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Epistemic Inertia in Higher Education Systems in Post-Colonial Africa and its Implications for Planning and Implementing Transformation in Higher Education

Abstract

The history of higher education in Africa is inextricably linked to colonialism, and later, to apartheid, in the case of South Africa. Higher education was one of the most effective tools that the colonial and apartheid regimes employed to subjugate, dismantle, and marginalise the cultures, knowledge systems, values and traditions of the indigenous African populations. Accordingly, one of the key targets for change after gaining independence, and after replacing apartheid with democracy, in the case of South Africa, was higher education in general, and the knowledge project, in particular. The aspired and desired change in the knowledge project goes by different terms including 'epistemic renewal', 'curriculum reform', 'decolonisation of higher education', 'decoloniality' and 'transformation of the epistemes', to mention but a few from a growing list of terms. Many decades into the post-colonial era, a key question that ought to be posed is why higher education systems and institutions in Africa have not made significant gains in bringing about the aspired and desired changes in higher education, in general, and in the knowledge project, in particular? The notion of 'epistemic inertia' is increasingly being used in attempts to answer this question. This piece of *Briefly Speaking* examines the notion of epistemic inertia and the manifestations of

epistemic inertia. It also discusses the conceptual frameworks that assist in understanding epistemic inertia and suggests ways to plan and implement transformation of higher education in a manner that reduces, and/or neutralises epistemic inertia to achieve socially responsive, and epistemically inclusive futures for higher education in post-colonial Africa.

Keywords: Change, epistemic inertia, higher education, innovation, reform, transformation

Introduction

In Africa, the history of higher education is inextricably linked to colonialism (Materu 2007), and later to apartheid in South Africa (Metz, 2015). Colonial and apartheid systems successfully employed higher education as one of the tools for entrenching European hegemony. The Eurocentric higher education systems that African countries inherited when they acquired independence, and when South Africa transitioned from apartheid to democracy, were anchored in a philosophy that sanctioned epistemological disenfranchisement

and/or epistemicide (Saidi and Mbhele, 2023). It has, therefore, been the desire of post-colonial Africa to bring about change in higher education, to transform it from being a tool of oppression and dispossession (van Wyk and Higgins, 2004) into a vehicle for redress, to compensate for the past epistemic injustices. The long-term goal of the aspired change has remained to open up space for new and much needed Afrocentric epistemes, which should assist in making up for the 'epistemicide' caused by colonialism and apartheid (Masaka, 2017).

At the centre of the aspired and desired change in higher education is the knowledge project itself, including knowledge systems, cultures, structures, and practices (Saidi and Mbhele, 2023). This is inspired by the increasing realisation that, outside of the Western world, countries and regions that have used education effectively as a tool for achieving remarkable social, technological and economic development, are those that have anchored their education systems in their respective national or societal philosophies, values and traditions (Msila, 2009).

The aspired and desired change in the knowledge project goes by different terms including 'epistemic renewal', 'curriculum reform', 'decolonisation of higher education', 'decoloniality' and 'transformation of the epistemes' (Le Grange, 2018), to mention a few. Each of these terms has its own emphases and nuances, but they share a common envisioned endgame which is all about higher education curricula and the kinds of knowledge domains that could be freely interrogated and restructured to serve the needs of the African people, and to push

forth the emancipatory dialogue successfully initiated by the independence leaders in countries such as Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania (Mamdani, 2019).

Many decades into the post-colonial era, a key question that ought to be posed is why higher education systems and institutions in Africa have not made significant gains in bringing about the aspired and desired changes in higher education, in general, and in the knowledge project in particular? In attempting to answer this question, Gebremariam (2025) observes that whenever the process of changing the knowledge project is set in motion, there is a form of a counterforce that limits, constrains, or curtails progress, resulting in the preservation of the *status quo*. This is known as 'epistemic inertia', a term that is defined as the tendency of higher education knowledge systems, cultures, structures, and practices to continue reproducing inherited assumptions and dominant epistemic traditions, even when these no longer align with the needs of contemporary socio-economic realities and developmental aspirations of societies or nations (Maringe, 2023).

This piece of *Briefly Speaking* examines the manifestations of epistemic inertia, discusses the conceptual frameworks that assist in understanding epistemic inertia, and suggests ways to plan and implement transformation of higher education in a manner that reduces, and/or neutralises epistemic inertia to achieve socially responsive, and epistemically inclusive futures for higher education in post-colonial Africa.

Change concepts and epistemic inertia

The word 'change' carries connotations such as to alter the *status quo*; to give a different position, course, or direction; to replace a particular dispensation with a different dispensation; to switch or make a shift from one situation or dispensation to another; and to make something different. Change often arises from a deep-seated desire to create something new (Brankovic and Cantwell, 2022). Ordinarily, the word 'change' is used to describe episodic, small-scale, incremental, and cosmetic alterations which do not fundamentally alter the *status quo*. When change is so fundamental, the words commonly used to describe it are 'reform', 'innovation' and 'transformation' (Brankovic and Cantwell, 2022).

Change as episodic, small-scale, incremental, and cosmetic alterations, does not entail sufficient force to alter a system or an institution fundamentally (Beit, 2026). This is consistent with Isaac Newton's first law of motion which states that unless a force greater than that which maintains a body at rest or in motion is applied, the body will remain either at rest or in motion. The point is that a large external force is required to move a body from rest or to alter its velocity once it is in motion. Change as episodic, small-scale, incremental, and cosmetic alterations does not generate sufficient force or forces to move or accelerate a system or an institution towards a fundamentally different form, size and shape. Therefore, change is often countered by a greater force, resulting in inertia.

'Reform' is relatively more fundamental than ordinary change. It refers to deliberate efforts to improve existing systems, structures or policies without necessarily altering the underlying

assumptions or institutional logics (Khajuria and Thapa, 2025). It tends to be policy-driven and seeks correction, efficiency, accountability, and modernisation. In higher education, reforms often include curriculum reviews, restructuring of governance structures, improvements in quality assurance mechanisms, review and revisions of funding formula revisions, and review and revision of assessment regimes, to mention key ones. Reform targets aspects or portions of a system, not the entire system. For that reason, the impact of reforms is often limited and easily neutralised. In other words, the combined force of reforms are not sufficient to fully counter the force that maintains the *status quo*, which is reflected by the degree of inertia. Therefore, there is a tendency for reformed systems to either retain some features of the *status quo*, or to temporarily bring about fundamental change, only to revert to *status quo ante* over time. Therefore, the sustained changes that are required in higher education cannot be achieved through reforms (Maringe, 2023).

'Innovation' is relatively more fundamental than ordinary change and/or reform. 'Innovation' is a term that has its origins in design and technology management. It refers to the development, implementation, and evaluation of tried-and-tested creative solutions to existing problems, often associated with aims such as improvement, better service delivery, cost-cutting, scaling, and sustainability (Kayyali, 2024). Typically, like reform, innovation targets specific aspects or portions of a system, rather than the entire system. It is science-driven and gains acceptance through multiple positive trials, often conducted within the same contexts where it is intended to solve existing problems. Because of its limited application,

innovation can suffer the same fate as reform, namely, being absorbed into the organisation's general culture and dissipating into obscurity before its impact is even noted. Furthermore, innovation tends to be costly and highly specialised, and it rarely survives when the innovator has, or innovators have left the institution. By its nature, innovation is about improving the *status quo*, and not completely departing or breaking away from the *status quo*. Accordingly, it does not generate a force that can fully counter the force that maintains the *status quo*. Therefore, innovations tend to be countered by significant degrees of inertia.

'Transformation' is large-scale change that targets the cultural and ideological heart of a system. It aims at overhauling a system and developing a new one, not through mere modification and tinkering at the edges, or cut-and-paste processes that give only a semblance of change on the outside (Du Preez, Verhoef, and Simmonds, 2016). Transformation goes beyond what ordinary change, reform and innovation can provide. It represents profound, systemic, structural, and, most importantly, epistemic reconfiguration. It reconfigures the underlying assumptions, power relations, identities, and purposes that underpin institutions. In higher education, transformation focuses on developing new capabilities in freedom and belonging, increasing choice and decision-making, and enhancing the quality of life and opportunities for all students, not just for a few privileged groups. Ultimately, transformation is about creating new values such as equality, social justice, equity, and inclusivity (CHE, 2022). Since transformation requires more than institutional change, reform, and innovation, it demands a

critical interrogation of the purposes, values, knowledge systems, and power structures that shape higher education. Transformation creates and is propelled by a force that is, or forces that are greater than the force that maintains or the forces that maintain the *status quo*. As a result, transformation programmes tend to experience less degree of inertia, or less long-lasting inertia.

Applying the conceptual differences among the concepts discussed earlier, it is clear that change, reform, and innovation are not sufficient forces to move or accelerate an institution towards fundamentally different dispensation. This appears to be consistent with observations across higher education systems in post-colonial higher education systems in Africa, which remain largely untransformed despite their avowed intention to do so because of epistemic inertia.

Epistemic inertia versus resistance to change

Epistemic inertia and resistance to change are often conflated, yet they are conceptually distinct. They operate at different levels of institutional life and are grounded in different assumptions (Zantvoort, 2015).

Resistance to change tends to be primarily behavioural and psychological, whereas epistemic inertia is structural, cultural, historical and epistemological. Conceptually, resistance to change refers to conscious or unconscious opposition to proposed alterations to the long-established features or characteristics of a system or institution. It is often associated with fear of uncertainty, loss of power and control, and disempowerment stemming from the need to learn and unlearn in response to change. It can

occur at both the individual and institutional levels. It is human-centred, visible, immediate and reactive. In higher education, for example, resistance to change occurs when academics oppose new technologies, performance management systems, institutional mergers or governance reforms.

Epistemic inertia operates through deep institutional habits, embedded epistemologies, inherited power structures, cultural reproduction, institutional reward systems, and historically normalised assumptions about what counts as legitimate knowledge. It is, therefore, systemic, often invisible, historically sedimented, culturally reproduced, and structurally reinforced. In higher education institutions, epistemic inertia manifests in multiple ways, including through the sustained privileging of the Western canon, the persistence of narrow disciplinary silos, reward systems driven by metrics rather than impact, the exclusion and/or marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems, assessment systems that privilege individual performance, and quality systems that prioritise compliance over transformation.

Higher education institutions can overcome resistance to change while maintaining epistemic inertia. For example, a higher education institution may successfully overcome resistance to the establishment and adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, the digitalisation of learning, the internationalisation of curricula, and the restructuring of institutional governance, yet still do so within the context of prevailing Western canonical paradigms. In such situations, change, reform or innovation might have occurred within

higher education institutions, while the epistemic foundations would have remained unaltered.

Epistemic inertia explains why higher education systems may undergo change, reform or innovation without being transformed. They may change administratively, technologically, or structurally while remaining epistemically stagnant, thereby maintaining the dominance of Western knowledge systems. While higher education institutions may successfully implement changes, reforms, innovations and technological adjustments, they often leave deeper epistemic assumptions unaltered. These assumptions shape knowledge systems, determine whose knowledge matters, define what counts as excellence, define how institutional success is measured, and determine who benefits from them.

Theoretical framing of epistemic inertia

Kuhn's structure of scientific revolutions

Kuhn (2012), a renowned science historian, in his seminal work on the structure of scientific revolutions, argued that established scientific disciplines cannot be overturned overnight even in the face of new findings and contradictions. He suggested that new scientific findings tend to spur new developments within stable disciplinary formations rather than destroy the disciplines. Established disciplines become paradigms, not just an assembly of theories, but social institutions in their own right. Kuhn's work thus explains the persistence of disciplinary silos in higher education and the trust people have in them as the valid basis for understanding the world. It offers the most direct explanation of why the Western canonical paradigms have become hegemonic, and why

these tend to offer the starting point for the growth of new understandings. Paradigms thus embed inherent epistemic inertia, which stalls the emergence of new ideas.

Foucault's knowledge as power

Michel Foucault argued that knowledge and power cannot be separated because they are inextricably linked. Power produces regimes of truth that define what is accepted as true, and this same truth legitimises the knowledge used to produce it. As such, knowledge and power circumscribe what is legitimate and true, and towards which all forms of human endeavour must be directed. Foucault's work (see, for example, Nwadinihu, 2025) thus shows the embeddedness of knowledge and power in what higher education institutions ought to be concerned with. When a society produces new knowledge, it evaluates it using the powerful existing epistemic frameworks. Thus, power and knowledge have inherent epistemic inertia that almost always favours the *status quo*.

Fraser's knowledge of social justice

Nancy Fraser, an American critical theorist, proposed a social justice framework (Musara, Grant, and Voster, 2021) in which she argued that knowledge without participatory parity is an unjust imposition on those who have no say in its promulgation. She suggested that knowledge making should address three interconnected dimensions: economic redistribution, which entails economic restructuring to ensure everyone has the means and resources needed to participate on equal terms; recognition, which ensures that diverse identities and groups are respected and valued as full partners in social interaction; and

representation, which involves the reform of decision-making rules and political boundaries to encourage and guarantee participation and rulemaking. Fraser's social justice framework identifies the embedded marginalisation of some groups from knowledge-making as a key epistemic inertia barrier that must be dismantled for more justice-led knowledge creation in education.

Fricker's epistemic injustice

Miranda Fricker's theory of epistemic injustice addresses the moral and cognitive wrongs committed against others in their capacities as knowers. While epistemic injustice describes the structural and interpersonal silencing of marginalised groups, epistemic inertia explains the psychological and institutional tendency to resist beliefs which perpetuate prejudice and marginalisation (see, for example, Nielsen, Nordgaard and Henriksen, 2025). Her theory emphasises two forms of injustice in society and educational settings: testimonial injustice, which occurs when a knower's credibility is undermined because of their identity, and hermeneutical injustice, which occurs when a knower is rendered unintelligible because of a general belief that their status lacks the capacity to articulate intelligible issues. Epistemic inertia, according to Fricker, thus occurs when recognised cognitive systems, beliefs and prejudices resist change even when they are contradicted by new evidence or novel information.

de Sousa Santos's epistemologies of the South

Boaventura de Sousa Santos made a sociological contribution to the understanding by critiquing Eurocentric dominance in knowledge production.

He argued that global social justice requires global cognitive justice. He further argued for the recognition and valorisation of marginalised knowledge systems in the Global South against what he called Western epistemicide, which destroys rival knowledge systems. De Sousa Santos (2012) suggested that there is an arbitrary, pervasive, and invisible border that divides human experience into two realms: the visible, recognised, dominant, and valid Eurocentric side; and the invisible, inferior, and discarded realities of the Global South. He argued that the Eurocentric perspective provides only a partial understanding of the world and that the task of transformation in higher education is to bring Western theories into close collaboration with the lesser-known epistemologies of the Global South. Epistemic inertia in this context resides not just in the theories of the Western canon but also in the resistance to any rival theories seeking to enter the domains of established thought.

Paulo Freire's emancipatory education

Paulo Freire (1972), one of the most influential post-colonial thinkers, observed the injustices of the miseducation of poor Brazilian children and articulated them in the timeless book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'. In the book, he rejected the banking model, in which teachers act as all-knowing transmitters of sterile, unexamined information to passive students, treated as empty vessels whose ticket to success is guaranteed only through unquestioning acceptance of authority and insatiable assimilation of information. Encouraging problem-posing, dialogical education, critical consciousness, and praxis, Freire saw epistemic inertia in the pedagogical belief in teacher authority, which encourages

knowledge-giving rather than knowledge-making (see, for example, Majola, Rangana, and Geduld, 2025).

Mignolo's coloniality of knowledge

Walter Mignolo (2007) showed how Western epistemologies present themselves as universal and neutral, silencing local epistemologies and dictating what counts as valid knowledge. Mignolo argued that this conceals a hidden, darker side, which he called coloniality, the underlying logic that sustains the hierarchy of knowledge necessary to justify ongoing imperial/colonial expansion. Coloniality thus transcends the boundaries of colonisation, ensuring that, despite the physical manifestations of decolonisation and a new democratic dispensation, the collective minds of the formerly colonised persist in believing in the supremacy of colonisers' knowledge systems and in the weaknesses of local knowledge systems. Coloniality thus sees epistemic inertia residing in the minds of people, on both sides of the global divide, and in the relentless representations that propagate the superiority of the Western canon.

Amaryta Sen's capability approach

The essential argument behind the capability approach is that educational institutions hold a limited view, assuming that their role is to train young people in skills and aptitudes that enable them to work productively in their societies' economies (see, for example, Chiezey, 2026). Sen tore this argument apart on many fronts, arguing that, beyond a capacity-driven transformation, questions have to be asked about whether young people are afforded the capabilities to be self-determined, to recognise their worth beyond what

society seems to determine, and to live a life they value and cherish. Capabilities are thus liberating, while skills alone allow people only to conform and be compliant slaves in the economies they fought hard to transform. In Sen's framework, epistemic inertia resides both in the minds of elites who see young people as elements of their profit-motivated labour markets and who believe they need only the skills that production owners require. Education systems that emphasise the development of employability skills while ignoring ideas of entrepreneurship and work-driven education thus create a node of epistemic inertia that needs to be confronted.

Manifestations of epistemic inertia

Epistemic inertia permeates entire higher education institutions in post-colonial Africa, but is most evident in the critical areas of research, teaching and learning, pedagogy, governance, and quality assurance. The colonial curricula of higher education have largely remained intact, save for few tweaks here and there. The Western teaching and assessment pedagogies persist even when there is widespread recognition of the need for fundamental change. The governance systems for higher education institutions continue to mirror those of Europe or North America, while underlying higher education institution cultures are largely indistinguishable from those in the West. Similarly, the quality assurance regimes remain entirely Eurocentric (Saidi and Mbhele, 2023). Although access has been widened, the institutional cultures remain alien and alienating to most African students, who are from historically marginalised backgrounds. Failing to fit in such alien and aliening institutional cultures compromises their chances of success. Consequently, the higher

education systems continue to graduate a small number of elites, not unlike what was happening during colonialism and/or apartheid (CHE, 2019).

In research, for example, there is high dependence on hegemonic theoretical frameworks developed within Western contexts, with limited adaptation to local realities in the global South. This undermines relevance, intellectual innovation, analysis, and interpretation, and limits prospects for achieving important transformational goals (Fataar, 2025). Emerging local African theories are often systematically displaced from mainstream frameworks. They are either treated as secondary pathways to understanding or, in many cases, deemed ineligible to produce knowledge that matters in the academy.

Similarly, research cultures across the critical fields tend to be grounded in tried-and-tested methodological constancies. Accepted methodological regimes that fall outside quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods are rarely, if at all, attempted in research across many fields. When they are tested, the research is often considered suspect, inconsistent with established paradigms, and therefore constitutes an invalid basis for useful conclusions and decision-making (Fataar, 2025). Using Western theories and methodologies that created inequalities in colonial societies to create inclusiveness and equalise opportunities in the post-colonial era may inadvertently reproduce the same inequalities that transformation efforts seek to dismantle. There may be a need to look elsewhere to discover theories and methods for creating and driving the new

value that transformation seeks in post-colonial higher education sectors.

In addition, research funding in many higher education systems in post-colonial Africa remains heavily dependent on external donors and international partnerships. These external agencies operate according to their own agendas and priorities (Jongbloed, Enders and Salerno, 2008). Failure to adhere to these priorities and agendas usually means one thing: an inability to access much-needed funding to operate their institutions and to compete on globally recognised platforms. More importantly, it also means that the agendas and priorities of the African nations receive less attention, diminishing the prospects for transforming the very institutions that badly require transformation. While international partnerships have contributed substantially to human capacity development and to publications in globally rated journals, they have also been linked to a subtle brain drain, as academics from the African countries are drawn to the Global North to pursue their careers.

Furthermore, most valued publication outlets are located in the Global North. In contrast, those that are located in Africa are usually treated as substandard and peripheral to the publishing industry's objectives (Mutongoza, 2023). As academic promotion and advancement are directly dependent on publications, staff who do not publish in higher-impact Global North journals tend to be overlooked. What makes things even worse is that African academics who are fortunate to publish in Global North journals often have their research locked behind prohibitive paywalls, making their own research effectively invisible to

others on the continent, while Global North partners, who tend to have the financial resources, enjoy the benefits from both worlds. Rankings also exert similar pressures. Biased as they are, on the developmental priorities of the Global North, they ordinarily exclude, through narrowed definitions and the types of data they privilege, the crucial transformative objectives which are prioritised within their contexts. As such, many higher education institutions in Africa do not compete favourably in global ranking systems.

Existing global challenges, such as climate change, cybersecurity, poverty, and geopolitical tensions, are more readily tackled through multilateral and transdisciplinary approaches rather than simple disciplinary knowledge systems, which continue to characterise higher education institutions, how students are taught, and how knowledge is disseminated and valued. This suggests that higher education institutions are not adequately contributing to the human capacities the world so badly requires (Mhlongo, 2025).

Transformation pathways and epistemic inertia

As indicated earlier, transformation is a fundamental form of change. The force generated by transformation is greater than the force that maintains the *status quo*. Therefore, transformation tends to experience less degree of inertia. Fowle (2023) observes that the use transformation pathways may attenuate inertia even more substantially. Transformation pathways (Fowle, 2023) in higher education is a term that has seen increasing use in post-colonial higher education systems. It refers to broad frameworks for reflective reconsideration of ways to strengthen gains already achieved, minimise the persistent

epistemic inertia that continues to hold back intended progress, and focus attention on advancing the quadruple transformational goals of justice, equality, equity, and inclusive growth in higher education.

There are five requirements for developing such effective pathways to transformation. Firstly, they must be context-sensitive, with a clear understanding of the specific needs and conditions in which the desired development is envisaged. Secondly, they must recognise the cumulative gains achieved through strategies of change, reform and innovation, and specifically seek to build on them in new initiatives designed to deepen the desired transformation. Thirdly, they must centre the transformation on the quadruple of justice, equality, equity and inclusive growth and development. Fourthly, they must commit resources, human capacity development, strong implementation and monitoring, and flexibility to make changes and adaptations when needed. Fifthly, they must not be isolationist in their creative instinct to build something new, throwing away everything foreign and abandoning the good that can still be useful in their new creative value-building.

Previous studies on transformation pathways such as those of Tefera (2014) and Maringe (2023) identified nine critical areas that ought to be prioritised in planning and implementing transformation pathways in higher education in post-colonial Africa. The nine areas are (a) dismantling the stranglehold of the hegemonic Western canon in higher education; (b) enhancing inclusivity in collaborative knowledge creation and partnerships in higher education; (c) deep

curriculum transformation, which subsumes and prioritises local knowledges and the systems that sustain them, such as decolonisation, and how these link to contemporary knowledge systems around the world; (d) transforming pedagogies that can sustain large-class teaching while promoting diverse collaborative learning and assessment; (e) transforming discipline-led education into a more transdisciplinary organisation of university teaching, learning and research; (f) transforming quality maintenance mechanisms from regulatory support to transformational enhancement; (g) diversifying student funding mechanisms to reduce the impact of poverty on participation and engagement in higher education; (h) embedding AI, technology and digitisation to facilitate teaching and learning, enhance academic integrity and improve student learning outcomes; and (i) enhancing the quality of the pipelines that deliver higher and more stable levels of female participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and in critical higher education leadership structures.

Conclusion

Epistemic renewal or the transformation of the epistemes is necessary in post-colonial higher education systems of Africa to make higher education relevant to the specific contexts of the post-colonial African societies and nations. It is only when higher education is relevant to specific contexts of the post-colonial societies and nations that higher education becomes a vehicle for the realisation of a nation's or society's cultural, socio-economic and technological development; and for nurturing and entrenching democracy.

Ordinary change, reform and innovation frequently result in small-scale, episodic, and unsustainable developments that possess limited ability to challenge the underlying inequalities, especially across socio-economic groups and within historically disadvantaged sections of society. Transformation, on the other hand, holds the promise of delivering equity and equality of opportunities and benefits, success, and capacities that protect and elevate people's identities, social justice, and inclusive participation and outcomes.

Any form of change in the academic project is often offset by inherent epistemic inertia, which refers to the tendency of established knowledge systems, institutional cultures, research practices, and teaching and assessment pedagogies to persist even when there is widespread recognition of the need for transformation.

Several decades after achieving independence from the former colonial masters, post-colonial higher education systems in Africa continue to exhibit vestiges of the colonial or apartheid legacies, as a result of not succeeding in minimising epistemic inertia. These vestiges are discernible in all facets of the core activities of higher education, including in teaching and learning, research, community engagement, governance and leadership models, and quality assurance and promotion approaches. Western canons remain the prevailing models for understanding, analysing, interpreting and implementing almost everything in higher education in post-colonial Africa.

There are theoretical frameworks that assist in understanding the origins of epistemic inertia. For

example, Kuhn's paradigms have effectively cemented knowledge and practice into predictable ways of knowing and understanding the world. Foucault's claims about the inseparability of knowledge from power mean that it is the powerful in society who determine what is worth knowing and how knowledge can be used, disseminated and applied; and Freire's prevailing banking concept in education has become the default mechanism by which academics teach in higher education institutions.

It is important to plan and implement transformation in higher education while being conscious of epistemic inertia and being intentional about minimising epistemic inertia. The use of transformation pathways to plan and implement priorities for transformation is recommended. The transformation pathways are broad, interactive, iterative, and reflexive frameworks for layered thinking about transformation achieve greater equity, equality and inclusiveness in post-colonial higher education systems.

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