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# A transformative exploration of epistemic individual(istic) identity formation within a synergistic decolonial student support system

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## Abstract

*The possibility of individual (istic) identity formation is explored within a context of a synergistic and communal support system. Within this context, the intrinsic complexities of the African child who enters the academia with a multiplicity of epistemic identity contestations are simultaneously explored. The ensuing alienation resulting from the cultural displacement from the known and familiar to the unknown and unfamiliar is brought into view as a factor for further interrogation. Attention is thus drawn to the implications for identity formation in this cultural and epistemic displacement. In this discussion the Ubuntu philosophical orientation is presented as part of a transformative pathway of transition into the multiple contextual nuances of identity formation. This is coupled with participatory praxis within the paradigm of community-based action for transformation. The empirical data of this discussion accrues from a study in which the existential realities and complexities of being a Black African in a previously white institution of higher learning were brought into view. This study paid specific attention to the convergence of language and identity in relation to a contextualized understanding of the performance (as it was conceived of in this study) of this cohort. The findings of this study pointed towards the need for a synergistic student support system that would provide individualized or individualistic and customized support. I argue here that the African child is often kept in a cyclical position of pathologizing, insubordination and multi-layered subjugation, within a system that does not adequately provide support for this positionality. This paper thus interrogates the possibility and potential of the collective in harnessing the benefit to be derived from communal interaction and engagement in the direction of interpersonal and intrapersonal transformation. In this regard I present the tenets of the Ubuntu way of life within a decolonial synergistic support system that takes into consideration the value of communal interactions but not at the expense of individual transformation.*

**Key words:** African child, ubuntu, individualistic, synergistic, transformative, ubuntu decolonial, communal spaces, pre-service teacher, praxis, identity formation

## 1. Introduction

This paper purposes to position individual(istic) transformation and identity formation within a communal and decolonial student support system. The focus of this

discussion is, therefore, the merits of individualism as associated with professional identity formation within a communal space that allows for both the individual and collective good. The upshot of this orientation is the creation of a synergistic communal ethos that makes provision for individual identity formation. Within this context the African child, the problem is presented as the multi-layered contestations of the pre-service teacher who enters the multi-cultural space of the academia (Stewart, 2008). These contestations further have to do with identity formation in the pursuit of what Ndlovu-Gatsheni and others, (for example, Ngugi, 2009 and Quijano, 2007) refer to as the attainment of ontological density.

In addition to the above-stated, this discussion is framed to bring into view the idea of misrecognition as it plays itself out within the institution. Attention is paid to the issue of transitioning and its associated complexities. The theoretical orientation of Ubuntu is foregrounded as an appropriate philosophy for facilitating the ideal of epistemic individual identity formation within the context of a synergistic student support system. Furthermore, the methodological considerations pertaining to the study that forms the basis of this paper are taken into account followed by a discussion of the findings and concluding remarks.

## **2. Institutional misrecognition**

Postma (2016) and others like Apple (2016); Alexander (2014) and Boughey (2007), by implication, bemoan the demerits of the corporatisation, commercialisation and capitalisation of higher education. The contention here is that this reasoning perpetuates apartheid's mission of misrecognition (Bourdieu, 2000; Fraser, 2009; James, 2015 & Fataar, 2017). Bourdieu (2000) also refers to this phenomenon as symbolic violence that has implications for the academic performance of black first generation (G1) students' – who, within the context of this discussion, represent the African child. Misrecognition is conceptualised by Fraser (2007:20) as injustice that, on the one hand, manifests itself as a denial of "... parity of participation...and interaction... through institutionalised obstacles..." On the other hand, the Frasian view of misrecognition is that it is attributable to "distributive injustice or maldistribution... of economic structures" that deny them the resources they need for their academic success. This denial factored into the journey of epistemic and ontological becoming with implications for identity-formation (Barnett, 2009; Maseko, 2015). The disadvantaged social and pre-university schooling backgrounds of the individuals that form the fulcrum of this discussion predispose them to both aspects of misrecognition. Additionally, this phenomenon of misrecognition poses as a miscreant, in the form of subtle inequities—such as institutional cultures (Tabesny & Matthews, 2015) and non-responsive curricula (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondo, 2016). In the light of this discussion, these factors ultimately detract from professional identity formation. Of specific relevance to this discussion is the concern with the individual(istic), that is personalised and customized identity formation, within a decolonial tutor setting.

This discussion is, therefore, a contribution towards the corpus of consciousness-raising in the direction of a systemically engineered *modus operandi* that takes cognizance of and consciously seeks to eradicate misrecognition practices. I argue here that appropriate responsiveness to the challenges associated with misrecognition (and its attendant complexities) requires paying attention to the full bouquet of individual cultural, cognitive and affective complexities pertaining to these students' displacement from their pre-university contexts of disadvantage.

Fataar's (2017:3) comments are instructive in this regard:

*What has therefore been missing from universities' existence over the last 20 years has been a systemic and concerted focus on understanding what the shifting composition of the student body signified a concomitant academic platform whose fundamental orientation would be fuller recognition of the specificities associated with student's epistemic becoming .*

This has connotations of cultural displacement (Bammer, 1994) with implications for cultural epistemic and identity alienation. The transition from the known and familiar, that is, the pre-university context to the unknown and unfamiliar, namely, the university context, is brought into view as part of the journey of professional teacher identity formation. Attention is thus drawn to the implications for the identity development of preservice teachers within the process of cultural and epistemic transitioning. Within this context, collegial support (which is attainable through communal student support systems) is an important factor in building a sense of belonging, with specific reference to professional teacher identity formation (Izadinia, 2014; Goodwin *et al.*, 2014; Wenger, 1998; 2000). The said transition carries connotations of an alienation that is exacerbated by several variables, as discussed below.

### **3. Complexities of transitioning**

The transmigration from the familiar to the unfamiliar is problematized by highlighting the variables that are associated with and attributable to reductionist and technocratic views about student preparation and success and or (non) success. In this regard Mbembe (2012:8) expresses disgruntlement with the National Development Plan (NDP). In his view, this body represents the reduction of colonially created social and material conditions to technical "mathematical modelling" that perpetuates the purposes of colonialism. In consonance with this view, Fataar (2017) and others (Lalu, 2007; Soudien, 2012) lament the apartheid-inspired discursive practices. They suggest that these have been replaced by the current and future dispensation's state-fuelled technocrat ideological orientations. In other words, their view is that there has been a negative ideological shift. According to the views that relate to the afore-mentioned ideological orientations, the focus has shifted from the eradication of the structural remnants of apartheid to a modus operandi that is influenced and governed by, what Fataar (2017:3) refers to as, "techno-instrumental reason". This, he asserts, is partly attributable to the often-lamented disjuncture between policy formulation and responsive policy-implementation within the various structures of the academia. My contention in this regard is that the technocratic reductionist focus deflects attention from the systemic structures that are at the heart of the perpetuation of inequity. They thus call for a decolonial synergistic redressal strategy as suggested in this paper.

Elsewhere, albeit in an American context, and with specific reference to racism, Verschelden (2017:34) observes that subtle racism, as opposed to "old style, in-your-face-racism", requires more cognitive energy. She adds that it is easier to deal with blatant racism in the sense that this type of racism is quite clear and easy to detect. However, with subtle racism and its associated complexities such as misrecognition, an added affective and cognitive burden detracts from the ability to perform at optimal level. The burden is increased with the addition of alienation, exclusion and marginalisation (Chetty & Merret, 2014; Giroux, 2014; Higgins, 2013; Storm & Martin, 2013). When you add the concomitant effects of the potentially toxic mix of codification, meritocracy and performativity (Maseko, 2018), you have the kind of post-colonial discontent and alienation that gave rise to protest movements

such as #Feesmustfall and #Rhodesmustfall (Nyamnjoh, 2016). With regard to the above assertions, Verschelden (2017:8) refers to what Mullaithan and Shafir (2013) conceive of as band-with tax when she states that:

*Racism and poverty rob people of mental band-with, leaving them with limited cognitive resources to learn and perform to their potential and resulting in the national tragedy of blighted hope and squandered human capacity for creativity and problem-solving*

She adds other factors that have a bearing on band-with such as, for example, ill-health, which is associated with lack of access to appropriate medical attention owing to financial constraints. The afore-mentioned point towards the underlying factors that contribute towards the concomitant intricacies of the African child's cultural and epistemic transitioning from the familiar (context of disadvantage) to the unfamiliar context (of the culture of the academia). I posit the view, therefore, that in the interests of the individual good, as well as the common collective good to the benefit of social stability, there is a need to make systemic (within the academia's student support system) provision for the epistemic implications and cultural ramifications of transition.

The aforementioned resonates with the contention pertaining to the cultural complexities of transitioning, with implications for alienation and misrecognition. I make the submission here, that this carries an implicit message of redressal, in the interests of individual identity re-cognition. In this sense, re-cognition is associated with mental band-with recovery. My contention in this regard is that tutorials can be used as an avenue for facilitating this recovery. This is in recognition of the assertion that, as a counter to alienation, the self is formed within social relations which is in consonance with the opinion presented by Jaeggi (2014:82) that alienation is "...problematic because it undermines self-realization".

Therefore, the afore-mentioned view supports the contention about individual (istic) professional identity formation within a communal context that is in consonance with an Ubuntu-framed decolonial ethos and cultural modus operandi.

#### **4. Theoretical orientation**

The predominant orientation for the anti-alienation decolonial strategy is an Ubuntu theoretical orientation towards a transformative pathway of transition into the multiple contextual nuances of identity formation. This is with specific reference to the African child – as conceived of in this discussion. The pertinence of this specific Ubuntu orientation lies in the fact that community is the cornerstone of African thought and life. Ubuntu is seen as a philosophy that, inter alia, foregrounds caring and compassion as well as reciprocity and dignity (Mangaliso, 2011; Bekker, 2008). More often than not, Ubuntu is at the heart of many African rural and disadvantaged communities. This sense of community is often borne out of a sense of co-dependence and need for communal support (Chachine 2008; Adonis, 2008). However, contrary to commonly held beliefs about community, it is important to note that the communal character of African cultures does not mean that the good of the individual person is subordinated to that of the group. In a true community, the individual does not pursue the common good instead of his or her own but rather pursues his or her own good in order to promote the good of others. Thus, an invitation is extended for members of a community to recognize that they can attain their own true good only by promoting the good of others. This is aptly exemplified through the Igbo social structure in which "...even though there existed a strong social consciousness, the individual's rights and existence as an entity were not

neglected” (Ike & Edozien, 2001:155). The notion of communalism, as espoused in the ubuntu ethos, is best illustrated through an Akan proverb:

*The clan is like a cluster of trees which when seen from afar appear huddled together, but which would be seen to stand together individually when closely approached*

The proverb stresses the social reality of the individual, it expresses the idea that the individual's identity is not subsumed within the collective identity. Rather, the individual has a separate identity and that, “like the tree, some of whose branches may touch other trees, the individual is separately rooted and is not completely absorbed by the cluster. That is, communality does not obliterate or squeeze out individuality” (Gyeye, 1996:32).

The view I present here is that the backgrounds of disadvantage (with specific reference to black African students) carry implications for cultural capital in the form of collective survival strategies that emanate from the principles of ubuntu. In a sense, cultural capital is often associated with advantage and privilege (Bourdieu, 1973). That is, it is regarded as part of the accrual system that derives from class privilege. In this sense, however, cultural capital is conceived of in positive and asset-based terms to draw attention to the benefits that are to be derived from a system (that is, Ubuntu) that survives through co-existence and co-accrual. In view of this, my assertion here is that the cultural survival capital that individuals enter the academic space with can be harnessed to mitigate against the potentially incapacitating operational standards of the academia. Thus, despite the negative existential realities associated with transitioning, students can draw from the tools derived from familiar cultural contexts to cope with the unfamiliar context of the academic terrain. In implicit consonance, Godsell and Chikane (2016:6) present the view that:

*University is to some extent a foreign language for all new students; academic language, concepts, work demands...for many black South African students the country of academia is not only foreign but hostile. They find little that is familiar in the structures and content that they are presented with.*

The above confirms the notion of transmigration from the familiar to the unfamiliar as well as the attendant alienation. Subsequently, this points towards the need for a strategy that will circumvent the alienation that arises out of this. I argue, elsewhere (Maseko, 2018) that the ramifications of coloniality call for a counter strategy in the form of a decolonial approach towards the attainment of ontological density and identity formation. Albeit in a different context, Bourdieu's (1998a in Mills and Gale, 2010:27) views are worth noting. Here he expresses the need for:

*increasing awareness of the mechanisms at work in the reproduction of disadvantage in education [so as to] offer a measure freedom for those manipulated by these mechanisms [with the intention] to improve access, participation and educational outcomes for marginalised and disenfranchised groups.*

In this conceptualisation of transformative decoloniality a high premium is placed on the inculcation a culture of critical consciousness and transformative praxis. This fusion has ramifications for both individual and collective transformation as is envisioned in this context.

In a sense, this paper endeavours to contribute towards the discourses pertaining to the removal of the remnants and various manifestations of colonialism and its aftermath of coloniality. In this instance, particular emphasis is placed on transitioning decoloniality discourses from arenas of theoretical and ideological contestations into spaces (at both literal and figurative

levels) of pragmatic responses, with specific regard to institutions of higher learning. Tutor spaces are, in this case, regarded as decolonial communal spaces that, in the ethos of Ubuntu, provide opportunities for professional individual growth and collective development.

## 5. Methodological approaches

This paper uses as the premise and basis for some of the arguments presented here, a qualitative doctoral study that looked at language and identity as convergent factors (Maseko, 2015). My specific interest in the study emanated firstly from my personal language and identity struggles -which would warrant a separate the ambit and context. Secondly, in my professional capacity, as a lecturer, I often encountered the reality of seeing the potentially debilitating effects of the two phenomena on the performance of individuals from contexts of disadvantage.

For purposes of this study, permission was sought from the relevant authorities in compliance with the requisite ethical clearance considerations. The participants were selected based on an invitation and their availability and voluntary willingness to participate in the study. They comprised of two layers, namely, on the one hand, that of the two lecturers (one black and one white) and, on the other hand, nine students (three for each level of study, that is first, second and third year) who availed themselves for the study. The students were second language speakers of English (L2), preservice teachers who transitioned from rural, urban and peri-urban contexts of disadvantage to a previously white institution of higher learning. The context of this institution was that English and Afrikaans were the two official languages of instruction. Even though the issue of their G1 (1<sup>st</sup> generation) status was not foregrounded in the study it was a given existential reality accruing from their backgrounds.

The potential value of the participants' responses was highlighted and data was generated through semi-structured interviews, in view of their utility and functionality in facilitating data generation. The dialogical design of the interviews allowed for open-ended responses (Irvine, Drew & Sainsbury; 2013) which further allowed for a deeper insight into the complexities associated with the existential realities of their transmigration. A rapport was built with the participants through a modus operandi that created an environment of participatory camaraderie in which could freely converse about their challenges/experiences with the view to positively contribute towards My position in the hierarchical structure of the institution was such that I had no direct contact with them. In this regard, the interviews yielded utterances that were instructive in relation to their existential realities and contextual challenges. "*Yoh...It was intimidating to express myself in a class full of people who spoke English; I never had the opportunity to speak English; I started speaking English when I came here, I must be honest with you I was scared that I might say the wrong thing....*" One participant, (who was initially visibly ill at ease) asked. "*Can I please express myself in Setswana?*" After I acceded to her request she was able to open up to air her frustrations, with specific regard to her language-related challenges.

The questions of the interviews were designed to be responsive to the main research question that revolved around the convergence of language and identity in relation to the performance and portraiture of the cohort of Black BEd Foundation Phase students that formed the focus of the study. The overarching objective of the study was thus the extent to which the phenomena of language and identity affected students' ability to participate freely in teaching and learning environments, with specific reference to formal lecture hall or classroom settings. This backdrop, therefore, provides the contextual basis for the focus

of this discussion in relation to the claims pertaining to transmigration from the known to the known and professional identity formation within a decolonial communal context.

In the study, the phenomena of language and identity were linked to participants' experiences in relation to their participation and performance. In this regard, participation and performance were associated with the extent to which they were able to freely engage in class discussions as well as their ability to express themselves (as L2 speakers of English) without any fear of bias or discrimination (Burke, 2014).

## 6. Discussion of findings

An analysis of the data yielded three themes and their concomitant categories. Two of the three themes were largely related to language while the third theme was primarily associated with identity. The first theme and its related categories focused on, firstly, participants' exposure to English in the pre-university school context and secondly, on their exposure in the pre-university social context. The second theme and its two categories centre on language, with specific reference to English, as the medium of instruction in the university context and language use; in relation to contextual support. Even though the data from Theme 2 relates mostly to language issues there are aspects that bear relevance for this discussion in relation to transmigration, misrecognition and alienation. For example, with regard to language use and contextual support, participants pointed out that they were overcome by feelings of inferiority whenever they had to participate and express themselves in classroom contexts. The following are examples of this occurrence: *"I just keep quiet even when I need clarity...I'm too scared to say the wrong thing because in school we were taught in our mother tongue... here they say something and they just expect you to know"*

Another student (Y3s3) who, by virtue of her seniority, was expected to be in a better position, responded by stating: *"I don't think I understand fully like sometimes I think I'm not sure about what they want so I have to get someone to verify something for me."*

A second year student (Y2s1), however, confirmed that, for her, the passage of time played a significant role in her journey. Nevertheless, her experiences, like that of her peers, aptly illustrate the fact that the convergence of language and identity-related factors has a significant bearing on performance:

*I think there's a huge difference there because I've acquired a bit of English so it's quite better than last year...in the beginning I wasn't good in English so I wasn't very comfortable but since now I can construct proper English sentences...in the beginning I would not even answer a question, so I would just keep quiet because I didn't have that confidence...*

The above is an implicit reference of the convergence of language and identity as they were envisioned in the study. That is, the negative effects of the two phenomena on their academic performance as it was conceived of in this study. On the other hand, it draws attention to the positive regard for the acquisition of English language proficiency. This was attested to by the assertion by student identified through the pseudonym Y2s2 below. However, at the same time, they felt that it would be in their best interests to face discomfort; and run the risk of ridicule and censure in order for them to, hopefully, gain confidence in expressing themselves. Their assumption was that this would position them to be better teachers, in view of the value accorded to English as a medium of instruction and a universal language of communication. The second year student (Y2s2) pointed out...

*...when you go further you have to know English because it's the most used language inside and outside our country ...*

The data obtained through semi-structured interviews attests to the fact that the language and identity-related experiences of the nine selected students had a bearing on their cognitive band-width (Vershelden, 2017) with epistemic and ontological ramifications (Maseko, 2015). Of special significance was the fact that the participants were presented with the opportunity to air their views regarding ways in which they could contribute towards the amelioration of their circumstances. For example, they expressed the opinion that appropriate support, in the form of regular, consistent and user-friendly tutor sessions, would assist greatly in relation to some of the challenges they were experiencing.

*Y1s1: I think it's gonna help...coz right now they'll tell us, 'here's a tutor' but then there are no classes. So now coping with that thing is not easy... Ya, something should be done ...some people are struggling extremely although there are tutors ...it's still not enough because tutors...like [sometimes] they won't be patient with you and they just call something out and you have no idea of what they are saying*

*Y2s2: I think programs like tutoring if they can form a group that can help us*

*Y3s2: ...they'll tell you that there is a tutor and the contacts and everything but then you have to book and when you go there then the person is not available so you just give up...*

The above comments substantiate the claims about the need for fit-for-purpose multi-layered support system that will be cognisant of the complexities associated with transitioning from the familiar contexts of disadvantage into the unfamiliar situation of advantage.

In the study, Theme 3 and the two categories that were derived from it drew attention to both positive and negative identity related experiences. In view of the focus of the study these were limited to those that pertained specifically to participants' participation and performance in formal class contexts. The positive experiences have to do with the extent to which they were able to exercise agency in circumventing the potentially debilitating circumstances of misrecognition with positive ramifications for emergent transformative praxis. For example, two students (Y2s1 and Y2s3, respectively) commented on how they would navigate their way around complex concepts:

*I do a lot of research...I have to understand the concept of the question, define them on how I am going to answer the question...that's where I have confidence about what do they really want in that question.*

"On the other hand, the associated negative experiences served as confirmation of the assumptions about the effects of the convergence of language and identity on performance". The remark by student (Y1s1) are instructive in this regard:

*Um it's kinda like intimidating because you've got like Whites and they so English and like...I can speak English, but I don't think that I'd be able to express myself in a lecture hall full of people who've been doing English like their whole lives.*

The above concerns are confirmed by Lecture W1 who observed that she had to caution L1 speakers against what she terms as "linguistic arrogance" that accounted for the L2 speakers feelings of intimidation. This supported the view expressed by L2 speakers that their discomfiture would be considerably alleviated if they could be allowed to express themselves

in their Home Language: (Y3s3) *"I'm scared... I have fear that maybe I won't say the right words..."* In this regard, this third year student showed that there was a correlation between prior exposure and proficiency when she said: *"There's no one who speaks English where I say...I still struggle because this is where I started to speak English and to socialize with people who speak English"*

A lecturer (B1) corroborated the fact that the black students in her class were reticent in relation to class participation:

*In terms of class participation they don't participate much. Others can participate but it's very limited. Most do not participate at all until I call out their names and say: "you haven't spoken to me for the past 3 months..."*

Lecturer, (W1), remarked that over the years she noticed the need for support:

*If you ask a [black student] ...it's almost as if instinctively the Black student would turn to someone to consult with a friend...um confer with someone...it's more a collective response... and I hesitate to say that coz I could be stereotyping but that is a real experience of mine*

The possibility of stereotyping aside, the above assertion could be attributable to the culture of communalism that forms part of the backgrounds of these students. It could be assumed that the communalistic backgrounds accounted for the need to consult or confer. This is an implicit confirmation of the assumptions about the validity for a communal support system that is based on the principles of Ubuntu. In that regard the claim about the need for customized and contextualized support is supported. This also validates the role of a culturally appropriate collective support strategy such as the one envisioned through a decolonial Ubuntu approach. Within the context of this discussion tutor sessions are envisioned, as bias-free zones where students' identity as black Africans from disadvantaged backgrounds will not act as a barrier to participation. On the contrary they will be afforded the opportunity to experience the benefits of contextually appropriate multi-dimensional participation in a 'safe space'. This, I argue, will provide them with the communal support that will facilitate recovery of a band-width that has been compromise through misrecognition (Fraser, Fataar, in print; Mullaithan & Shafir, 2013 in Verschelden, 2017:8).

## 7. Concluding remarks

This paper focused on individual(istic) identity formation that is situated within a synergistic student support system in the interests of both the individual and collective good. The argument presented here is that the contestations of identity formation would be resolved through a decolonial Ubuntu-framed communal support system. I argue in this paper that tutor spaces have the potential to provide students, with specific reference to those who fall within the category of "the African child", as conceived of in this discussion, with the opportunity to draw from their ubuntu cultural capital in two ways. Firstly, to engage with one another in a manner that allows them to develop within the Ubuntu principles of *"umuntu umuntu ngabantu"*, that is, "I am because you are." An added translation would be "whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual" (Briggs, 1996:27). This means that within that space there is a collective and systemic agency that provides traction for their individual epistemic and ontological becoming. Secondly, as part of the collective support system, there is also a simultaneous sense of individual agency in which there is a mutualistic benefit towards the

common good, but not at the expense of their individual transformation, rather, this is in the interests of the personal development.

The intention of this discussion is to contribute towards the re-imagining of the decoloniality discourses from theoretical and ideological contestations into the arena of pragmatic responses to the remnants of colonialism and coloniality such as misrecognition. Simultaneously, in cognizance of the Akan proverb about the cluster of trees, they are envisioned as appropriate spaces for allowing individual growth, development and band-with recovery with positive ramifications for academic performance I take the liberty here to reiterate the three-pillar support approach that was presented in the original study for application in this discussion. I referred to the first pillar as “*epistology*” [own coinage]. This coinage was conceptualised as a combination of the constructs of epistemology and ontology, as they pertain to teaching and learning environments. Attention was drawn to the convergence of language -as associated with epistemological access and identity - as part of the cohort’s ontological development and professional identity formation.

The second was intended to highlight the fact that the ideal, such as, for example, the use of the Home Language, should also take into account the practical realities that might hamper the actualisation of the ideal. The recommendation in this regard is to work with the reality while working towards the ideal. That is, the reality that systems are not yet fully in place to facilitate the full actualisation of the ideal call for practical interim measures such as, for example, alternatives to monolithic English context (Blommaert, 2010) such as, for instance, heteroglossia, codeswitching and trans-languaging (Williams, 1996, Cook, 1991; Makalela, 2015).

Additionally, I recommended the critical theory synergised student support system that is comprised of a collaborative network of tutors, mentors and SI facilitators. The envisaged advantages of the recommended synergised support were presented as:

- Participatory collaboration and collegial engagement
- Responsibility and concern for social justice
- Personal and professional development
- Scholarly critique
- Reflectivity and reflexivity (Maseko, 2015:161).

With specific regard for the argument presented in this discussion about communal professional identity formation the envisioned decolonial tutor spaces should provide “*epistemologically*” individualised support. At first glance, this might seem to be a contradiction of terms because the terms individualism and communalism seem to be at opposite ends of a binary. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes evident that tutor spaces are an apt vehicle for conveying the decolonial synergistic clustering and huddling of Ubuntu and recognition, that is, identity-formation.

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