement currently carries no award of marks, students are required to participate. Each project lasts a term, and, as with modules that carry credits, is presented as a project brief moderated by the departmental head. The student body includes a diversity of races: Indians, Whites and Blacks, who made the largest number, and is of mixed gender, with a predominantly female representation.

Three of the 23 students were not required to participate in the project, due to having incomplete subjects, but chose to participate voluntarily. Students divided themselves into groups of three to four members, and each group was partnered with a seamstress from the inner-city sewing group. The group of seven seamstresses were all Black females ranging in age between their mid-20s and late 40s. Five of the seamstresses were originally from the KwaZulu-Natal province, while two were from Zimbabwe. Six of the seven were proficient in Zulu, including one of those from Zimbabwe, who had lived in Durban for many years, although the remaining Zimbabwean member understood very little Zulu. In a casual conversation, she indicated that she was not as proficient as her fellow Zimbabwean national because, while she had been in the province for many years, she was based in an area having very few Zulu speakers.

Learning from the previous year's project, where a large student group engaged with and overwhelmed a sewing circle partner, I encouraged the groups to develop a system of rotation where only one or two students were assigned to work with their partners each week. In this way, it was less probable that partners became overwhelmed, and all students could thereby contribute to the process equally. Each week, the absent students consulted with their groups and discussed tasks planned for the following week.

This paper focuses mainly on the workshop conducted to prepare students for their project engagement, which entailed analysing three proverbs using qualitative design in an interpretive approach. An interpretive approach allows students to empathise with their perceptions of the given proverbs, and explore topics by interpreting their understanding (Thanh & Thanh 2015, p. 25). Moreover, the process of interpreting the three proverbs into single themes was informed by notions forwarded by such African writers as Sophie Oluwole (1985) and Kwasi Wiredu (1980), who propose that the analysis of African languages and 'language of a people can be a splendid index to their philosophy' (Owolabi 2001, p. 150).

The author, who identifies as Zulu, and acting as both community engagement facilitator and planner of the project brief, introduced the three proverbs to the project groups. A 1990 reissue of Nyembezi's 1954 book, *Zulu Proverbs*, and an article by the Reverend Father Mayr (1912), were used as references because both works provide a catalogue of Zulu proverbs which detail their meanings.

In order to diversify the interpretation and analysis process, a seamstress partner proficient in Zulu was invited to join the workshop to assist as language interpreter. Only four students could not speak Zulu, of which three spoke English as a home language and the other Afrikaans, and while one student who identified as Tsonga was fluent in Zulu, the remainder of the student participants identified as Zulu. In the preparation workshop, each proverb was read and written out in the vernacular, followed by a direct translation in English. All interpretations were then transcribed to whiteboard, and analysed for distillation into single themes.

## Analysing and Interpreting the Three Zulu Proverbs

Nyembezi (1990) classifies various Zulu proverbs into different categories. For example, *izandla ziyagezana* (also expressed as *isandla sigez' esinye* – 'one hand washes the other') and *ukupha ukuziphakela* ('giving is to dish out for oneself') are classified as proverbs related to Ubuntu (Nyembezi 1990, p. 50). *Inkunzi isematholeni* ('the bull is among the calves') is classified under the upbringing of children, and deals with preparing children to be future leaders (Nyembezi 1990, p. 162).

The reason for choosing these proverbs was, firstly, to introduce students through them to the concepts of remaining humble, and maintaining the spirit of Ubuntu as future leaders of the country. Secondly, the proverbs carry themes such as leadership, empathy and co-operation, which all embody aspects of the tenets of the critical citizenship framework proposed by Johnson and Morris (2010). Student interpretations closely resembled the meanings provided by Nyembezi (1990) and Mayr (1912), and in some instances extended the meanings of the proverbs to include interpretations drawn from spiritual principles. Some, who were encountering the proverbs for the first time, such as the Indian and White students, also participated enthusiastically in the analysis and interpretation process.

### *Proverb 1: Izandla ziyagezana ('one hand washes the other')*

'Help and you will be helped'; 'no man for himself', and 'giving without expecting anything back' were amongst the phrases used to interpret this proverb. One student mentioned 'having one goal' as another possible meaning, and when asked to explain this, they stated that when washing hands the goal was to wash hands, and if the one hand is in disagreement with that goal, then the task would not be successfully fulfilled. Likewise, for the community project, the goal should be to work together with community partners towards a common goal, which in this case was to make and complete a garment. After deliberation and distillation, the theme chosen for this proverb was social responsibility.

### *Proverb 2: Inkunzi isematholeni ('the bull is among the calves')*

This proverb attracted interpretations that alluded to leadership, with phrases such as 'a future leader is among the youth' and 'identify the leader in the crowd'. Reference was also made to strength, with phrases such as 'the strong is among the weak' and 'strength is in the young' emerging. Teaching as an act of giving back was also mentioned as another possible meaning, with 'teach others what you know'. Identifying the proverb's main theme as youth leadership required much consideration.

### *Proverb 3: Ukupha ukuziphakela ('giving is to dish out for oneself')*



Analysis of this final proverb resulted in spiritual interpretations, with explanations drawn from the Christian *Holy Bible*, such as 'bless and be blessed', and 'blessed are those that give', which are associated with Proverbs 11: 25. Some students described the proverb in terms of *karma*, a spiritual principle associated with Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Taoism. All interpretations were considered, and empathy was chosen as the proverb's theme. Empathy currently enjoys discussion related to design under the sub-field Design Empathy (Kruger 2008), to which I argue this community engaged project contributes.

With the three themes – social responsibility, youth leadership and empathy – formulated by the workshop, the students partnered with their seamstresses to produce skirts and bodices over the course of two academic terms (February - March 2017, and April - June 2017).

## Analysing the Viability of Zulu proverbs for Socially Engaged Fashion Projects

At the end of the engagement, I circulated questionnaires to determine student impressions of the use of Zulu proverbs to prepare them for their community engagement project. The analysis process included reading the questionnaire responses repeatedly, segmenting themes and interpreting the accounts of these themes.

### Negative Responses towards Zulu Proverbs

Questioned on the effectiveness of the three proverbs in preparing them for the project, 33% of students responded negatively. Their reasons for this answer varied, with two students opining that the proverbs were removed from sewing, and that an introduction to basic words for various sewing techniques in Zulu would have enhanced their experience of working with a seamstress who understood very little English instead. These students were non-Zulu speakers, and it is possible that they suggested this in order to learn the related words for themselves. Their responses imply a preference for a more practical approach over the conceptual and philosophical learning provided, in particular, by the use of Zulu proverbs, as suggested by Hlongwa et al. (2014, p. 156).

Other responses indicated that the incorporation of these proverbs was a forgettable addition, and that the project could have proceeded without including them, such as the following response by one student who identified as Zulu-speaking: 'Because as a person you already know what you want to do and why you are helping [others]'. Two responses by non-Zulu speaking students alluded to a similar sentiment concerning the use of the proverbs, which were: 'The only reason I felt they did not help through the process was because I did not make a conscious effort to remind myself of it each week; it became something forgotten'; and 'I felt that we fulfilled and embodied those themes even without being consciously aware'.

### Positive Responses towards Zulu Proverbs

Of the participating students, 67% who responded to the questionnaire reacted enthusiastically, however, and pointed out how noteworthy the use of the proverbs was. Some responses by Zulu-speaking students refer to the use of proverbs in this manner as being a new paradigmatic perspective on community engagement.

Positive comments received included: 'I think the proverbs were to give us the idea of the entire community engagement on a different angle...'; 'The different take helped to look at them with a different understanding'; 'It was helpful because we now understand what it means exactly'; and 'They taught me things about giving back that I did not know and wasn't aware of'.

Responses from some of these students, also all Zulu-speaking, indicated that the project was seen as a viable approach to students developing values as citizens, and becoming agents for social good, which is stipulated in the definition for graduate attributes at the UoT. These responses support Fashina's (2008, p. 314) assertion that 'proverbs are a condensed text which embed a whole gamut of historical, cultural and moral narrative with intent for didactic values as a school of philosophical thought'.

Responses that align with Fashina's assertion include: 'The proverbs are basically a way of life; we can grow the community by giving back'; 'By teaching or giving back I become a better person, I gain more knowledge; by working together so much can be achieved, *umuntu umuntu ngabantu...*'; 'We learned how you can act as a leader and how to lead with the community; helping one another is what we learned the most, because we had empathy for each other and act on it if someone needs help'; and 'Each of these proverbs gave meaning and drive to actually go about sharing our knowledge; assisting in what we could also gave new morals and values to instil in our daily lives and as young designers'. Such responses also included:

We were able to engage with our mummies through teaching and sharing our knowledge in a responsible manner. Secondly, we were divided into groups and each person in the group had an opportunity to assist mummies every week; in a way, we became more responsible and also gained leadership skills in the process.

## Conclusion and Future Approaches

In this paper, I considered the UoT's goal of preparing students to be agents of social good. I made the claim that the UoT for which I work as a fashion lecturer can be defined as an ecological university (Barnett 2011), due to its aim of being responsive to the society in which it is based. Guided by this claim, and the graduate attributes of the UoT, I argued that there is a dearth of socially-engaged projects in the fashion department. I then continued the discussion by situating socially-engaged projects within the critical citizenship education framework conceptualised by Johnson and Morris (2010).

This discussion indicated a means for addressing the question of the extent to which design educators can incorporate the context and knowledge of Africa into the fashion design discipline. This question provided the impetus to make room for the use of African oral literature in my own teaching practices, using specifically Zulu proverbs to formulate a philosophical and conceptual framework for the socially-engaged project by second-year fashion students. While some students desired the use of Zulu words that were more practical, the majority accepted Zulu proverbs as a conduit to offering a new paradigmatic approach to community engagement that is both conceptually and practically rich. In conclusion, as a design educator, I was satisfied with the class exercise and the enthusiasm shown by the students in providing their understandings of Zulu proverbs used.

The learning approach adopted for the project was not a particularly simple one, because it required students to step away from the fashion design discipline as they might generally understand it and to engage in a discussion of African oral literature, within the environment of a multi-racial class. In this respect, a future consideration may be the incorporation of other oral resources, such as fables or riddles. Alternatively, the process can be made more student-centred, as per the institution's mandate, where themes could be identified and provided to students, who could be tasked with identifying proverbs, fables or other aphorisms from their own cultural backgrounds, and bring them to class for similar discussion. This could be done as an effective student-centred exercise in preparing students for future socially-engaged fashion projects.

## References

- Abubakar, AA 2011, 'Proverbs as a source of philosophic ideas about African Education', in AB Nsamenang & TMS Tchombe (eds), *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices: A Generative Teacher Education Curriculum*, Human Development Resource Centre, Cameroon.
- Akinsola, EF 2011, "Owoluwabi's approach" to educating the African child', in AB Nsamenang & TMS Tchombe (eds), *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices: A Generative Teacher Education Curriculum*, Human Development Resource Centre, Cameroon.
- Barnett, R 2011, 'The coming of the ecological university', *Oxford Review of Education*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 439-455.
- Berman, K 2013, 'Students as Agents of Change', *Third Text*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 387-399, viewed 4 May 2016, <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2013.796188>>.
- Bolton, M 2015, 'The role of the industrial design educator in equipping design students to be ethical decision makers', proceedings of the 2015 DEFSA Conference: Ethics and accountability in design: Do they Matter?, Johannesburg, pp. 12-22.
- Boyte, HC & Scarnati, B 2014, 'Transforming Higher Education in a Larger Context: The Civic Politics of Public Work', in P Levine & K Edward (eds), *Civic Studies, Bringing Theory to Practice*, Soltan, Washington.
- Castiano, J 2006, 'Community-based-research in Africa: Implications for Education', *Indilinga: African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 108-124.
- Chmela-Jones, KA 2015, 'The ethics of Ubuntu and community participation in design', proceedings of the 2015 DEFSA Conference: Ethics and accountability in design: Do they Matter?, Johannesburg, pp. 43-50.
- Constandius, E & Odiboh, F (eds) 2016, *The relevance of critical citizenship education in an African context*, Sun Media, Stellenbosch.
- Dei, GJS & Simmons, M 2011, 'Indigenous knowledge and the challenge for rethinking conventional educational philosophy: A Ghanaian case study', in P Lang (ed.), *Regenerating the philosophy of education: What happened to soul?*, Counterpoints, Berkeley.
- Department of Higher Education 1997, Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, Pretoria, South Africa, 24 July.
- Enslin, C & Cronje, F 2015, 'Paying it forward: Practicing Scholarship of Engagement in Design Education', proceedings of the 2015 DEFSA Conference: Ethics and accountability in design: Do they Matter?, Johannesburg, pp. 103-111.
- Fashina, N 2008, 'Postmodern ruptures and the de-construction of social-linguistic logic: a study in "Area Boys" proverbs and tropes in West Africa', *Ibadan Journal of English Studies*, vol. 5, pp. 310-329.
- Gbadegesin, S 1998, 'Individuality, community and the moral order', in PH Coetzee & APJ Roux (eds), *Philosophy from Africa*, International Thomson Publishing, South Africa.
- Giroux, HA 2012, 'Why teaching people to think for themselves is repugnant to religious zealots and Rick Santorum', *Truthout Op-Ed*, 22 February.
- Grant, RA & Asimeng-Boahene, L 2006, 'Culturally responsive pedagogy in citizenship education: using African proverbs as tools for teaching in urban schools', *Multicultural Perspectives*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 17-24.

- Gyekye, K 1998, 'Person and community in African thought', in PH Coetzee & APJ Roux (eds), *Philosophy from Africa*, International Thomson Publishing, South Africa.
- Hlongwa, T, Ngcobo, N, Mhlongo, B & Ntuli, S 2014, 'IsiZulu as conduit for accessing education: students becoming partners in knowledge discovery', *Alternation*, vol. 13, pp. 155-172.
- Johnson, L & Morris, P 2010, 'Towards a framework for critical citizenship education', *The Curriculum Journal*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 77-96.
- Kruger, R 2008, 'Design and empathy', *South African Journal of Art History*, vol. 23 no. 3, pp. 113-125.
- Mayr, Fr 1912, 'Zulu Proverbs', *Anthropos*, vol. 7, pp. 957-963.
- McCabe, G 2010, 'Graduate Attributes and Employability: helping universities and students prepare for the changing landscape', *Interchange*, Spring 2010, pp. 1-3.
- Motala, E 2015, 'Public Scholarship, Democracy and Scholarly Engagement', *Educational Research for Social Change*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 22-34.
- Nyembezi, CLS 1990, *Zulu Proverbs*, Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzburg.
- Oluwole, S 1985, 'The rational basics of Yoruba ethical thinking', *Nigerian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 4, no. 1-2, pp. 14-15.
- Owolabi, KA 2001, 'The quest for method in African philosophy: A defense of the hermeneutic-narrative approach', *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 147-163.
- Thanh, NC & Thanh, TTL 2015, 'The interconnection between interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methods in education', *American Journal of Educational Science*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 24-27.
- Wiredu, K 1980, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Cambridge University Press, London.