Chapter 20: Remembering Forward: Memory Work Principles in Transformative Postgraduate Supervision

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Abstract

This chapter argues for a fundamental reconceptualisation of postgraduate supervision in South African higher education through the theoretical framework of memory work. Reflecting on thirty years of post-apartheid doctoral education provision, the chapter demonstrates how transformative doctoral supervision requires moving beyond hierarchical, performativity-driven models toward collective, democratic approaches that value contestation and multiplicity.

The chapter is structured in two complementary sections. Section One explores memory work as a theoretical foundation, examining how productive memory-making operates through non-linear temporality (kairos rather than chronos) and relational experiences. It identifies five 'pedagogo-pathologies' (amnesia, fantasia, solitaria, inertia, and nostalgia) that undermine transformative potential by perpetuating apartheid legacies and conservative practices. Section Two applies these insights to postgraduate education, critiquing the quantitative obsession with doctoral outputs while presenting an alternative cohort model of supervision that embodies memory work principles.

The cohort model demonstrates how collective memory-making can disrupt traditional power relations through collaborative communities of practice involving multiple supervisors, students, and graduates. Various permutations of this model have evolved across disciplinary, institutional, and international contexts, addressing supervisory capacity challenges while promoting democratic engagement and creative 'serendipitous accidents'.

AASBS Volume #22 (2025) DOI: https://doi.org/10.29086/978-0-9869938-3-1/2025/AASBS22
Chapter DOI: https://doi.org/10.29086/978-0-9869938-3-1/2025/AASBS22/20 pp. 422 - 447

The chapter concludes that transformative supervision requires conscious commitment to challenging comfortable patterns of the past while remaining open to uncertain futures. Memory work provides a theoretical scaffold for continued experimentation in curriculum design, though further empirical research is needed to evaluate long-term transformative impacts across different institutional and cultural contexts.

Keywords: Memory work, transformative postgraduate supervision, cohort model of doctoral supervision, post-apartheid higher education, democratic curriculum design

Introduction: Memory-making and Reimagined Transformative Postgraduate Supervision

This chapter argues that a reimagined postgraduate supervision model is required to challenge the habituated hierarchical patterns that invalidate a deeper transformative democratic agenda of post-apartheid South African higher education. Such reimagining of an alternative requires the need to gene-rate curriculum spaces where productive learning and the campaign for democratic transformation can be brought together in robust, meaningful dialogue within the postgraduate supervisory space. This entails that the productive postgraduate supervisory learning space values simultaneously coherence, contestations and social justice aspirations for future directions.

The chapter draws on theoretical foundations of memory work, which point to how we remember our past and reconsider the present circumstances to move towards a reimagined future. Perhaps all reconstructive learning involves some form of memory work, grafting our past, present and future not in linear ways, but actively seeking to redirect towards transformatory, broader, more meaningful insights. In particular, the chapter will focus on how this memory work framework can be activated as a curriculum force within a remodelled postgraduate supervision space that attends to the values of contested and conflictual engagement rather than adherence to disciplinary boundary defensiveness and habitual hierarchical routines.

The chapter is divided into two broad overarching sections. Section One will elaborate on conceptions of memory-making, especially within the context of thirty years after the first 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, whilst

Section Two will tackle how elaborated, contested notions of the inter-connections of time and relationality can assist in reimagining the reform of doctoral postgraduate supervision. Section Two will foreground the theoretical and practical potential of an alternative cohort model of postgraduate super-vision to activate engagement, contestation and generate creative serendipitous accidents. The cohort model links the memory-making framework to an alternative educational transformative agenda.

Section One: Memory-work: (Re)membering our Future

This section points to how memory-making is itself neither neutral nor uncontested and requires elaborated non-linear conceptions of time. Nevertheless, the argument signals that moving towards a productive, creative memory-making is paradoxically undercut by the dominance of pathologies that steer the system towards containment rather than elaboration. Memory work could be critiqued as restrictively consolidating the past hegemonies and hierarchies, but it also has the potential to challenge inequities and activate alternative transformative spaces. Drawing these conceptions of positive disruption is seen as a potential force for curriculum transformation, which will be argued further in Section Two.

This section provides the theoretical exploration of memory work, with its embedded complex and assertive processes and outcomes of making memories that are retrospective and prospective, as a potential foundation upon which curriculum designs of postgraduate education and supervisory models could be built. How history is reflected upon thirty years into the new democracy is evocative to demonstrate the process of memory-making currently at play. These historical reflections are reminders that the reconstruction of the education system ought to be primarily driven by the transformative quest for a more socially just post-apartheid society. However, other agendas have come to subvert this primacy.

Towards Productive Memory-making: Reading History Critically

The doors of learning and culture shall be opened is the popular refrain in the Freedom Charter, which remains, almost seventy-five years later, one of the documented benchmarks internationally of a democratic movement driven from

the ground up to set the goals for a dignified life[1] freed from the apartheid oppressions of racial, sexist and classist bondages (Suttner 2015). The principles of this people-driven agenda became enshrined in the new post-apartheid Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996; Liebenberg & Young 2018). Similar initiatives to take stock of the past and interrogate its setbacks to charter a way forward for consolidating our democracy and socio-economic transformation have been undertaken across the country. These initiatives accent the many layered dimensions involved in the process of transformation, including at governmental policy levels (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET] 2024), at institutional curricular levels (University of Johannesburg - UJ 2024) or community-based organisation programmatic levels (The 1860 Heritage Centre 2024). Each constituency chose to engage in how it remembers in varied ways.

For example, the political reporting pointed to the strides that have been made to reflect the increased demographic participation of previously marginalised groups, especially within higher education (Department of Higher Education and Training, DHET 2024)[2]. An assemblage of academics at UJ provided a balance between a variety of perspectives from policymakers and critics, from bureaucrats, managers and academics, from advocates and theoreticians to fuel debates about our histories (or whose histories) about the building /architecture of the higher education system[3]. The 1860 Heritage Centre in Durban foregrounded its campaign not to forget the contributions of the stalwarts of the Indian community. Nevertheless, by extension, it aims to examine the intersection between the Indian indentured labourer's original heritages of the community (the remembered past) and its evolving diasporic identity in post-apartheid society (the future present). In this regard, the Centre

[1] Yunus Ballim (first Vice-Chancellor of a newly-created post-apartheid university) cautions that the Freedom Charter was directed at fostering a broad-based democratic *dignity*, not econometric *ascendancy* into a middle-class for a selected new elite (UJ 2024).

[2] More subtle nuances of the achievements and challenges of higher education participation are explored further in the CHE report on the epistemic access and success of historically disadvantaged students in South Africa post-apartheid public universities (CHE 2022a).

[3] See link for the full programme and speakers: https://url.za.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/fPwNCP1JWRtEA8X7C0hBu9qI8p?domain=acrobat.adobe.com

professes itself as a potential space where the connectivities between the multiplicity of Indian identities and their quests for the broader social justice discourse should feature prominently (The 1860 Heritage Centre 2024).

These efforts signal that our agendas for remembering are never neutral. They are implicated in how we see the relationships between the past, the present and the future. They also accent that we do not remember alone. We all select with whom we wish to make memories. We selectively choose the options for what will constitute our repertoire of achievements and setbacks. More assertively, memory-making is not fundamentally about the past, but is entangled in the ways in which the past can be used to reimagine our present and future selves. Reappropriated productively, memory-making, thus, becomes a process of active learning, selecting and deselecting those elements that fuel our planned intentions. While the memory-making is shaped by the past, it collides with multiple contested and fluid entanglements of several competing and coherently aligned forces that co-exist. Thus, the educational space should be one in which these contested collisions and assertions are opened to scrutiny. Transformation is not simply about capitulation to the agenda of singular, powerful perspectives; instead, the education space should be a space for exploration of alternative and multiple readings of our world.

Reconceptualising Time: From Chronos to Kairos

The above examples about memory-making at policy, curricula and programmatic levels, when they adopt an uncritical one-sided reflective stance, present the dominant default to understand time in linear and chronological ways. This conception of time is referred to as *chronos,* which segments human experience into discrete units. The past, the present and the future are suggested in this caricature to unfold in sequential, bounded ways[4] and has contributed to humans' understanding of their worthiness in relation to how much effort they expend at any one moment or defined span of time. Measures of success become calculations of how we utilise time efficiently. Individuals are also rewarded in relation to these valued bytes of time. Their efforts are understood as efficient

[4] This draws from a paradigmatic dominance of the positivist epistemological worldview, which emphasises discrete 'truthful' ways of knowing, celebrating the quest for certainties. To achieve the 'scientific' way of knowing, researchers are expected to disrobe themselves of any subjective personal interpretations to adopt an objective relationship to that which is being researched.

units of the measures of time. So, mantras like 'don't waste time' or 'time is money' soon come to be equated as hallmarks of a productive system. These conceptions of linear time have become infused into our policy and curriculum choices, as we begin to measure the worthiness of our curriculum in relation to matters of efficiency, rationality and performance outputs.

This chronological interpretation of time often neglects that some moments of time are considered more important than others. A critical moment in time that is considered an opportune moment for something to come into existence is referred to as a *'kairos*' moment. One modern scholar who has extensively engaged with the concept of the *kairos* moment is Thomas Rickert. His work often explores *kairos* in the context of rhetoric, new media, and the intersection of technology and human agency. He suggests that we are surrounded by declarations that often are symbolic, paying deference to political or econometric mantras, often without any deep intention to translate into concrete, real, socially relevant action. Additionally, social media create fictive and marketised communities that feed incestuously with and on their targeted audiences. The loss of human agency amidst the powerful potential of technologised ways of activating knowledge is an increasing concern in many realms.

Rickert's scholarship considers *kairos* as a pivotal moment of opportunity that is deeply contextual, emerging from the interplay between time, place, and discourse (Rickert 2013). Kairos within curriculum spaces pays attention to the quality of *relational experiences* that individuals harvest as an influence of being part of a collective meaning-making and shared dialogical agenda in a democratic trust and valuing of diverse vantages. Focus is directed towards how the relational experiences contribute to the quality of collective transformative goals.

Furthermore, the relegation and ascendancy of moments in time emanate not solely from highly individualised, experiential interpretations. Memory making is inherently connected relationally to the broader community within which one is located. Personal phenomenological experiences cannot be separated from embedded and embodied wider historical, sociological, political and cultural ways of seeing (Samuel, Reddy & Brown 2022). For example, the fleeting second of a significant moment is less about the duration of the event than about the significance of that moment for that individual in relation to their own past conceptions, prior knowledges and previously socialised constructs. Time, in this latter interpretation, is considered as something experienced, reflected upon and ingrained into one's evolving memories. Learning embraces the embodied moments and is constitutively linked to a social space.

A productive curriculum design activates this personal-social relationality, acknowledging not a unidirectional communication from a singular, all-powerful knower to a passive recipient. Instead, it allows for multiple opportunities to serendipitously co-exist, out of which individuals make choices. It is the quality of the social experience (its *kairos*), not the length of time (its chronos), that matters. Hence, curriculum design in higher education should be about providing opportunities for these moments of disruption and contestation to occur, which allure respectfully all participants to draw on their own legacies to make sense of a particular new learning process.

Learning is embedded not only in the immediate present but also embraces dimensions of both past and future possibilities. Hence, the kairos directs the current experience toward activating a better version not just of the individual but of the system. It is transformative not just of the self but also of the social context within which the self operates.

The diagram below (Figure 1) captures the agenda of the kairos moment as prospectively systemically directed.

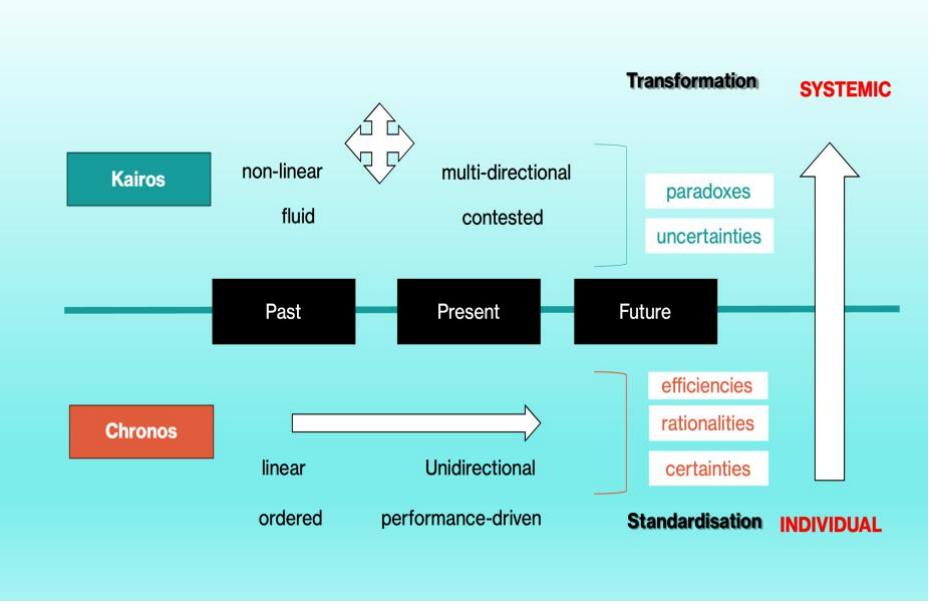

Figure 1: Transformative memory making: From chronos to kairos (Sources: Author's own)

This diagram translates within the curriculum design spaces of higher education to challenge the extant tacit interest directed towards the development of individuals at the expense of the collective. The present higher education space suggests that personal ascendancy overrides questions of whose interests the curriculum design serves. Instead, the curriculum design based on a kairos agenda is about assuring that social transformative goals of the curriculum are not just professed as symbolic targets but are translated into how practical engagement between various role players takes place to activate socially just and democratic intentions.

This more open democratic social space is not necessarily directed towards providing congratulatory affirmations of one's past legacies, and one's capitulation to the safe comfort zones. The contested disruptive curriculum expects that whilst some forces appear stable, they are feverishly turbulent, embedding and holding power aggregations and marginalisation, contradictions and tensions. Transformative education is about exposing these laden elements of assertion and subordination towards the activation of more socially just rearrangements. A disruptive kairos curriculum space may be birthing new possibilities arising out of contradictions and disputes. Our seeming deaths might be revolutionary new possibilities. This is the deeper curriculum agenda of deep transformation.

Yuval Harari (2017) (in his book *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow)* reminds us additionally that this complexity and contradictions are the nature of our future revolutionary history. However, unlike the revolutions of the past, such as the agricultural or the industrial revolution, the modern era is likely to endure simultaneous multiple recurring revolutions. He suggests that revolutions of the future are likely to be short-lived since newer technologies will outshine their sustained trajectory. They will also tend to be repetitive in minor variations rather than being incrementally evolutionary. Whereas previous, more stable, enduring revolutions spanned several decades, the present information revolutions, biological and climatic revolutions of the present times, are morphing exponentially on a weekly, if not daily basis, as new knowledges come to bear upon human existence by human or artificial means. Education cannot be about holding down the traditions of legacy or habituated rituals that stabilised our existence and calmed our memories. Instead, our new education must be directed to assist in how we interpret our entanglements and should provide means to interpret how to know what to know when we do not know how to know. This entails living in what is coined an **'infinite present'** where the past, present and future co-exist in dialogical iterative engagement

(Manathunga 2014). Future education is not about certainties, but about how to negotiate uncertainties.

Pedagogo-pathologies: Undermining Productive Memory-making

Unfortunately, our memory-making is not yet sufficiently robust to cope with these uncertainties. In exploring these limitations, Lee Shulman (2017) suggests that teachers, educators, curriculum designers and higher education researchers (specialists and supervisors) suffer from several 'pedagogo-pathologies' which disable or undermine the potential of our educative responsibilities. These powerful pathologies constrain memory-making towards attempts to standardise and fossilise current modes of operations. These celebrate the architects of the conservative past rather than the designers of the alternative future. He listed these pathologies as follows:

- **amnesia** (*a selective forgetting of priorities*),
- **fantasia** (*a romanticisation and simplification of what is possible in a complex intersected world*),
- **solitaria** (*an obsession with private hoarding rather than disseminating of possible leverage pedagogical possibilities*),
- **inertia** (*a reverting to habituated rituals as if educational choices are a-contextual or timeless*) and
- **nostalgia** (*believing that we once lived in a golden age in the past*) (Jenvey 2015).

Whilst these pathologies are pertinent to activating a scholarship of teaching and learning research, I am arguing that they may be useful instruments to examine how our collective remembering occurs within the education system, particularly in postgraduate educational curricular and supervisory spaces. I now turn to provide examples of how these memory-making and vagaries of time and space play themselves out in the educational spatiality. My suggestion is that whilst the memory-work model of relationality has the potential to challenge apartheid legacies towards transformative potential, our pedagogo-pathologies could serve to perpetuate and consolidate the rituals of the past. New curriculum possibilities for postgraduate supervision could emerge out of this entanglement.

Section Two: Transforming Postgraduate Education: Memory Work and Curriculum Design

Section One explored the potential of a memory work model as a transformative lever and the pedagogo-pathologies which undermine it. In Section Two, I explore how the higher education system can appropriate these entangled ways of being and becoming, membering and remembering within the postgraduate supervisory space. How we remember (our memory-making), with whom we remember (our partners in memory-work) and in whose interest (our goals) we choose to reimagine our future constitute the foundation principles for examining higher education pedagogies of supervision prospectively.

I examine firstly, the drivers of transformation in the higher education postgraduate space with its unique ways of remembering, and then the pathological blockages of selected mechanistic translations that support low levels of quality research. The section then expands the possible options of theoretical models of doctoral supervision, suggesting the need to critique the learning models that underpin the design of doctoral education curriculum. This exploration of the range of possible models suggests that we have the potential to critique the paradigmatic orientation of our learning pedagogies in the supervisory space. Unconsciously, supervision practices might be conserving ritualistic and habituated practices of the past rather than promoting a more socially just and democratic transformative curriculum practice. I present the cohort model of doctoral supervision, which draws theoretically on the model of memory work described in Section One, promoting a valuing of dialectical contestation, complexity and contradiction. I then demonstrate how the original cohort design has evolved into many permutations within a selected School of Education context. The arguments suggest why this cohort model of doctoral supervision is considered to activate deeper transformative goals of postgraduate education.

Higher Education: Evolving Reflections on Doctoral Education Provision in Post-apartheid South Africa

My focus in this sub-section is now directed towards how postgraduate education is reported on within the higher education sector. Doctoral education is considered the endpoint exit qualification of the higher education system. However, rather than concentrating on the transformative and social influence of the research agenda of doctoral education as a knowledge contribution, measures of the success of postgraduate education have taken on new pathological

fetishes, foregrounding exclusively quantitative performance outputs of the different higher education institutions. This was perhaps spurred on by the critical analysis (of which I was a part) in the Academy of Science of South Africa's (ASSAf 2010) reflection on the status of PhD production in South Africa.

After fifteen years of post-apartheid democracy, the system still reflected the remnants of a highly skewed system. Globally, South Africa was reported at the bottom end of the low percentage of doctoral graduates per million of the population[5]. Similar developing world countries like Brazil and Korea outcompeted South African production. While being the largest of the doctoral education systems continentally, the national system still recorded a low percentage of academic staff with doctorates in historically under-served institutions. This had the effect that fewer doctorate graduates were being produced by those institutions which do not share the history of a strong research tradition. These legacies were aligned with apartheid racialised configurations, where undergraduate teaching rather than research production dominated. A snapshot indicated that during the period 2000-2012, 70% of all doctorates were produced by only six previously advantaged institutions (ibid.). The National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 set new benchmarks to increase the productivity of doctoral graduates, with a target of 100 graduates per million people by 2030 (National Planning Commission 2012). This was mooted not just about spreading capacity throughout higher education but argued to be allied with activating a research-led economic development process. These targets translate into the higher education (HE) system being expected to produce 5000 new doctorates per annum. The rate of doctoral graduates in 2010 was 1421 nationally. The DHET (2022), in a report entitled '*Are we Producing Enough Doctoral Graduates in South Africa?*', reported the following trends over the period 2012 to 2022, showing an annual increase in the output of graduates from public higher education institutions[6].

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[5] Based on comparative International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) South Africa produced 27 doctoral graduates per million of the population. This official framework facilitates international comparisons of education systems as sub-unit of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

[6] This data constitutes the most recent audited data from the Department of Statistics on Post-School Education and Training. The output from private education is relatively small. For example, the DHET (2022) report indicated

Table 1: Number of South African doctoral degree graduates, 2012 - 2022

Date	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No.	1879	2051	2258	2530	2797	3057	3344	3445	3552	3574	3690

Source: Department of Statistics on Post-School Education and Training (Khuluvhe & Netshifhefhe 2023)

On the one hand, this increase could be considered as evidence of the growth of the system, but the Department of Statistics on Post-School Education and Training reflected that the 3690 graduates produced in 2022 were well below the original 5000 per annum target (Khuluvhe & Netshifhefhe 2023).

Moreover, the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the quality assurance body reviewing higher education provisioning, was concerned that this steady increase tended to prioritise quantitative rather than qualitative measures of doctoral education.

It is not surprising that the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in 2020 commissioned a national review (ten years later) to look at doctoral education provision, which still bore the hallmarks of underproductivity. For example, the concern was that the NDP set the target of increasing to 75% the percentage of academic staff with a doctoral degree (a proxy for the pool of potential supervisors), yet in 2022, only 52.5% of South African university academic staff had a doctoral degree (Khuluvhe & Netshifhefhe 2023).

Table 2: Share of academic staff with a doctoral degree in South African universities, 2012 - 2022

Date	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
%	38,6	41.1	42.9	43.8	44.9	46.0	48.0	47.7	49.3	48.8	52.5

Source: Department of Statistics on Post-School Education and Training (Khuluvhe & Netshifhefhe 2023) based on HEMIS database

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that there were 33 doctoral graduates from private higher education institution (HEIs) in 2022.

This table points to the demands of the NDP being largely unrealistic and unattainable given the prevalent low supervisory capacity of the system.

Disappointingly, the synthetic national report after the doctoral studies review (CHE 2022b) transferred the responsibility of renewing the system to the higher education institutions (HEIs) themselves, suggesting that there was a need for greater clarity on the purpose of doctoral studies as a driver of original, significant contribution to academic knowledge. This could be considered as a simple *romanticisation* of the repeated declaration of the targets of the system, without examining adequately what was possible within the realities of the differentiated higher education context. This could also be considered as externalising the systemic responsibility of the national departmental system to ensure resourcing the system to build the supervisory capacity of underproductive higher education spaces. Management systems, such as ethical procedures, came to be foregrounded as their concern. There was an expected declaration for increased project management skills and the need to prepare doctoral students better in soft skills such as communication and entrepreneurship, considered as needed in the job market. The report encouraged new structures and formats of doctoral programmes to allow for different disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. Was this a form of *fantasia,* simplistically declaring the outputs and re-directions required without providing the specific means of how to achieve this? This could be considered an example of the pathologies that Shulman (2017) pointed to in Section One above. The national report deflects the agenda and selectively chooses not to acknowledge sufficiently the broader historical divergences of resource provisioning of the apartheid legacy. Ironically, the advantaged institutions are celebrated for being advantaged, and the disadvantaged HEIs are expected to rise to the status of the target simply by internal mechanisms and management processes. This is an example of selective forgetting.

Reflecting on these CHE propositions, academics (postgraduate researchers and their managers) were concerned that there was insufficient attention given to the pragmatics of how these laudable intentions were to be translated within the HE system. Some argued that these ideals were again forgetting the specificities of the different higher education institutions, where research capacity was undermined by localised spatial and contextual issues. Simply demanding increased productivity could also have the capitulative effect of the institutions feigning adherence to the targeted outputs without paying adequate attention to the quality of the graduates they were producing. An underlying deficit and judgmental discourse indirectly celebrated the more

affluent institutions, while offering little support to marginalised institutions. Again, marginal institutions were being cast as spectators of the game of the powerful. This *amnesia* promotes selective forgetting of the real challenges in higher education institutions, which in practice must deal with the multiple challenges of an expanding education system.

A positive feature of the report was to recognise that alternative *models of supervision* were already being used within the HE system, and that there could be more collaborative engagement across differing institutions to share curriculum designs and models of supervision. The report suggests that we do not need to work in *solitaria* without looking for inspiration for alternative transformatory supervision models which already exist in some contexts. The rest of this chapter will address the interest in shifting the discourse towards a deepening of the quality of doctoral education curriculum through experimenting with alternative approaches to doctoral education and research supervision, which promote a more socially just democratic curriculum space. This shift is underscored by a range of researchers who chose to document their alternative pedagogies of critical hope for the future of doctoral education in the post-apartheid South Africa[7].

Further, rather than an obsession with stories of failure, Samuel and Mariaye (2023) work with authors across the national and international context of reviewing doctoral education who choose to reflect on the evidence of *successful alternatives*. An anthology entitled '*Transforming postgraduate education in Africa*' captures these 'stories of success' shifting from superficial demographic shifts of participation in postgraduate education and quantitative measuring of the system's outputs towards a deeper conception of transformative postgraduate education and research (Samuel & Mariaye 2023). Firstly, the argument of the anthology critiques the notion that doctoral graduation is solely about producing a technically competent report. It is expected that a research report (doctoral thesis) must be coherent in its design and analytical stance, but, more importantly, be about activating a process of self-awareness and scholarship as a way of being. Doctoral education in this formulation understands the importance of teaching students within their doctoral education curriculum about leadership and activating a responsibility

[7] Bozalek, Leibowtiz, Carolissen and Boler (2014) argue against celebrating the naïve hope of those exotic few who escape the hegemonic norm. They argue for a critical hope which understands deeply the blockages to equitable achievements.

and responsiveness to contextualised social challenges. Rather than the emphasis on obtaining a doctorate for the sake of the honorific titles or serving the careerist intentions for promotion, a doctorate should be teaching students about the 'self-in-service': using one's education prowess to serve the community in which they reside. Rather than promoting discipleship (a following and cloning of the habituated rituals within a field of study), the new doctoral graduate should be able to activate boundary-crossing and shared dialogues across sectors and levels. The theoretical and philosophical input of the doctoral study ensures it is the apex qualification. The engagement in the research process ought to be directed towards the generation of a deep transformation that affects the quality of lives of the future persons with whom one interacts. Doctoral education cannot simply be about producing quantitative measures of outputs and graduation numbers.

Research Pathologies

However, the research terrain is littered with malpractices where supervisors and their students become complicit with an agenda of *disguised advocacy*, using the research process merely as a formality for foregone conclusions. To speed up the production line of doctoral education, supervisors, caught within the performativity discourse of quantitative outputs, choose study designs that can efficiently and speedily produce desired results in record time. Sampling in this vein is chosen to support the already presumed assumption that the researcher has before s/he began the study. These studies tend to conclude with definitive and categorical knowings which are often detached from the complexities of social settings and their challenges. Arrogant studies reflect no tentativeness and instead profess a tendency to singular certainties (whilst privately acknowledging that many vacillations might exist). The researchers (and their supervisors) are led by the unethical agenda of introducing an already foreclosed solution without due attention to the effect or impact their research will have on the lives of the social communities where the research is conducted. This deeper ethical agenda ought to be what constitutes the quality of research agendas, rather than capitulations to formulaic considerations (usually based on laboratory-like scientific research traditions). Especially in the humanities, one needs to develop deeper considerations of what research ethics and social responsiveness mean.

The performativity discourse in research has activated the view that doing doctoral education is about displaying the outward manifestations of a

qualification. They promote a logic of a *chronos* rather than a *kairos* mentality about time and commitment to the complexity of knowing and knowledge-making. However, alternative models directed towards a deeper transformation of postgraduate research should guide the interaction between supervisors and the supervised, which values the democratic respect for contested multiplicities and robust experimentation of complexification rather than reduction.

Alternative Models of Research Supervision

Some involved in research supervision are not explicitly aware theoretically of the learning model that underpins the way in which they engage in the supervision process. Doctoral supervision constitutes a curriculum itself that is not sufficiently interrogated for its pedagogical underpinnings. The traditional and dominant model that underpins most supervisor relations is that of a one-on-one supervisor-student model, where an expert master supervisor apprentices a candidate/ student to adopt the approach, theoretical works view and methodology of the custodian of the project. Drawing from its *behaviourist roots*, the candidate is evaluated in terms of how well s/he clones the supervisor and replicates the former's standard of behaviour. This might also include cloning of values that imitate those of the supervisors. Such a model ensures that the student stays on track in line with the authority and expertise of the supervisors. Students' experiences within this model are generally accepted since the relationship of supervision succeeds when the master is an expert in his/ her field. However, there is a potential for abusive power being enforced over the student when s/e has little leeway to disagree with the master.

A more *rationalist approach* aims to ensure that the student is first inducted into the propositional knowledge that needs to be applied in the fieldwork to be undertaken. In this supervision model, the supervisor is likely to insist that the scope of the theoretical worldview of the project is first thoroughly understood before the student researcher can enter the field. Supervision is usually prefaced with lengthy periods of reviewing existing bodies of literature and theoretical frameworks (and/or methodologies) before the candidate is allowed to suggest a directed and informed choice for the proposed study. This applied science model spans not only traditional scientific research, but also is evident in many professional programmes, such as medicine, engineering, teacher education, law and others.

A *reflective practice model* of supervision, by contrast, is concerned with the personal growth and development of the individual student as a practitioner who can self-reflect on research choices made. The emphasis in this model is on ensuring a weighing up of multiple interpretations and meaning-making processes, which may even contradict each other. The supervision space is one in which the supervisor and the student explore lines of inquiry, negotiating interpretations of the alternative ways of seeing. This is a common expectation of many social science research studies.

By extension, a *critical reflective model* is consciously aware that the research space, its fieldwork context, as well as the relational space between supervisor and supervised, are a highly contested terrain. The space is imbued with processes of silencing and foregrounding, of contestations and complementarities. This dialogical space is one which attends to how social justice considerations are being developed, how rituals of the past are being contested, and how doctoral education is allowing the possibility of new equitable arrangements. The aim in this model is to be disruptive of inequities. The above depictions of the models are explored as a theoretical heuristic to reflect on the kinds of models that ought to characterise the emerging and developing democratic space of post-apartheid South Africa. Nevertheless, in practice, it is more than likely that permutations of these models occur at different points in time, even in the same study. Supervisors might also shift their supervisory stance to achieve contextualised and situated goals.

The Cohort Model of Supervision

The cohort model of supervision, as used within my institution, is a combination of one-on-one models with variations of theoretical approaches as discussed above. Instead of only assigning doctoral students to one supervisor, students are assembled in a team of students with a team of supervisors. The cohort acts as a collaborative community of practice (Maistry, Samuel & Reddy 2021). In this team cohort, the students are exposed to a variety of different voices and openings and models of how to approach their research study.

It is not accurate to interpret a cohort model of supervisors as simply the assemblage of students and supervisors in groups to report on their work in progress. Instead, the cohort is expected to act as a collective, collaborative network where troubling assumptions, habits, rituals and routines are exposed, analysed and critiqued. The responsibility for the co-ordination of the overall

programme is usually conducted by a senior academic staff member who responds to the cohort group's needs at different points in their study. Such a co-ordinator, when designing the programme, does arrive at the curriculum design in an *a priori* preordained fashion but draws the cohort unfolding to reflect the unique stages or phases of the students' cohort group as well as the specific needs of the students at a moment in time (Maistry, Samuel & Reddy 2021). These input sessions are usually directed by the pool of supervisors who are a permanent feature of the cohort model. However, visiting guest speakers are drawn into the programme. Such speakers may originate from within the disciplinary interests of the students, or from outside the discipline, and even outside the institution itself. Unlike one-on-one supervisory sessions, not all areas of the cohort input sessions are fine-tuned to only the individual topics of the students; they are directed organically towards a range of interests.

Increasingly, as the confidence in the model of exchanging multiple vantage points is explored, past graduates of the cohort programme are brought in to lead what is considered the plenary session of a weekend programme. Such sessions share personal experiences among peer students within the collective cohort group. These graduating students sometimes continue to serve the cohort as facilitators of breakaway groups, rendering specific input about topics and approaches that they have previously used and responding to the needs of students. This model thus consists of a range of different models of supervision simultaneously: *one-on-one* supervision (where much of the administrative responsibilities of doctoral studies[8] are finalised); a *study team* approach of collective supervisors, as well as *peer supervision* from past graduates and present student colleagues.

The programme is organised in a way that the breakaway sessions are chaired by the students themselves. Sustainable combinations of supervisors are assigned to breakaway groups to activate the reflection. Usually, breakaway supervisors stay with the students in their group from the time of commencement of the study to its end, providing developmental scaffolding throughout the study[9]. Students serve as scribes of each other's presentations and comments offered in the session. It is not possible to rid such a breakaway

[8] These include the registration, proposal defence applications, ethical clearance applications, progress reporting, intention to submit, examination and graduation procedures.

[9] Not all breakaway facilitators are specialists in the field of the students' topics. Nor are the facilitators necessarily the supervisors of the students.

session from the vagaries of power that emerge in relation to the experience, age, reputation or personalities of both the supervisors and the students. Ideally, supervisors are restricted from being defensive about their own students' presentations, and the student chair has the right not to invite their commentary.

Permutations of the Cohort Model

Since its beginnings in the late 1990s (Samuel & Vithal 2011), the cohort model has morphed to proliferate a range of different typologies of cohorts. Originally, the cohort curriculum was designed around cognate groups of students across *three phases*: research proposal writing, fieldwork and analysis/reporting writing. Over time, alternative combinations of students have been assembled around those who share a common methodological interest (e.g., action research, curriculum policy studies research). These spiral groups have originated from the founding model but are now led by cohort graduates who themselves have started their own cohort models based on a range of varied models. Each permutation establishes how frequently they meet, the length of their meetings, and the specifically targeted roles and responsibilities for participating members. The varied budgets available to run such a programme vary, and the co-ordination and management thereof take on unique characteristics. Further examples include *country-specific models,* which were established to activate groups of students who are studying in their own countries but linked by a memorandum of understanding between the founding institutional home and the collaborating international institution. *Inter-disciplinary* models have also been experimented with. These include groups of supervisors who have chosen to work in an intersectional way, promoting the fluid interchange across previously bounded disciplines. Some cohort postgraduate models have assembled students in combinations of *honours, masters and doctoral students* as a single collective. Some supervisors have chosen to work with only their own students in a *supervisor-cohort*. Some supervisors have activated cohorts of students that span across *different institutions in a national* programme.

These permutations of possibilities for cohort design have led to a range of cohorts as depicted in Figure 2 below.

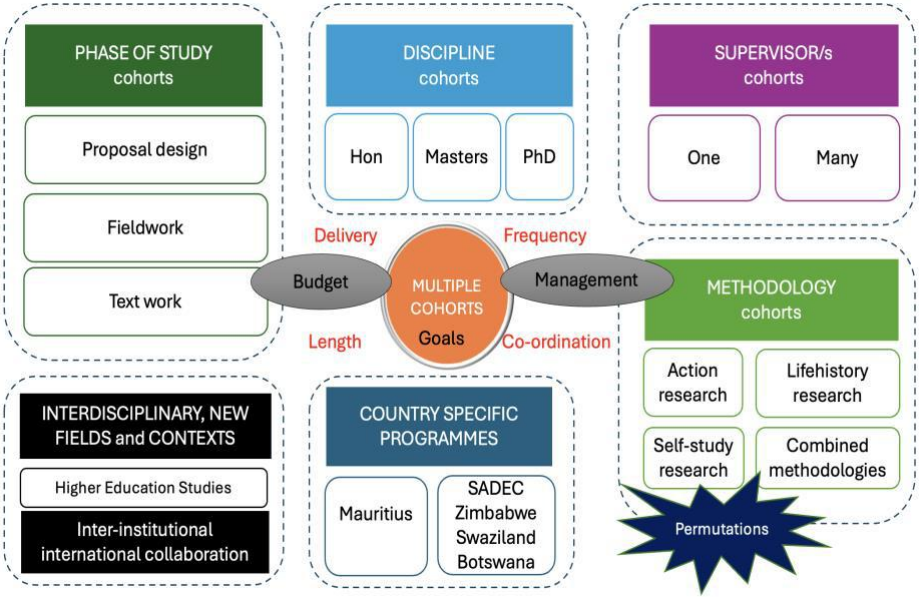

Figure 2: A range of cohort models of supervision of doctoral education
Source: author's own

The effect of this cohort model over the last twenty years or more has addressed what was a perceived shortage of supervisory capacity at this one institution. By altering the model of supervision and the goals of the supervisory process, a range of possible combinations are activated. Many more students are capable of being enrolled and supported by the multiple cohorts available. Students are supported to develop interdisciplinary scholarship, learn how to work in a community of scholars and above all, learn not only how to be supervised but also glean the ingredients for being prospective supervisors working with diverse students and topics. Students are also indirectly learning the potential critiques they are likely to receive during the examinations of their theses; they are learning how to coordinate and manage research meetings, and plan projects drawn from a range of peer examples. They become exposed to a range of disciplines other than only their own study, its theoretical framing and its methodology.

The model is also used as a form of building novice supervisors' supervisory capacities. Consciously, the programme design assembled both senior and more experienced supervisors with novice and oftentimes innovative

colleagues as a form of peer mentorship and capacity building in supervisory practice. When assembled into the cohort team, novice supervisors are exposed to how other seasoned academics respond to their own students. Such 'novices' also bring into their cohort group their own recent research studies, showing other prospective students what the cutting-edge discourses are in the specific field. The cohort space has also become a dissemination space for the novice to consolidate and share their emerging scholarship. We argue elsewhere that we need to design doctoral education for creative serendipitous accidents, allowing the possibility for new insights to collide in creative and imaginative ways (Maistry, Samuel & Reddy 2021).

This cohort model of doctoral supervision draws inspiration from the complexities and pathologies of memory-making. We do not remember alone, and we reimagine new possibilities by exploring a range of options that are inherently contradictory, multifaceted and non-linear. These complexities are not a problem but a resource. We are rooted in the realities of our present circum-stances and should not capitulate to the mantras of *amnesia*, *fantasia* and *solitaria*. Additionally, we are not obsessed with preserving an *inertia* remaining only in how our present has been determined by the past. To disrupt our routines and habits, creative and critical reflexivity is needed. More dynamic and respectful curriculum space attends specifically to the democratic sharing of diverse readings of the social context. Since memory work has the potential both to challenge and perpetuate the legacies of the past, one must adopt a curriculum space that consciously attends to the matters of injustices and inequities

New knowledge contributions within postgraduate education spaces ought to serve not just selfish personal interests but also the wider interests of the social system within which one operates. Memory, education and transformation are thus intricately entangled, and our supervision spaces should celebrate rather than curtail contestation, fluidity, flexibility, and consciously remember with prospective exploration for a future rather than merely reinforce the rituals of the past.

Concluding Thoughts: Transformative Supervision through Collective Memory-making

This chapter has argued that transformative postgraduate supervision requires a fundamental reconceptualisation of curriculum design grounded in the principles of memory work. The theoretical exploration presented here demonstrates

how the interconnections between memory-making, time, and relationality can serve as foundational principles for reimagining doctoral supervision beyond the pathological constraints that perpetuate apartheid legacies in South African higher education.

The relationship between Section One's memory work framework and Section Two's cohort model of supervision is fundamentally symbiotic. Section One's elaboration of productive memory-making, with its emphasis on non-linear temporality, contested dialogical engagement, and the transformation of pedagogo-pathologies, provides the theoretical foundation upon which the cohort model operates. The cohort model, as described in Section Two, exemplifies memory work principles in practice: students and supervisors engage in collective remembering that draws from multiple perspectives, challenges habituated hierarchical routines, and creates spaces for serendipitous encounters that generate new knowledge possibilities.

The theoretical argument presented here suggests that curriculum design for transformative postgraduate supervision must move beyond chronos-driven performativity measures toward kairos-oriented relational experiences. The cohort model demonstrates how memory work principles can be activated through curriculum design that values contestation over compliance, multiplicity over singularity, and democratic engagement over hierarchical apprenticeship. Where traditional supervision models risk perpetuating amnesia, fantasia, solitaria, inertia, and nostalgia, the cohort model's emphasis on collective memory-making disrupts these pathologies through its inherent commitment to diverse perspectives and critical dialogue.

The implications of this argument for future postgraduate education are significant. First, institutions must recognise that curriculum design is not merely about administrative arrangements but about creating transformative learning spaces that challenge existing power relations. Second, the cohort model suggests that supervisory capacity building should move beyond individual expertise development toward collective, collaborative approaches that democratise knowledge production. Third, the integration of memory work principles into curriculum design offers a distinctly collaborative approach to postgraduate education that resists deficit narratives while promoting indigenous knowledge systems and methodologies.

However, this theoretical exploration in this chapter has limitations that must be acknowledged. The argument relies primarily on conceptual frameworks and limited direct empirical evidence from cohort model implementations. Previous studies documented in Samuel and Mariaye (2023) already

detail such more empirical work that suggests that deep transformation is activated by programmes, people and perspectives that foreground the complexity of postgraduate education in, by and for Africa. They outline that such wide-reaching efforts span beyond parochial redefinitions and include the need to work in interdisciplinary, cross-departmental, inter-institutional, national, continental and transnational contexts.

Nevertheless, more targeted future research should include comprehensive evaluations of the cohort model outcomes themselves, comparative studies across different institutional contexts, and longitudinal analyses of graduate impact on broader transformation goals. These should include both empirical and qualitative theoretical explorations of alternative postgraduate curriculum design and supervisory models, and their social influence. Additionally, research is needed to examine how memory work principles can be adapted across different disciplinary contexts and cultural settings. For example, some disciplines are fundamentally directed paradigmatically to profess the quest for certainty, and promoting a disruptive agenda might destabilise, foundationally, their axiomatic assumptions about their knowledge enterprise. Some cultures promote constitutively the respect for and deference to authorities; challenging this relationality within the educational space might counteract their normative expectations. This chapter has already linked memory work as capable of activating systemic transformation of institutional curricular relations yet acknowledges paradoxically that our memory-making pathologically can be appropriated to stall deep transformation. Studies in the future about memory work and its curricular potential would be advised to differentiate when memory-making is either affirmatory or conservative, or paradoxically both. However, one should caution against the prospective studies from simplistically equating our ways of knowing about the successes of postgraduate studies curriculum design only in efficiency and rationalistic measures.

The chapter concludes by recognising that transformative postgraduate supervision represents part of South Africa's 'unfinished revolutions'. The memory work framework presented here offers one pathway toward engaging these forever revolutions, but it requires conscious, sustained commitment to challenging the comfortable patterns of the past while remaining open to the creative possibilities of an uncertain future. The theoretical foundation established here provides a scaffold for continued experimentation and refinement of transformative curriculum design in postgraduate education.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Zahraa McDonald (University of Johannesburg) for a critical reading of an earlier draft of this chapter. Her critique streamlined the focus of the chapter towards the links between memory-making and transformative curriculum design of doctoral education. Nevertheless, I take full responsibility for the choices interpreted in this chapter.

As an ethical declaration of the use of AI tools, I acknowledge the use of Claude to sift the diverse critiques offered by reviewers and create a more manageable, structured architecture for the paper. The abstract and the closing section drew on AI's recommendations, which synthesised my argument through language editing.

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