



Collaboratively reimagining teaching and learning in East Africa

Prof. Flora Masumbuo Fabian,
Mwanza University
Dr Albert Luswata, Uganda Martyrs
University
Jon Harle, INASP



A partnership of East African university educators, social entrepreneurs, and experts in capacity development for change in higher education



Gulu University,
Uganda



Association for Faculty
Enrichment in Learning & Teaching,
Kenya



Uganda Martyrs
University



Ashoka East Africa, Kenya



University of
Dodoma, Tanzania



INASP, UK



Mzumbe University,
Tanzania

Funded by the UK government through the Strategic Partnerships for HE Innovation & Reform programme. Informal and formal support from CGHE members - David, Rebecca Schendel, Diana Laurillard

Why TESCEA? Motivations

- Employers, and governments and communities felt universities disconnected from societal and labour market needs.
- Rising graduate unemployment rates across the region.
- Students weren't developing critical thinking, problem solving and other 21st century skills –to learn how to think not what to think.
- Learning environments for women were not sufficiently supportive and enabling to enable them to progress and succeed.



Why TESCEA? Motivations

- To enable the talent and expertise of East African academics to drive change.
- To bring change into the classroom sooner.
- To design, test, refine and ultimately scale an approach – to support change beyond these programmes and these institutions.



Our approach

- Focused on **critical thinking, problem solving, gender responsive pedagogies** as core 21st Century competencies.
- Worked **across many disciplines** – including business, education, agriculture, IT, health.
- Did not need to overhaul entire degree programmes.
- Worked at the **course level**, so that change was quicker, feedback and learning faster.
- Academics **redesigned a course one semester, taught it the next**, got feedback from their students.



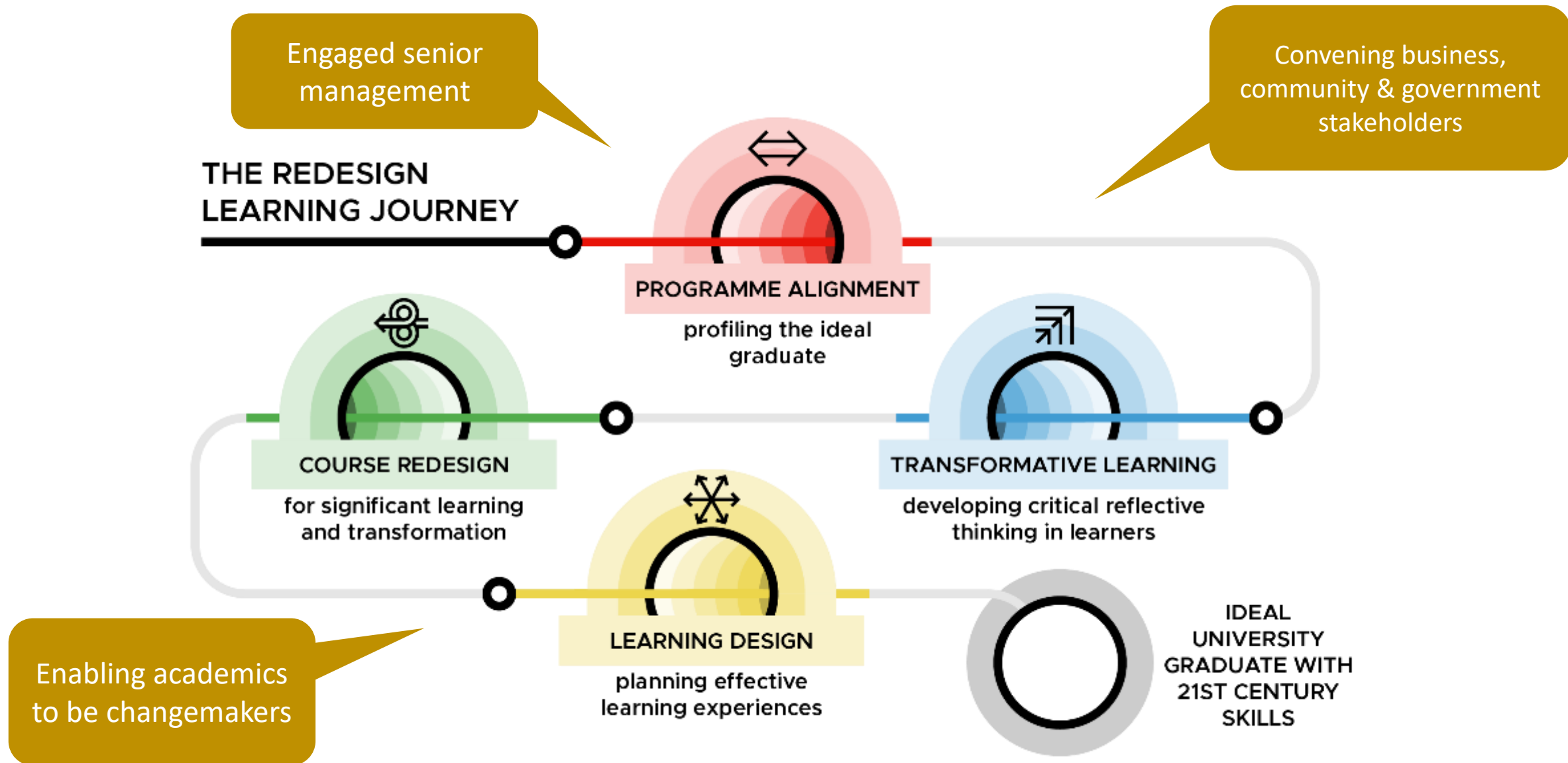
TESCEA

Enabling academics to teach for critical thinking

- “Transformative Learning Journey”, to initiate cultural, structural and individual change in the philosophy of teaching.
- Drew from established theories to identify transformative learning as a process of critical self-reflection, reflective thinking, and meaning making (Fink, 2013; Freire, 2017; and others)
- Assumption that if academics and programme managers were helped to think differently they would embark on helping their students to participate effectively
- Convened a series of workshops with lecturers and programme managers (administrators) to encourage them to formulate their own philosophies of learning.
- Argued that it was their role to facilitate a process of engagement and critical reflection with their students (to develop critical thinking for learners) rather than to transmit a body of knowledge.



A method for transforming learning



Enabling academics to teach for critical thinking

1. Programme Alignment – profiling the ideal graduate

- Consulted the literature and stakeholders to identify skills, competencies, dispositions that graduates needed
- Mapped this to Fink's taxonomy of significant learning (Fink, 2013; Wild & Omingo, 2020).

2. Transformative Learning

- Critical readings on teaching and learning. Exercises that engaged academics in reflective observation and active experimentation
- Identified early enthusiasts and created a cadre of “multipliers” to ensure local capacity to lead change.

3. Course Re-design

- Lecturers mapped concepts and crafted their learning outcomes and teaching and assessment strategies

4. Learning Design

- Introduced lecturers to the digital Learning Designer tool (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/learning-designer/>).
- Collected examples of designs representing a variety of pedagogic principles, including social learning, experiential learning, and active learning that can be used by others as inspiration for their teaching

Three critical factors

- Change had to be **rooted in East African expertise and experience**
- **East African educators** and programme managers had to **lead the change**
- **Partnerships**
 - Between universities and their stakeholders (government regulators, employers, industry, & community)
 - Amongst the partners, based on mutual respect and trust, valuing each others' knowledge, collaborative working, and consensus in decision making



Results



- Trained 565 lecturers
- Redesigned 212 courses in 100+ departments
- 39 policies and guidelines revised or created
- Reached 3,800 students

Academics – an emergent shift in teaching practices

- A growing wish to engage students in the learning process
- 91% of academics using gender-responsive pedagogies
- 80% of academics using critical thinking techniques
- 94% of senior managers said the changes were very important to their institution, and two thirds reported that their institutions were very supportive of institutionalizing the changes
- ...the use of critical thinking and problem-solving techniques increased by 43 percentage points
- ...the use of active learning strategies (such as role plays, fishbowl debates and peer teaching) increased by 37 percentage points
- ...the use of complex problem-based and team-based learning strategies by 15 percentage points
- ...the use of gender-responsive pedagogies by 45 percentage points
- One in three lesson plans was assessed as excellent; two-thirds were assessed as good.



Students are not empty vessels.... When you give them the opportunity to interact, to share what they have, they will learn how to solve problems themselves.

When we are in class let them think what we are teaching, think on the scenarios, think on the problems facing society...

I started to analyse myself... did I manage to create creative students who are free to express themselves and to work in different kinds of environments? ... now I have to find ways of enabling students to participate, interact and give their ideas

I have loved my experience. I have shifted my mental model about learning... 

Students – observable shifts in learning

- Became more responsible for their learning: no longer passive, more engaged in the learning process
- Felt valued in their learning process and listened to. 87% of students had positive experience of new teaching and learning
- Surveys indicated positive shifts in students' learning practices, and particularly in their use of critical thinking and problem-solving approaches.
- Increases in the proportion of students feeling they were better able to
 - apply facts, theories and methods in practice
 - examine their own views on an issue
 - change the way they thought about a concept or formulate their own questions
 - connect ideas from their studies to their own experience
 - clarify personal values and ethics
 - understand another's views, and understand the consequences of their own actions

“ It allowed me to have an open mind. Life is not a straight arrow... Having a willing and open mind allows for flexibility

This has helped me learn to appreciate the importance of working as a group or team”

I have learnt to make right decisions after weighing current situations at hand. It's something that has enable to handle various situations in the community

My thinking and way of perceiving things have totally changed from focusing on how to get employed to how to improve my community by starting something that solves their problems while making money



Institutions – structural and policy changes

- Various policies and guidelines were developed and passed
- Centres for teaching and learning
- A new certificate course (Gulu University)
- Certificates of excellent teaching and learning
- Positive shift towards the new approaches by university managers

Challenges

- Disruption by the pandemic closures
- Serious resistance on gender from some staff
- Lack of time to absorb new ideas and insufficient support to embed them in the teaching
- Interruptions from internet connectivity and power outages (workshops)

How we achieved change

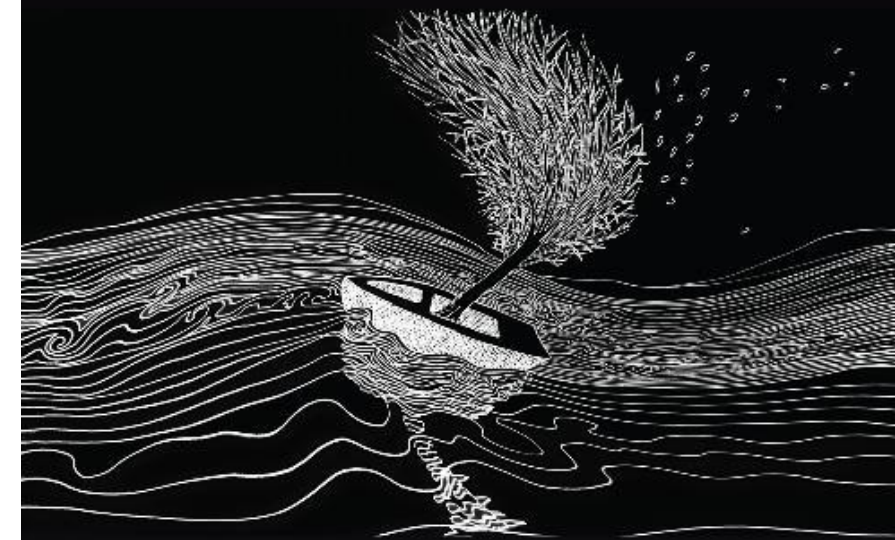
- Our common purpose and aligned visions
- Trust and humility
- Rooted in East African practice
- Learning and adapting as we went
- Inspiring academics and supporting them to explore change safely
- Maintaining enthusiasm and momentum

More in...

- Chapter 22 of Higher Education for Good
- www.transformHE.org
- <https://www.inasp.info/project/transforming-employability-social-change-east-africa-tescea>
- <https://youtu.be/X-JFydBz5zs?feature=shared>

Higher Education for Good

Teaching and Learning Futures



Edited by
Laura Czerniewicz and Catherine Cronin