**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**


# Exploring the role of pedagogical practices in the brand identity formation of selected Gambian universities


**Ozioma Ikonne**

**219048827**


**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Marketing**


**School of Management, IT & Governance**

**College of Law and Management Studiess**


**Supervisor: Dr Aradhna Arbee**


**2022**


i

# DECLARATION

I OZIOMA IKONNE  declare that

(i)    The research reported in this dissertation/thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.

(ii)    This dissertation/thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

(iii)    This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

(iv)    This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
a)  their words have been re-written but the general  information attributed to them has been referenced;
b)  where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.

(v)    Where I have reproduced a publication of which I am author, co-author or editor, I have indicated in detail which part of the publication was actually written by myself alone and have fully referenced such publications.

(vi)    This dissertation/thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the dissertation/thesis and in the References sections.

Signed: …………………..

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support of many individuals who 'walked' with me from the beginning to this day. I describe these individuals as 'very good people'. On top of the list of these individuals is my supervisor, Dr Aradhna Arbee. Dr. Arbee stood firmly by me throughout the protracted admission processing period that lasted nearly twenty four months. Given her quick and brilliant understanding of my unque circumstances, she would take extra steps to re-ignite my self-belief and the motivation to continue with the rigours of doctoral-level research. Her timer-style reminders of important deadlines, her timely, critical but calm feedback all became routines that made this study a memorable journey of educational experience and self-discovery. I am indeed grateful.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to my family for their support throughout this period. They showed tolerance for the isolated reading and writing sessions which remained a rountine throughout the duration of this study. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to my Personal Assistant (PA), whose office mamangement skills created the space for me to execute the critical phases of this study alongside my very packed official schedules.

Finally, I wish to thank my parents for their moral support. Their optimism and steadfastness in their support for my pursuit of a doctoral-level education provided a beacon of strength throughout the duration of this study.

# DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of Ugochi, Cynthia Ikonne, my younger sister who departed in her prime

# GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AAR       Anticipatory Action Reflection Cycle

AAU       Association of African Universities

ACE       Africa Centre of Excellence

ACFTA       African Continental Free Trade Agreement

AIUWA       American International University West Africa

ATL       Above-The-Line Channels

ATUP A       Association of Technical Universities and Polytechnics in Africa

BCBD       Bachelors in Community Building and Design

BLP       Blended Learning Practice

BRICS       Brazil, Russia, India, China & South Africa

CAPA       Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa

CBI       Confederation of Business Industry

CBIM       Coporate Brand Identity Matrix

CBL       Case-Based Learning

CMO       Chief Marketing Officer

COO       Country of Origin

DVCA       Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic

ECD       Early Childhood Development

EEC       Eastern European Countries

FaBL       Flexible and Blended Learning

FAS       Faculty of Arts and Science

GDP       Gross Domestic Product

GHELI       Global Health Education and Learning Incubator

GHS       Gambia Hotel School

GoTG       Government of The Gambia

GTHI       Gambia Tourism & Hospitality Institute

GTTI       Gambia Technical Training Institute

HBS        Harvard Business School

HE         Higher Education

HEIs       Higher Education Institutions

HGSE       Harvard Gradute School of Education

HKS        Harvard Kennedy School

HMS        Harvard Medical School

IBL        Inquiry-Based Learning

IEF        Institutional Education Framework

ILO        International Labour Organisation

KTP        Knowledge Transfer Partnership

LBS        London Business School

LTRM       Learning and Teaching and Research Model

MDI        Management Development Institute

MoBSE      Ministry of Basic & Secondary Education

MoHERST Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science & Technology

MOOCS      Massive Open Online Courses

NAQAA      Natonal Accreditation & Quality Assurance Authority

NDP        National Development Plan

NTA        National Training Authority

NTSC       Ndenban Technical Skills Centre

OACPS      Organisation of African, Carribbean and Pacific States

ODL        Open and Distance Learning

OECD       Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development

OEM        Open Education Movement

OEP        Open Education Pedagogy

OERs       Open Educational Resources

PAGE       Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment

PBL        Problem-Based Learning

P-HEBIM  Pedagogy-based Higher Education Brand Identity Matrix

RRU         Royal Roads University

SDGs        Sustainable Development Goals

SEAS        School of Engineering and Applied Sciences

SLATE       Strenghtening Learning  and Teachning Excellence

SSA         Sub-Saharan Africa

SSPs        Subject-Specific Pedagogy

TEA         Technology-Enabled Agency

TEL         Technology-Enabled Learning

TVET        Technical Vocational Education & Training

UEP         University Extension Programme

UK          United Kingdom

UNESCO   United Nations Educational Scientific & Cultural Organisation

USET        University of Applied Science Engineering & Technology

VU          Victoria University

WEF         World Education Forum

YESTA       Youth Employability and Skills Training in Africa

ZPD         Zonal of Proximal Development

# ABSTRACT

This study sought to facilitate insight into the potential role of pedagogy in the brand identity formation of higher education institutions (HEIs), through a study of selected HEIs in The Gambia. Specifically, the study sought to address the following research question: What role do pedagogical practices play in building the brand identity of selected universities in The Gambia?

The study was underpinned by an interpretivist philosophy and the intra-paradigm qualitative mixed method of data collection (O'Reilly, Kiyimba & Drewett 2020). This facilitated a preliminary analysis of the contents of institutional documents and social media postings. This was followed by telephonic and virtually mediated in-depth interviews in which the interactionist interpretations, recollections, experiences, and opinions of 54 participants (students and staff) were explored on the themes of institutional brand management practices, institutional pedagogical practices, institutional brand identity, and the links between pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity. The study used the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde 2013) as a supporting framework of analysis.

The findings indicate that the HEIs recognise the emerging trend of competition in Gambia's higher education sector as a consequence of government's liberalisation policy. However, there is no evidence of the majority of them responding to emerging competition using strategic marketing and branding. The evidence suggests that the HEIs use hardly differentiated, production-style portfolios of academic courses to pursue largely unengaged students, prospective students and other stakeholders. Further findings indicate that academic staff use a narrow variety of pedagogical approaches, with the teacher-centered, lecturing method emerging as dominant. This insight emerged against the background of the evidence which indicates a link between pedagogy policy and practices and stakeholder impressions. A synthesis of these findings culminated in the emergence of the pedagogy-based higher education brand identity matrix (P-HEBIM), which this study proposes as a novel framework for the branding of HEIs. Drawing on this, the study sets out a practitioner guide for the use of the P-HEBIM, making specific recommendations for the brand management roles of different HE stakeholders in The Gambia.


**Key words: branding, employability, higher education, institutional identity, marketing, pedagogy**

# Table of Contents

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF FIGURES

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

The tertiary and higher education history of The Gambia dates back to the colonial era when The Gambia College was established to cater for the secondary teacher education needs of the country. This was followed by the establishment of the Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI), the Management Development Institute (MDI) and the Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute (GTHI), all in the early 1980s. These institutions emerged as the outcomes of government's vision and understanding of the role of post-secondary education and training in achieving its development objectives. The implication therefore is that Gambia College was the only tertiary education institution that existed during and immediately after the political independence era in 1965. The diversification of tertiary education opportunities only began a decade and half after independence from the United Kingdom (UK). The highlight of this evolution is that none of these tertiary education institutions had degree-awarding powers . Degree level higher education only became available in The Gambia in 1999. Following government's liberalisation of the higher education sector a few years later, other private universities, two conventional universities  and two online universities, were licensed to operate. This is the evolutionary background that put The Gambia as a single country case into the context of this study. This study makes the assumption that higher and tertiary education have since become the center-piece of Gambia's development priorities, wherein youth unemployment was identified in concert with other macro-economic factors as being a key constraint to the competitiveness of The Gambia. This is an understanding that has since shaped successive national development policies and instruments in The Gambia (Government of The Gambia 2017).

In this effort, successive national development policy instruments such as the defunct Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment  (PAGE)  (2021-2015) , the National Development Plan (2018-2021), The Gambia National Institutional Policy and Strategy, the Tertiary and Higher Education Policy (2014-2023) and the national Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policy (2021-2030) all envision a country whose development and international competeveness will be driven by tertiary and higher education and training.

In keeping with the insight on the Government of The Gambia's (GOTG) effort to reimagine its national development by leveraging the instrumentalist role of education and training, there is evidence (World Bank 2020) of existing gaps in the concept and programming of tertiary and higher education in The Gambia. These  gaps are indicated in the problem statement section that follows this introduction.The implication of the GOTG vision of achieving  a digital economy status within this decade is premised on the pre-requisite achievement  of a highly competitive national  tertiary and higher education system. Such achievement  positions HEIs as the main drivers for the attainment of national development goals,

including producing highly competent and innovative graduates. The production of competent graduates in this context becomes a function of an envisioned policy environment and institutional governance philosophy, on one hand, and institutional pedagogical practices, on the other. The further implication of this is that HEIs in a country with a digital economy aspiration would need to shift from the traditional conception of tertiary and higher education to the entrepreneurial, market-based, competitive model of higher education programming. In the specific case of The Gambia, the contradiction that accompanies this insight is that no studies have yet been conducted in ~~the~~ an effort to understand the extent to which HEIs in The Gambia have adapted to the new conception of HE around the globe. This leaves a gap in our understanding of the competitive behaviour of HEIs in The Gambia, as well as their readiness to lead the digital and knowledge-based economy aspirations of the GOTG.

Drawing on this background, the research question and objectives have been formulated to address these gaps . This study is further justified by the evience (GTTI 2018; World Bank 2020) which suggests that most teachers in public schools in The Gambia, including universities, lack content and pedagogical knowledge. These sources suggest that training in Gambian educational institutions does not necessarily improve literacy. This is implicit indictment of The Gambia's education system and institutions. This insight emerged in parallel with the notion of instititonal pedagogical identity (Hamilton *et al.* 2017) and the debate on its efficacy in strengthening the competitiveness of HEIs. Although the underlying causes of the contested weak foundations of teacher education in The Gambia (World Bank 2020) are yet to be investigated, this situation carries implications for the competitiveness and readiness of HEIs in the country.

This study therefore aims to bridge these gaps by seeking preliminary understanding of the marketing and pedagogical practices of HEIs in The Gambia, while providing a theoretical framing for the use of innovative pedagogical constructs as critical elements of HE brands.

For the purpose of conceptual clarity, it is pertinent to mention that the emerging coincidence in the shifting conceptions of higher education and the evolution of the branding concept provided added impetus for situating this thesis within the Marketing Management discipline. Hence, the extensive review of literature on global trends in higher education and higher education pedagogy in this thesis has been used to interrogate its (pedagogy's) role within the brand management tool kit of HEIs. There exists consensus in the literature (Pinar, Trapp, Girard & Boyt 2011; Ng 2016; Peruta, Hamula & Gayeski 2015; Mintz 2020) on the pivotal role of pedagogy in the value chain of HEIs. Yet, very few studies have espoused pedagogy's role in the evolution of higher education brands. In fact, studies investigating the inclusion of pedagogy in the branding architecture and positioning strategies of HEIs in SSA do not exist. While the few studies that currently exist in higher education branding (Clark, Chapleo, & Suomi, 2019; Balmer, Mahmoud, & Chen, 2020) generate varying perspectives in higher

education branding in general and the branding of African universities in particular (Kieu, Mogaji, Mwebesa, Sarofin, Soetan, & Vululle, 2020; Wayne, Farinloye, & Mogaji, 2020; Mogaji, Restuccia, Lee, & Nguyen, 2022), none of these sources has investigated the potential value of pedagogy in the brand architecture of African universities. This is a paradox and knowledge gap that this study sought to bridge in the literature of higher education branding. This goal is futher supported by evidence (Heding, Knudtzen, & Bjerre 2020) of the evolution of the brand from a positivist construct residing within the frames of the rational economic man, to a phenomenological and socially-constructed asset within the psyche of competitive organisations.

## 1.2 Problem statement

The relative newness of HE branding and the resulting scholarly interest is well documented in the literature (Ivy 2008; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka 2006; Chapleo & Reader 2014). This situation is further highlighted by the relative newness of HE in The Gambia, where university education was first introduced only two decades ago (GOTG 2017). However, the net impact of this seemingly lethargic pace of development of The Gambia's higher education sector can be seen in the country's graduate quality trends, which show a double-digit graduate unemplyment rate as well as gaps in their employability skills profiles (GTTI 2018). This source reports that Gambian graduates, especially TVET graduates, lack the expert-level skills required by industry. This insight emerges against the backdrop of The Gambia's global and African economic rankings, which stand at 185th and 50th respectively (OACPS 2022). Other higher education and general development indicators which underscore the implicit role of the late development of the county's higher education sector and the management practices of HEIs include the country's research profile (which shows only 31 researchers per million) and a human development index (HDI) ranking of 174th out of 191 countries (UNDP 2022). Broadly speaking, while these profiles may be specific to the Gambian situation, they mirror the situation with HE management status quo and its consequences in many countries in SSA.

Despite this situation, the majority of extant research in higher educaton brand management has focused on universities of western origin. Studies investigating the phenomenon within an exclusively African context (e.g. Boateng 2015) are few and scattered. Given the structural, environmental and historical uniqueness of HEIs in SSA in general and The Gambia in particular (de Klerk & Sienart 2016), the paucity of research in this area leaves a gap in our understanding of the HE branding phenomenon in Africa. Thus, this situation implicitly validates the view that HE managers face challenges in articulating and managing the identity aspects of their institutions (Melewar & Akel 2005; Balmer & Liao 2007). Further to this, is the recent emergence of the notion of institutional pedagogical identity (Hamilton, Grundy, Agger-Gupta, Veletsianos and Marquez 2017; Burke, Stevenson, & Whelan 2015 ; Stevenson, Burke, & Whelan, 2014) as a composite concept in HE branding (Nguyen &

La Balanche 2001; Pinar, Trapp, Girard & Boyt 2011; Francis 2015). As a major construct in the proposed study, the relative newness of the institutional pedagogical identity concept further highlights the challenges faced in articulating and managing the institutional identity of HEIs. The proposed study therefore seeks to bridge this knowledge gap and thus contribute to the literature on HE branding by drawing on the structural uniqueness of HEIs in The Gambia to examine current branding practices in the sector. This inquiry includes exploring how a continuum of pedagogical practices may be enacted as shared institutional principles with the view to constructing institutional points of difference (Ivy 2008; Pinar *et al.* 2011), highlighting institutional essence and thus enhancing institutional brand equity (Fanghanel 2007).

## 1.3 Statement of purpose

The insight emerging from the background of this study indicates that no research has ever been conducted on the competitive behaviour of universities and other HEIs in The Gambia. This is a situation that contradicts the central role assigned to tertiary and higher education in The Gambia's development blue print (GOTG 2017). Furthermore, this situation validates the view that gaps exist in the way tertiary and HE are programmed in The Gambia while reinforcing the view that the higher education environment is influenced by liberalisation policy trends, institutional positioning trends and rising competition which create challenges for higher education managers in articulating and managing the identity aspects of their institutions. Further to this is the recent emergence of the notion of institutional pedagogical identity (Hamilton *et al.* 2017; Burke *et al.* 2015; Stevenson *et al.* 2014) as a composite concept of higher education branding (Francis 2015). These are situations that have created conceptual and theoretical gaps in the higher education management literature, especially in SSA. These gaps in turn highlight the challenges that HEIs face in re-imagining their relevance, and articulating their emergent identities, against the backdrop of the envisioned pivotal role of higher and tertiary education in The Gambia.

This study therefore sought to bridge the existing gaps in our understanding of the behaviour of the selected HEIs in this emerging environment. Hence, the study aimed to contribute to the literature of HE branding by drawing on the structural uniqueness of HEIs in The Gambia to examine the dominant marketing, branding and pedagogical practices in the sector. This included seeking evidence on how the continuum of pedagogical practices may be enacted as shared institutional meanings with a view to constructing institutional points of difference (Ivy 2008; Pinar *et al.* 2011) as sources of competitive advantages for the selected HEIs (Supe *et al.* 2018).

## 1.4 Research question and objectives

The broad research question that was addressed in this study was: What role do pedagogical practices play in building the brand identity of selected universities in The Gambia? This facilitated the emergence of pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity as the main constructs in the study. Drawing on this, therefore, the following research objectives were pursued:

- $RO_1$: To understand the brand management practices of selected HEIs in The Gambia
- $RO_2$: To understand current pedagogical practices of these HEIs
- $RO_3$: To explore the institutional brand identity of these HEIs
- $RO_4$: To explore the link between institutional pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity at these HEIs

These objectives laid the context for the articulation and adoption of the frameworks of analyses that were used in this study. In doing so, the institutional identity determinants, the pedagogical identity rudiments, and brand identity elements were framed and integrated to provide the mechanism for the interrogation of existing literature and critical analysis of emergent evidence.

## 1.5 Overview of methodology

Drawing on the evidence (Ridder 2017) that this study is a novelty on the competitive behaviour of HEIs in The Gambia, the exploratory case study strategy was chosen (Seaton & Schwier 2014). The multi-institutional case strategy was used to enable in-depth probing of the institutional identity phenomenon, the patterns of pedagogical conceptions, their underlying drivers, and the role the identified drivers play in the evolution of institutional brand identity. The institutional identity phenomenon of HEIs was studied based on the interpretation and reconstruction of the lived experiences of participants, the interpretation of observed human actions from the perspectives of the main actors in Gambia's HE sector, and the construction of meanings based on the observations of the types of social interactions that are undertaken by participants in the study. Hence, the inductive approach was used. The inductive approach draws on the exploratory nature of the research question to facilitate in-depth probing and the consequent generation of insight (Bryman & Bell 2011) on the marketing, branding and pedagogical practices of the selected HEIs. Thus, the use of the inductive research approach in this study lends support to the adopted blend of phenomenology, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism as compatible variations of the interpretivist research philosophy. This built the conceptual foundation for the use of the intra-paradigm qualitative mixed method of data collection (O'Reilly & Kiyimba 2015). This provided the justification for the combination of content analysis of qualitative data and in-depth interviews to seek a theoretical outcome in the study. This approach is

further buttressed in Balmer (2010) and Urde (2013), where it is argued that brands are social constructions whose epistemological complexities are better explored using in-depth probing and inductions on the observed and probed behaviours of brand managers and other stakeholders. Drawing from a population of interest which included current students, heads of institutional marketing, faculty heads, teaching staff and Deputy Vice Chancellors Academic (DVCA), the purposive sampling methods and the maximum variation approach were used to identify participants who provided evidence on both shared and distinct patterns of pedagogical practices, the implicit institutional identity formation processes, and the emergent impact of these on the brand reputation (Suri 2011; Palinkas *et al.* 2015) of the selected HEIs. The resulting methodological triangulation provided the basis for the enhancement of the credibility of the findings of the study. The dependability and confirmability of the results were ensured through an audit trail that guaranteed the transparency of the research path, while ensuring that evidence that emerged in the study were indeed the interpretations made from the real accounts of research participants (Korstjen & Moser 2018; Loh 2013).

## 1.6 Rationale and significance of the study

The study sought to make contributions to the HE marketing literature by facilitating insight into the notion of institutional pedagogical identity, the variables that mediate such identity and how these interact to influence the evolution of the brand identity of HEIs. Hamilton *et al*. (2017) posit that the articulation of institutional pedagogical identity can be an effective way of improving institutional competitiveness. Despite this assertion, however, few studies (e.g. EUA 2018) have explored the relationship between pedagogy and the competitiveness of HEIs. Thus, this study sought to facilitate insight into how good practices in teaching and learning can be framed as shared meanings at the institutional level and consequently used as an instrument of distinctiveness for HEIs in The Gambia. The main significance of this goal lies in the evidence that tertiary and higher education have been assigned pivotal roles in the development objectives of The Gambia since the past decade. Hence, HEIs have recognised the overwhelming need to adapt to the emerging realities around the changing concept of knowledge, the competitive behaviour that emerged from such trends as the evolution of HE students into HE customers, and the trend of compelling changes in HE delivery structures.

This study therefore sought to provide insight into how universities and other HEIs can enhance their competitiveness, become prospective students' destination of choice, attract more funding and become employers' preferred sources of graduate recruitment. This is supported by the assumption that the resulting insight on the efficacy of innovative and contemporary pedagogy, and the enactment of such pedagogical practices as institutional shared meanings, provide firm foundations for institutional differentiation and identity.

## 1.7 Role of the researcher

This researcher's dual role as a teacher and a tertiary and higher education manager provided the opportunity for his observations and reflections on the emerging trends in the global HE environment. This unique position provided further advantages in the ability of this researcher to draw on his everyday work experiences to make assumptions on the readiness of Gambian HEIs to adapt to emerging trends in the global HE environment. This researcher made these observation against the backdrop of the relationship between HE systems and the pace of development of nations. The role that successive national development blueprints of The Gambia had directly and indirectly apportioned to HE provided further context for this researcher to draw on his deep connections and experiences at varying levels of tertiary and higher education in The Gambia to interrogate the competences that are inherent in HEIs from which these institutions would draw impetus to fulfill their expected roles.

The most recent national development blueprint of The Gambia is the National Development Plan (2018-2021). This document identifies eight strategic priorities and six enablers for the identified development priorities. The overarching goal is to transform The Gambia into a competitive economy through investment in the health and education sectors while building a happy and caring society (Strategic Priority 4). The full list of the strategic priorities of the Gambian NDP (2018-2021) can be accessed at https://ndp.gm/priorities/. Although it is only Strategic Priority 4 that makes explicit statement about education, the insight that is implicit in these development goals of The Gambia is that the main driver for all the strategic priority areas is a strong and resilient system of tertiary and higher education. The same analysis applies to the seven critical enablers that are used to anchor each of the strategic priorities. While Critical Enabler 5 seeks to support the attainment of the strategic priorities by creating the conditions for a digital nation and modern information society, the central role of a well-resourced HE system remains implicit in the expected contributions and outcomes of all the strategic enablers. The educational design implication for an aspirational digital and information society is the recognition that the production of digital skills to scale is a precondition for other direct and indirect economic growth and national competitiveness goals. This is an insight that carries further implication for HE pedagogy. This conclusion is reinforced by the World Bank (2020), which highlights some of the quality challenges that are currently confronting Gambia's HE sector. The report observes that:

> *In 2016 about 96 percent of teachers from schools were credentialed from The Gambia College. However, most teachers in public schools still lack content knowledge, and pedagogical skills and training do not necessarily translate to higher literacy rates (World Bank 2020:73)*

It is also reinforced by the spotlight that environmental turbulences such as the COVID-19 pandemic have placed on the limitations of the traditional conception of education in general and HE in particular.

The cumulative evaluation of this situation, from this researcher's perspective as an active participant in The Gambia's HE sector, provided additional context for the concept and design of this study. This researcher draws on his understanding of contemporary global trends in HE to seek understanding on the market behaviour of the selected HEIs and to what extent such behaviour affirms institutional core beliefs in an era of rapidly changing conception of HE. These are the factors that inspired the concept and design of this study. Drawing on the guidance of a very proactive and innovative supervisor, this researcher implemented all phases of this study.

## 1.8 Definition of key terminologies

This section draws on the research question to define the key terms and concepts in this study. Guided by the theory and the conceptual framework that underpins this study, these terms and concepts have been defined in order to underscore their framing and application in this study.

### Brand identity

A brand is a value composite that delivers a holisitic consumption experience through the consistency of the distinction that it offers the company and its customers. Strong brands embody a deliberate set of features that differentiate them from the competition while maintaining their relevance to customers (CIM 2021). Brand identity represents a construct of principles, structures, and affiliations which identifies and differentiates the brand, while facilitating its negotiation of agency and positioning objectives (Hamilton *et al.* 2017; Vignoles 2017; Brown 2018). The brand identity construct crystallises through images, ideas, logos, slogans, design schemes, and behavioural norms through which a product or service can be differentiated and recognised.

### Behavioural identity

A representation of an entity's non-visual attributes, systems of principles, behavioural preferences and structures which systemise differentiation, identification, recognition and affirmation for the entity. Behavioural identity stems from the bundle of sub-identities that constitute shared meanings while consisitenly manifesting a pattern of behavioural standards within an entity (Simmons 2021).

### Employability

The outcome of a graduate's acquisition of the bundle of skills that are needed to gain, retain and progress within employment. This includes critical and reflective abilities, cognitive awareness and core and entrepreneurship skills (York 2010; OECD 2019).

**Institutional identity**

The notion of institutional identity refers to an institution's self-concept which emerges from the dynamic interaction of institutional members who are unified by their subscription to the shared meanings that differentiate their institution from other institutions (Sama *et al.*.2011).

**Institutional pedagogical identity**

 The notion of institutional pedagogy is centered on the complex totality of settings that facilitate the learner-teacher interaction and the role the institution plays in the process of intervening in the learning interface (Eaton, Wagner,  Hirashiki &Ciancio 2018).

**Technology-enabled agency**

 The notion of technology enabled agency (TEA)  is a pedagogy inspired educational goal   that draws on the underpiniing theories of technology-enabled  learning(TEL)  and open learning networks to enhance the self-efficay and meta-cognitive competences of learners.

**Future skills phenomenon**

The future skills phenomenon is  a cross-disciplinary phenomenon that is emerging against the backdrop of rapid transformation of the knowledge society into a disintermediated, globalised, digital space. Thus, future skills mirror the trajectory of digital acceleration that is implicit of a diversified bundle of practitioner and intellectual views (Ehlers 2020; OECD 2019).

**Knowledge society**

This study conceptualises knowledge society as the immediate aftermath of the industrial society (Galsby 2015). Thus, knowledge society is characteristically defined by its openness to information sharing and the availability of ecosystems that guarantee education for all and facilitate the conversion of information into relevant knowledge (Engida 2016; UNESCO 2015).

**Marketing orientation**

 Marketing orientation is a strategic marketing planning process that takes a long term view through which companies and institutions seek to build superior market presence. Marketing orientation as a strategic marketing philosophy places emphasis on the need to have a clear understanding of the market environment, including the activities of the competition, and the state of internal resources while using the emerging insight as the basis for strategic marketing decisions  (Gheysari, Rasli, Roghanian & Norhalim, 2013).

**Pedagogy**

Pedagogy may be defined as scientific principles, methods and approaches that are used in the design and delivery of educational content in varying institutional, disciplinary or academic programme contexts (Betham & Sahrpe 2007; King 2017). Hence, pedagogy emerges as a tensed paradox and an abstract medium that facilitates the negotiation of how knowledge is constructed (Luguetti *et al.* 2018; King 2017). Implicit in this assumption is the notion that pedagogy is conceptually discursive, reflexive, dialogic and evolutionary.

## 1.9 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is presented in seven chapters.

Chapter One serves as the introduction to the thesis. This chapter takes a reflective approach to give the background to this study and the problem statements that motivated the study. The chapter also presents the research question and objectives as an overview of various conceptual and theoretical decisions that formed the methodology  of this study. The rationale and significance of the study are also presented in this chapter.  The significance highlights the study's aim of making both managerial and theoretical contribution to the literature of HE branding, drawing on the situation of the paucity of research in this area, the relative newness of HE in The Gambia, and the focus of Gambia's national development aspirations. The intended contributions of this study emerged against the backdrop of the evidence of a relationship between pedagogical efficiency, graduate outcomes and institutional reputation. The rationale of the study, on the other hand, draws on the trend of the fit-for-purpose implications of marketing and branding on the evolution of the brand identity of HEIs, to identity gaps in the competitive behaviour of Gambian HEIs, especially in an environment where the emerging conceptions of knowledge triggered the rationale for how the enactment of epistemic and pedagogic shared meanings may be included within an institution's branding structures.

Chapter Two presents a review of literature with the aim of providing the theoretical background to the study, while identifying the gaps in the literature. The chapter outlines the conceptual framework of the study, and conducts a detailed evaluation of current and emerging trends in the global HE sector. The chapter identifies the emerging phenomena in global HE in the context of their impact on the adaptive behaviour of tertiary and higher education in Africa and The Gambia. The review further examines the notion of institutional sub-identities, in order to stablish how institutional pedagogical identity elements interact to influence the evolution of institutional brand identity. The literatures on epistemologies of teaching and learning, and the emerging pedagogical practices in HE are critically reviewed to facilitate understanding of how the phenomenon of technology-enabled agency (TEA) has emerged in response

to the changing conception of knowledge and HE. This section of the literature review chapter highlights how the TEA of learners is the pedagogy-driven imperative that may be used to positively influence graduate outcomes and the institutional identity of HEIs.

Chapter Three presents the brands and branding concept and draws on the brand-building potentials of institutional pedagogy to evaluate the use of institutional pedagogy within the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM). While this evaluation primarily highlights the CBIM as a framework of analysis, it also identifies institutional pedagogical practices as institutional competences that can be used within the CBIM to project and sustain institutional positioning strategies.

Chapter Four presents the methodology of this study. The chapter begins with an outline of the research design while providing a detailed overview and justification for the use of multiple blends of interpretivism as the philosophical foundation of the study. In this effort, the combined use of phenomenology, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism was explained in the context of the support these provided for the subsequent decisions on research strategy and research methods.

The presentation of research findings and synthesis is done in Chapter Five. This chapter draws on the main objectives of the study to present the outcomes of the preliminary qualitative document analysis on each of themes. The findings of the subsequent telephonic and online interviews in each of the selected case institutions on the main research themes are presented subsequent to presentation of the outcomes of the documentary analysis.

Chapter Six presents the discussion of findings. The outcome of the thematic analysis on each research objectives is presented to highlight the extent to which the findings have met the objectives of the study.

The thesis concludes with Chapter Seven, in which the interpretations of the outcomes and consequent practice and theory-based recommendations are presented. Chapter Seven also highlights the managerial and theoretical contributions of the study, identifies the limitations of the study, and makes a case for areas of future research. The chapter concludes with the researcher's reflection on his experiences throughout the study.

## 1.10    Chapter summary

This chapter provided the background to this study. The chapter discussed how the national development objectives of the GOTG served as incentives for the concept and design of this study. These incentives emerged against the backdrop of the assigned role of tertiary and higher education in the national development aspirations of The Gambia. The chapter then draws on the situation of the envisioned instrumentation of national competitiveness through tertiary and higher education to identify the research problem as the asymmetrical relationship that exists between the envisioned role of tertiary

11

and higher education in successive national development plans and the paucity of research and evidence on the competitive behaviour of higher education instituions (HEIs) in The Gambia. While identifying the generation of preliminary understanding of the competitive behaviour of HEIs in The Gambia in the context of their role as national development catalysts,the chapter outlined the specific objectives and research design strategies through which the research question was explored.To support this, the chapter provided explicit details on this researcher's motivations and roles in the implemenatation of this study. The definition of key terms and concepts was used to faciliatate background understanding of the main constucts that were explored in this study. The chapter concludes with a statement on the structure of this thesis. This statement includes a sequential outline of the chapters that constitute this thesis. In summary, this chapter provided strong foundations for understanding the situational factors that inspired the concept , design , and implementation of this study while reducing the potential for tensed imaginations on the findings of the study.

# CHAPTER 2:  THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter lays the foundation for the conceptual framing of this study. Therefore, the logic of the review of literature is motivated by the  research question and the quest to understand the brand management and pedagogical practices of selected HEIs, and the link between pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity of  HEIs.

The shifting paradigms of the human society and the resulting changes in consumption measurably instigate a pattern of continuous evaluation of the role and purpose of HE and the traditional systems that underpinned the emergence of the industrial and knowledge societies. This assertion draws on the implicit consensus among scholars that human and economic development are constructs that are driven by deliberately engineered HE systems (Kruss, McGrath, Petersen & Gastrow 2015). In keeping with this view, different development indicators and frameworks, such as the human development index (HDI), the global competitiveness index (GCI), the global innovation index (GII) and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) all make assumptions about the role of HE within the human and economic development axes. These assumptions, however, have over the years triggered a seismic shift in policy and structural conceptions of HE across the globe. This situation has since resulted in the emergence of such phenomena as branding, marketisation, the widening participation agenda, managerialism and pedagogical contestations. However, there is an ongoing debate (Mugimu 2021) on whether HEIs of African origin have demonstrated adequate ability and willingness to adopt and adapt to this sequence of intervening themes in the same way their counterparts in other parts of the world appear to be doing. Further to this is the fact that this debate challenges the efficacy of traditional teaching and governance methods of HEIs in the context of changing social paradigms, institutional repositioning, competition for students, funding and better rankings. These trends are indicative of the commodification of HE, which draws on the capitalist rationale to espouse the widening participation and 'education for work' (skills-based education) agenda. Although commodification tends to infringe on the democratic model of education as a public good, the evolution of the knowledge and the digital society models tend to justify the commodification trends in the global  HE sector.  The further implication of this is that these trends tend to foster transactionism, enterprise and agency as outcomes of contemporary HE (Garrison, Ohman & Ostman 2022; Ostman & Ohman 2022). The transactionist rationale, in this context, lends support to the principles of  experiential continuum (Ostman & Ohman 2022) through which HEIs view the changing conception of HE as environment-mediated change and continuity processes, to which they have the obligation to respond with academic programmes that are market-led and curricula which define graduate employability and continuous pedagogical adpatations as the main outcomes of responsive  higher and tertiary education.

Against this background, this review of literature is split across Chapters Two and Three. This chapter draws on the research question and objectives to examine emerging trends in the global HE sector. This includes pegdagogical theories and practices in HE. The subsequent chapter draws on the emergent insight to review existing studies on higher education branding. The review of literature on the higher education construct in this chapter and the branding constucts in the subsequent chapter informed the emergence of a conceptual framework which is presented at the end of Chapter Three. Existing research on contemporary HE issues such as the changing skills paradigm, employability and branding trends and their implications on institutional pedagogical p ractices are examined. Drawing on insight gained from the review of emerging trends in the global HE sector, the historical background of HE in Africa and The Gambia is explored. This is followed by a review of extant research on the pedagogic practices in HE. Extant research on best practices in teaching and the nexus between HE pedagogy and institutional identity is also explored in this chapter. This includes a critical evaluation of the epistemological origins and basic assumptions of successive learning theories that underscore institutional pedagogical beliefs. Extant literature on threshold concepts in teaching and learning and emerging pedagogical practices, including technology-enabled learning (TEL) are also reviewed. Thus, the knowledge gap that emerged culminated in the emergence of a teaching and learning model for HEIs. The model makes prescriptions for a pedagogic configuration that is underpinned by TEL and open pedagogy doctrines.

## 2.2 Global issues in higher education : An overview

The universities with the best ranks appear to be those that seek to advance knowledge through research, innovative pedagogies and curricula that are adopted to support deliberately-defined learning environments (Cross 2018). This view, which highlights the competitive undertone of the global HE sector, sets the context for the reveiw of literature in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

The concept and definition of HE and all of its systems has been variously documented in the literature. However, what has remained consistent is the implicit consensus on the view of human and economic development as outcomes that are driven by the calibre of a country's higher and tertiary education system (Kruss *et al.* 2015). Implicit in this consensus is the fact that changes in education systems in general, and higher and tertiary education in particular, occur simultaneously with those environmental adaptations which signal movements in the trajectory and tempo of society's evolution. Thus, the obsolescence of HE policies, systems and processes reflect the antecedents of the stimulated evolution of the human society. Hence, universities and other HEIs have over the past three decades faced challenges not just in their ability to adapt their courses and programmes to the changing needs of their host communities but also in their capacity to tune their identities, governance structures, relevance

and value chain relationships to align with the changing needs of society (Glasby 2015; Robertson 2010).

The assumed trajectory and tempo of society's evolution tend to recognise the changing nature of knowledge and evolving pattern of the demand for competence (Ehlers 2020; Glasby 2015; Ramdan 2016). While triggering shifts in policy conceptions of HE across the globe, it has also instigated the emergence of new trends such as marketisation and the branding of HE (Pinar, Trapp, Girard & Boyt 2011, 2014), the widening participation agenda (Stevenson, Burke & Whelan 2014), massification, managerialism, and contestations on enacted pedagogies, institutional identity frames and positioning. These practices and phenomena have set up new frontiers that reimagine the purpose of HE and thus challenge the continuing relevance (Mourad, Ennew & Kortam 2011) of traditional university models and their inherent structures and identities (OECD 2019).

There is ongoing debate on the need for universities and other HEIs to reimagine their roles within the context of emerging social and economic realities of the 21$^{st}$ century and beyond (Schleicher 2019; Ehlers 2020). These authors argue that rapid advancements in ICT, globalisation, the neo-liberal economic agenda of Western countries (Miller 2015; Stevenson *et al.* 2014) and climate change have all combined to change the evolutionary path of not only the global society but also HE demand patterns and the skills requirements of future industries. Hence, scholars argue that these trends and phenomena have ushered in an era of increased student diversity and rethinking of the overall purpose of HE. Ehlers (2020) maintains that the evolving trends have triggered a rising demand for new competencies at the expense of academic and abstract knowledge, changes in the role of the teacher (Berber & King 2016), and triggered the student agency movement while recognising the changing role of students from being mere learners to becoming reflective practitioners (Ehlers 2018, 2020; OECD 2019).

While these trends challenge traditional assumptions on the role and continuing relevance of traditional universities, they also question the efficacy of traditional instructional methods. Hence, Gioia, Majken, and Kevin (2000) argue that the historical relevance of HEIs is founded on the ability of such institutions to identify and respond to evolving knowledge trends in their designated environments and communities. Thus, this assumed response to emerging phenomena often evolves simultaneously with pedagogical adaptations. Thus, OECD (2019) and Scleicher (2019) contend that the emergent process of HE aims to develop students' imagination, enhance their sense of responsibility, facilitate their moral maturity and, above all, validate their learning-to-learn competencies in an increasingly diverse environment.

## 2.2.1 The emergence of the post-knowledge era

For the purpose of this review, knowledge is conceptualised as a codified body of insights that forms the ontological basis for the definition of expertise. Ehlers (2018, 2020) argues that knowledge is evolutionary in the degree of its usefulness in the execution of social mobility.

Competence, on the other hand, is conceptualised as the result of learning (formal or informal) through educational institutions (universities and other HEIs) or work environments. Thus, competence may be seen as a conglomerate of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes that can be acquired through learning and are required to perform productively in specific occupations (UNESCO 2011; ILO 2013). However, for the purpose of conceptual clarity, it is pertinent to mention that competence differs from competency. The latter is viewed (Ehlers 2018, 2020) as one aspect of competence which encapsulates specific occupational standards through which competence levels can be measured. The emerging insight thus suggests that, while certification of professional competence evidences high degree of knowledge and competencies, graduate employability thus emerges as a function of renewable competence and standards of professional practice that are inherent in a given discipline or profession. Hence, the acquisition and delivery of standards (competencies) and, by extension, professional competence and their vehicular pedagogical practices may recognise disciplinary loyalties and contexts in the effort to transfer them at the teaching and learning interface.

The characterisation of the post-knowledge era in this review recognises the debate (Williams 2008) on the nature of knowledge and its related concepts. The review draws on this understanding to affirm that knowledge, irrespective of its context of discussion, is an outcome of learning. Thus, extant scholarly views (Ehlers 2020) on the debate on whether knowledge is an object or a process, subjective or objective, presentationist or constructivist, represent binaries that do not invalidate the notion of knowledge as an outcome of learning (Williams 2008; Kruss *et al.* 2015). Instead, they represent the evolutionary nature of knowledge in concert with social and generational realities.

Against this background, the quest for knowledge has historically driven the purpose of education and the pursuit of competence in different areas of occupational and disciplinary specialisations (Boehner 2017). Hence, the production, consumption and acquisition of knowledge may be predicated on an individual's level of cognitive awareness (ability) and routine (skills) in the pursuit of standardised problem-solving competencies. However, there is evidence (ILO 2019; Ehlers 2020) that the apparent relationship between knowledge and competence might have in many instances eluded the design and development of university learning programmes across the globe. This view has evolved not just across disciplines where cases of mismatch between educational programmes and labour market needs abound (ILO 2019; OECD 2019), but across national jurisdictions as well. Ehlers (2020) and Boehner (2017) argue that the universal dimensions of the disconnect between learning outcomes of university

education and the emerging needs of society may be attributed to the assumed role of universities as knowledge centres (Barber & King 2016). This assertion builds on the argument that the identity of universities and other HEIs as knowledge production centres gives legitimacy to the mistaken and frozen mandate for the traditional transmissive approach to curriculum design and teaching and learning in universities. This assertion appears to make reference to a trend of university programmes that are traditionally skewed towards producing graduates that may be very knowledgeable (have some competencies) but not necessarily competent (lack competence).

There is consensus in the literature (Bates 2015; Galsby 2015; Raman 2016; McGowan 2014; OECD 2019) on the view that unresponsive, traditional university models and their emergent pedagogical conceptions confer legitimacy on the acquisition of inert knowledge as dominant outcomes of university education in Africa ((Mushemeza 2016; Varghese 2016; Doran 2017). This view appears to make an implicit distinction between academic and applied knowledge. Bates (2015), however, cautions that the recognition of the inadequacy of academic knowledge at the dawn of the digital society need not be mistaken for a presumption for the irrelevance of academic knowledge. He contends that academic knowledge traditionally seeks general principles, deep insights and empirically-based outcomes. These views draw on the earlier work of Rugg (2014), which argues that such elements as rigour, rationalism, intellectual independence and abstractions that are traditionally associated with academic knowledge are fundamental to human development; hence, they need to be sustained. These authors agree that the emergence of the digital society has changed the nature of work, thereby rendering the notion of academic knowledge as the basis for the definition of expertise and performance invalid. The emerging insight thus indicates that the new world of work defines effective performance as that which requires the combination of both academic and applied knowledge (skills-based knowledge). While this marks the shift from the knowledge to the competence era, it however requires the integration and contextualisation of academic and applied knowledge at the teaching and learning interface (Ehlers 2020; Bohners 2017; Bates 2015; Rugg 2014).

Vaughan, Cleveland-Innes and Garrison (2013), Chung, Turnbull and Chur-Hansen (2014, 2017), Pritchard, Pausits and Williams (2016), and Hamilton *et al.* (2017) argue that global trends such as the massification of HE, the emergence of digital natives (Watson 2013), managerialism, the notion of learners as reflective practitioners and the emergence of digital society have altered the universal concept of HE and its role in the knowledge production ecosystem. These views draw on earlier work of Sukia and Dworking (2009), which contends that the emergence of the neo-liberal agenda (Miller 2015) has instigated fundamental changes in the structural and policy conceptions of HE across the globe. These authors argue that these trends and consequent pedagogical contestations have fostered an epistemic drift while signalling the beginning of the post-knowledge era. Arguably, the desired outcomes of the new higher and tertiary education would not be knowledge alone but a focus on standards, competence and competencies. Drawing on the agency doctrine, the OECD (2019) argues

that HE in the post-knowledge era will seek to enhance the simultaneous development of learners' knowledge, their specific skills and their situational coping abilities (Boehner 2017), as well as other behavioural attributes that would enhance their social maturity and other transformative competencies (OECD 2019; Corno & Andermann 2015).

Drawing on this background, there seems to be an emerging consensus on the view that there is a shift in focus from knowledge as the most important ingredient for action to a new paradigm in which individual capacity to self-organise and respond spontaneously to issues is paramount (OECD 2019). Hence, scholars (Raman 2016; Bates 2015; Ehler 2018, 2020) argue that educational systems and outcomes need to deliberately evolve from the production of knowledgeable graduates who operate in stable and predictable business environments towards producing spontaneous graduates. These graduates will be a new breed that would be critically efficient, have analytical competencies and display comfort and competence in collaborative environments. These views are evident of a shifting paradigm that carry implications for higher and tertiary education pedagogy (Raman 2016; Pinar *et al.* 2014; Chung 2010; Pritchard *et al.* 2016; Hamilton *et al.* 2017).

These authors argue that the post-knowledge graduate would need to think for themselves, demonstrate learning-to-learn abilities and be adaptable and creative in diverse and changing contexts. Thus, graduates of the future will be competent graduates rather than mere knowledge workers (Ehlers 2020). They will be individuals with the willingness and ability to think through, clarify and assess available opportunities and make the best career and family decisions. Ehlers (2020, 2018), Bates (2015), Galsby (2015) and Barber and Sheen (2016) argue that such graduates will have the propensity for independence, critical thinking, initiative, reliability and responsibility. While Klink (2011) maintains that graduates of the post-knowledge era will have well-thought-out moral imperatives and self-determined attachment to values, what remains unknown in the literature is the extent to which HEIs are prepared to meet the structural and pedagogical challenges that will arise as a result of the paradigm shift from the knowledge to competence era (Brusoni, Damian, Sauri, Jackson, KÖmurcugil Malmedy, Matveeva, Motova, Pisarz, Pol, Rostlund, Soboleva, Tavares & Zobel 2014).

## 2.2.2 From knowledge society to the future skills era

This study conceptualises the knowledge society as the immediate aftermath of the industrial society (Galsby 2015). Thus, the knowledge society is characteristically defined by its openness to information sharing and the availability of ecosystems that guarantee education for all and facilitates the conversion of information into relevant knowledge (Engida 2016; UNESCO 2015).

The transition from one development paradigm to another carries implications for both the industrial and social dynamics of HE. There is evidence that such transitions trigger changes in skills demand

patterns as well as changes in knowledge production methods (Bates 2015; Gatsby 2015; Deliotte 2018; Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac & Lawson 2012). These authors argue that such transition is further driven by advancements in information communication technology (ICT), globalisation and the emergence of digital natives as a dominant demographic in the global student population (Jones 2011; Raman 2016). However, the WEF (2016) argues that this transition has triggered a global shift in the conception of the purpose of universities and other HEIs, general consumption and knowledge production patterns, as well as the emergence of new industries. These authors argue that the evolution of new industries triggered the demand for new and future skills. Drawing on this view, Galsby (2015) argues that the demand for new and future skills appears to be underscored by the changing nature of knowledge, the digitalisation and automation era, the increasing diversity of the student population, the demand for remote learning, the emergence of new industries and the widening participation agenda (Hamilton *et al*. 2017; Stevenson *et al*. 2014).

### 2.2.3 Future skills conceptualised

The future skills project may be conceptualised as a cross-disciplinary phenomenon that is emerging against the backdrop of rapid transformation of the knowledge society into a disintermediated, globalised, digital space. Thus, future skills mirror the trajectory of digital acceleration that is implicit of a diversified bundle of practitioner and intellectual views. Evidence in both academic and practitioner literature (Deliotte 2018;  Bowles,Gosh & Thomas 2020; Raman 2016; Hamilton *et al*. 2017) points to the impact of ongoing advances in technology and automation on the knowledge and competence landscape over the next decade.

Scopio and Scovell (2016) and Kukulska-Hulme, Beirne, Conole, Costello, Coughlan, Ferguson, FitzGerald, Gaved, Herodotou, Holmes, Mac Lochlainn, Mairéad, Mhichíl, Rienties, Sargent, Scanlon, Sharples and Whitelock (2020) conceptualise future skills as competencies that enable professionals to proffer solutions to problems with high level of efficiency in diverse contexts These authors contend that the demand for future skills evolves from the emergence of new industries and changing social and economic landscape. As shown in Table 2-1 below, future skills form the competence criteria through which performance assessment benchmarks of the digital society will be set. While being supported by an individual's cognitive abilities, motivational levels and social resources, future skills can be acquired through formal learning. Arguably, this assertion supports the view that the future skills trend introduces new frontiers for HE pedagogical developments and enhancement (Kukulska-Hulme *et al*. 2020).

Table 2. 1 Aframework for future skills

| Future skills category | Category composites | Significance | Recommended pedagogy |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Work Readiness/Core Foundations** These are cognitive, health, emotional and social attributes that are fundamental for an individual's entry and progress in the workplace. They lay the foundation for lifelong learning, student agency, and transformative competencies. | Literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, physical and mental health and wellbeing, moral and ethical competence, self-efficacy, self-reflection, | Fundamental for job entry, lifelong learning, student agency, and development of high-level skills | Team-based Project-based Practical application Experiential Case Simulation Reflective learning Problem-based learning Guided inquiry Business exposure Job shadowing Mentorship Coaching, Community of inquiry(Collaboration) TEL |
| **Soft Skills** These are personal attributes that are core to the distinctive performance of individual performance while supporting the application of technical and entrepreneurship skills | Design thinking, systems competence, innovative competence, collaboration and systems competence; think creatively; solve problems independently; manage oneself at work; interact with co-workers; work in teams or groups; handle basic technology, lead effectively as well as follow supervision, adaptability | These skills facilitate the development of graduates' collaborative skills as well as their integration in the workplace. Thus, they lay the foundation for graduates' development of social, technical and ethical competence | |
| **Technical Skills** Knowledge and capabilities to perform specialised tasks | Design competence, communication, technology-based competencies, computer programming, project management, financial management, scientific tasks, mechanical functions | Forms the basis for defining graduates' technical expertise and professional identity | |
| **Entrepreneurship skills** These are skills that are needed by graduates in order to enhance their cognitive flexibility, and their sense making, create new value, take responsibility, reconcile tensions and dilemmas, enhance their social maturity, consistently, execute results in changing contexts, and consolidate their lifelong-learning skills. | Resourcefulness, sense making, initiative, ingenuity, innovation, business execution, problem-solving | Facilitates the development of graduates' reflective competence, judgement, decision competence | |

Source: Ehlers 2020; Deloitte 2018; OECD 2019

Ehlers (2020) argues that the discourse on future skills can be conducted based on a Triple Helix model that illustrates three dimensions that interlock to direct an individual's situational and social engagement response. Ehlers (2018, 2020) contends that the epistemology of future skills can be articulated from the micro dimension of an individual's distinctive skills, the meso dimension of an individual's

dexterity or ability to apply the micro level skills in context, and the macro dimension of an individual's distinctiveness in his/her combined application of the micro- and meso-based skills to social and organisational environment.

Bohners (2017), Ehlers (2020) and Delliot (2018) refer to future skills typologies as work force readiness skills, soft skills, entrepreneurship skills and technical skills. These authors argue that, irrespective of the nomenclature used, future skills represent the set of attributes that will define competent performance of social and economic agency over the next decades. Thus, there is consensus (Universities UK 2018; OECD 2019; Cheng 2020; Kukuilska & Hulme 2020) on the substance of the potential impact of future skills on the competence profiles of professionals. This makes a compelling case for universities and other HEIs to make the types of pedagogical adaptations that will systemise these skills and consequently facilitate their transfer at the teaching and learning interface.

Drawing on the works of OECD (2019) and Deliotte (2018), the core foundations or workforce readiness skills include attributes which may be identified as learning-to-learn skills, self-efficacy, ethical awareness, self-direction, reflective competence, decision competence and initiative. These skills facilitate entry into the workforce as well as an individual's accelerated growth within an organisation.

The meso or object-related skills (Ehlers 2020) enable the individual to convert the workforce readiness skills into a defined set of task performance using efficiency and effectiveness as evaluative criteria. These include design thinking competence, innovation and systems competence and digital literacy (OECD 2019). Drawing on extant literature, the acquisition of the meso skills facilitates the efficient and effective deployment of the macro skills in an emergent context. Hulme *et al*. (2020) maintain that organisational settings provide the context for the emergence of meso skills .However, organisational contexts simultaneously serve as the context for the deployment of communication competence, sense making and design competence. Ehlers (2020) argues that the macro skills do not just define the totality of an individual's performance output or professional value; they also define professional identity, which may represent observable patterns in an individual's task dexterity or output profiles in a collection of emerging or situational contexts.

### 2.2.4 The future skills pedagogy

There is an emerging consensus on the view that future skills require a shift from traditional pedagogical approaches. Costello, Coughan, Ferguson, Fitzgerald, Gaved, Herodotou, Holmes, Lochlainm, Giollamhichil, Rienties, Sergeant, Scanlon, Sharples and Whitlock (2020) and Raman (2016) argue that the trend indicates that universities and other HEIs are yet to demonstrate an adequate level of

preparedness in the effort to confront the curriculum and pedagogical challenges that underscore the future skills phenomenon.

While this situation holds true in the global tertiary and HE environment, its prevalence appears more profound in the African context (Mushemeza 2016; Varghese 2016; Doran 2017; British Council 2014). Hence the ongoing debate on whether HEIs of African origin have demonstrated adequate ability and willingness to adopt and adapt to the sequence of structural and conceptual themes that confront the sector in the same way that their counterparts in other parts of the world appear to be doing.

The emergence of the trend of future skills and environmental shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic instigate a shift in policy and structural conceptions of HE and thus contribute to ongoing debate on the efficacy of traditional and signature pedagogies in an era of continuous social change (Cheng 2020; OECD 2019; Ehlers 2020; Bates 2015). These authors argue that the future skills shown in Table 2-1 present the opportunity for university managers and teachers to recognise their changing roles, upgrade their own skills, review their conceptions of teaching and learning and ultimately begin those pedagogic adaptations that will enhance the integration and contextualisation of academic and applied knowledge. In this effort, the approaches that are emerging in the literature as the recommended assortment of teaching and learning methods for future skills include cooperative, project-based, practical application, experiential, case simulation, business, exposure, problem-based, inquiry-based, technology-enabled and blended learning approaches to student engagement (OECD 2019; Raman 2016; Ehlers 2020; Boehner 2017; Galsby 2015; Cheng 2020; Deliotte 2018). These scholars maintain that the envisioned shift from the production of knowledgeable graduates to the production of competent graduates requires teaching and learning approaches that draw on abstract conceptualisations, learners' concrete experiences, reflective observation and active experimentation to build learners' lifelong learning and employability skills (Bates 2015).

### 2.2.4.1 Enterprise and entreprenurship education and pedagogy

The literature on future skills trends (Ehlers 2020; Deloitte 2018; OECD 2019) identifies entrepreneurship skills as core skills for graduate employability. These sources assume that the notions of enterprise, entrepreneurship, and agency have emerged as the core foundations for competent graduates. In lending support to this view, Gibb and Price (2014) and Lackeus (2015) argue that the commodified HE programmes and curricula need to include learning contents and epistemological principles which seek to develop the cognitive, affective, and psychometric competences of graduates by targeting to optimise a balance between the development of learners' entrepreneurial passion and identity, ambiguity tolerance and self–efficacy on one hand, and their learning skills, interpersonal skills, self-insight, strategic skills and innovativeness on the other. These authors maintain that such competences do not

only enhance the critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills of graduates, but also empower them in setting up and managing innovative new ventures, using an assortment of non-traditional pedagogies. These conceptualisations lend additional support to the conceptual framing of this study.

## 2.2.5 Employability skills and higher education

The transition from knowledge to digital society has had profound impact on new patterns of consumer mobility and connectedness. There is evidence that the dawn of the digital society has disintermediated existing value chains, thereby triggering the emergence of new industries and the demand for new skills. The implication, therefore, is that the notion of employability is now being re-examined by employers, professionals, graduates, as well as HEIs (Fongwa 2018; Rowe & Zegwaard 2017). Drawing on this, the conceptual praxis between the main constructs in this study and employability provides the incentive to further interrogate existing research on the notion of employability. This approach makes the assumption that this review will facilitate further insight on the intricate relationship between the complex notion of employability and pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity formation of HEIs.

## 2.2.6 Conceptions of employability

The term employability is often mistaken for employment and used interchangeably with work readiness (Zagwaard 2017; Burk, Scurry, Blenkinsopp & Graley 2016). This mirrors the conceptual variations of employability that abound in the literature (Pegg *et al.* 2012; Fongwa 2018; McGowan 2014; Education Scotland 2016; ILO 2013; York 2010; Rowe & Zegwaard 2017). York (2010) contends that employability refers to a bundle of skills needed for an individual to gain, retain and progress within employment, while work readiness refers to the complete set of conditions (including skills) needed to gain initial employment. Drawing on this, Sachs, Rowe and Wilson (2017) maintain that the combination of work readiness and employability skills significantly increases graduates' chances of employment.

Hence, the emerging insight from these conceptualisations of employability draw attention to the extent the employability concept remains at the centre of the HE agenda around the globe. The implication is that universities and other HEIs are expected to produce graduates who are globally competitive and possess the competencies that align with the changing business environment (Browne 2010; Fongwa 2018; UKCES 2010b). Pegg *et al.* (2012) conceptualise employability within the frames of a knowledge economy. These authors take a broader view of employability by arguing that it transcends the acquisition of skills. They argue that employability emblemises the achievement of skills, understanding

and personal characteristics which enhance graduates' chances of gaining and retaining employment. Thus, the emerging consensus indicates that the development of graduates' critical and reflective abilities enacts stronger complements than the acquisition of personal attributes, techniques and experience.

While reinforcing the views expressed in Pegg *et al. (*2012), ILO (2013) argues that graduate employability may be described as a composite of technical and core skills, cognitive awareness and entrepreneurship skills. This is buttressed in OECD (2019), which contends that employability is the outcome of a good foundation for core skills, access to relevant education and training, motivation and the ability to recognise and utilise lifelong learning opportunities.

The common feature that appears to emerge from these conceptions of employability is the shifting emphasis from discipline-specific skills to core or generic or basic foundational skills (OECD 2019). Pegg *et al.* (2012) suggest that the notion of graduate employability is evolving along the frames of such macro-based themes as neo-liberalism, globalisation and the digital and data economy (Scheimann 2014; Rosenski *et al.* 2015) within the symmetry of traditional and emergent skills and competencies. Within this symmetry exists core skills which are described as contextually facilitative to the extent that they enable graduates to build lifelong learning foundations while strengthening their technical and specialised skills (York 2010; CBI 2011).

Thus, the core employability skills appear to be those non-discrete competencies that are generic i.e. without specific disciplinary alignments. ILO (2013) identifies core skills to include problem solving skills, adaptation abilities, learning and effective communication skills, interpersonal skills, team skills, digital literacy, leadership skills and the ability to follow supervision where appropriate.

Table 2. 2: Conception of employability

| Employability | ILO (2013) | OECD (2018, 2019) | Deloitte (2018) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Core foundations** | These are skills in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy which facilitate easy access to jobs and thus act as prerequisites for continuing education and training | These are fundamental attributes, attitudes, knowledge and values that are prerequisites for further learning and training. Examples include cognitive foundations (literacy and numeracy), health foundations (mental and physical health), social and emotional foundations (moral and ethics), and data and digital literacy, that lay the foundation for other context-specific | These are core to individuals' entry and success in the workplace. Literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, communication, self-presentation, time media literacy, social skills |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | competencies like media and financial literacy and other global competencies | |
| **Vocational skills** | Thes include specialised skills, knowledge or know-how like data literacy, digital literacy, media literacy that are needed to perform specific duties or tasks | This includes the ability to use language, symbols and text interactively; information and media literacy, including the ability to use technology tools interactively | Knowledge and capabilities to perform specialised tasks including technology skills, project management skills, financial management skills and lifelong learning skills |
| **Professional skills** | These are abilities which support work habits such as work ethic, social skills, honesty, integrity, and interpersonal competencies | These include transformative competencies that manifest in the form of new value creation abilities, reconciling tensions and dilemmas, leadership and entreneurship, adaptability and relective competencies | These include competencies include cultural awareness, emotional intelligence,communication skills, criticalthing , creative skills,lradership, and self management. These competencies support work place success as they generate work ideas, buld team momentum and sustain team cohesion |
| **Core skills** | Some of these skills may be found in other categories.<br><br>They include Learning to learn skills, writing and computing skills, problem solving skills, originality , basic technical skills, leadership and cooperation | **Compound Skills** Crtical thinking, metacognitive capabilities, self-efficacy.<br>**Task Performance** Responsibility, self-control, achievement motivation, persistence<br>**Emotional Regulation** Ability to resist stress, optimism emotional intelligence,<br><br>**Collaboration** Trust, empathy, cooperative skills<br>**Open mindedness** Curiosity, tolerance, creativie skills<br>**Engaging with others** Social competence, ássertiveness, innovative energy | The generic capabilities which allow people to succeed in a wide range of different tasks and jobs drawing on their workplace experience, their disciplinary skills and metacognitive abilities, |

Source: ILO (2013); OECD (2018, 2019); Deloitte (2018)

There is evidence (McGowan 2014; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017; Holmes 2013; Jackson 2016; Campbell & Pretti 2017) of growing scrutiny of the readiness of HEIs to produce highly-skilled, work-ready graduates sufficiently qualified to meet the technical, social and professional skills requirements of the knowledge and digital societies. This scrutiny brings an added dimension when the focus shifts to

universities and other HEIs in Africa (McGowan 2014; Fongwa 2018). These scholars argue that that there are significant core skills gaps in Africa. They argue that this gap is hypothetically linked to the severe quality challenges being faced by universities in Africa. This view is emerging against the backdrop of ongoing debate (Fongwa 2018) on lack of consensus on how employability should be conceptualised. York (2010) highlights the changing conceptions of employability in relation to the rate of technological obsolescence as well as the revolutionary impact of this obsolescence on the labour market. Thus, he conceptualises employability not as a one-off, static achievement but as a phenomenon that takes cues from an individual's ability to track, identify, choose and adapt his/her skills undertakings in response to labour market needs.

Bridgestock (2016, 2017), as well as Zegwaard, Campbell and Pretti (2017), built on York's work to highlight the emerging roles of professional identity and networks as essential complements to the work readiness of graduates (Sachs *et al.* 2017). This view of employability draws impetus from the work of Russell (2014), which marked an implicit departure from the techno-conceptions of employability and work readiness to highlight the soft dimensions of lifelong and self directed learning skills, social skills and situational copinng competences , professional identity, global citizenship, career self-management and transfer, situational application of capabilities, adaptability and scholarship as critical dimensions of graduate employability (Jackson 2015; Wilson 2015).

### 2.2.7 Regional views of employability

While there is yet to be consensus on the conceptual underpinnings of employability (Jackson 2016), existing and emerging conceptions tend to mirror not only occupational biases, but national and regional distinctions as well (Fongwa 2018; Rowe and Zegwaard 2017). Evidence in extant research tends to associate the definitional preferences of employability with three drivers: HE policy, national human capital objectives, and competing economic and market philosophies (Miller 2015; Browne 2104; Pegg *et al.* 2012; HEFEC 2011; Education Scotland 2016; Stevesnon *et al.* 2014). Against this background, different regions and countries tend to adapt their national systems and infrastructure to suit their human capital needs. In the United States of America (USA) and Canada, the two competing schools of employability include the neo-liberal school which advocates for national education policy to be shaped by the skills requirements of the global economy (Miller 2015; Fongwa 2018). This implies that university degree programmes' design and graduate enrollments should mirror specific needs in the workforce . Hence, the conference Board of Canada identifies communication skills, the ability to learn independently, ethical responsibility, teamwork and flexibility, thinking and digital skills, and knowledge management as employability skills (Bates 2015). Similarly, the Australian definition of employability highlights the acquisition of interpersonal understanding, communication skills, creative

and critical thinking, social competencies , problem solving as broad categorisations of employability skills.  Rowe and Zegwaard (2017) report that these skills are required not only to gain employment but also to progress while contributing to the strategic direction of the enterprise. This mirrors the views of employability within the European Union and the OECD, where graduate employability is prioritised and constitutes an evaluation criterion for educational systems' efficiency .

The OECD Learning Compass 2030 shows seven broad categorisations of graduate competencies that learners would need, not just to enhance their employability but also to navigate individually and collectively towards a desirable future (OECD 2019).  As shown in Table 2-2, these include core foundational skills, transferable skills,  as well as the skills and values that support  anticipatory-reaction-reflection cycle (AARR) (OECD 2018, 2019). While these mirror employability and future skills (Ehlers 2020), they carry significant implications for HE pedagogy. The EU, on the other hand, identifies literary skills , multilingual abilities , digital skills,  social skills,  learning to learn, entrepreneurship competence, cultural awareness and experience (EU 2018). While the  OECD integrated approach to employability skills framework is yet to be adopted by BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), there is evidence of a unified goal to enhance BRICS cooperation and competitiveness by universalising foundation skills in the respective member countries through an integrated national education and training and funding framework (UNESCO 2014).

Prior to 2021, with the exception of South Africa, there was no employability skills framework at the African continental level. The Association of Technical Univesrities and Polytechnics in Africa (ATUPA), previously known as Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics and Technincal Universities in Africa (CAPA), led the way in adopting an employability skills framework for Africa through its Youth Employability Skills Training (YEST) programme (ATUPA 2021). The ATUPA Employability Framework for Africa draws on the specific context of the SSA business environment to identify foundation skills, communication skills, learning literacy, team skills, problem-solving, entrepreneurial skills, self-management, leadership, adaptability  and resilience, and digital literacy as the firtst ever employability skills framework for Africa. While this signals  a growing scholarly interest in employability skills in SSA, there is no indication of any uniform  framework (national or regional) of employability skills in most countries on the continent. The existence of employability skills frameworks in North America, the European Union, Australia and the OECD has been used for the development of programmes' curricular and professional standards by universities and professional associations (EU 2018).  Against the background of serious quality challenges and skills mismatch (British Council 2014), universities, and professional bodies in Africa have been left to improvise while lacking the incentives for pedagogical adjustments. This regulatory vacuum notwithstanding, a communique was issued at the end of the 13th General Conference of the Association of African

Universities (AAUs), where university leaders and academics were urged to provide students with education and training skills responsive to labour market requirements (AAU 2013; Fongwa 2018).

## 2.3 The changing paradigm in global higher education

The last five decades have witnessed changes in policy conceptions, economic and governance models, as well as noticeable touchpoints in the techno-social evolution of the human society. These developments appear to be driven by the new globalisation and internationalisation phenomena. Among the trends that have evolved from this changing paradigm is the switch from the Keynesian consensus as the basis for social and economic policy, to neoliberalism. Nureev *et al*. (2020), Rustin (2016), and Dougherty and Natow (2015, 2019) all describe neoliberalism as an economic doctrine, a historical phenomenon and a governance rationality that is resloute and absolute in its prescription of socio-economic legitimacy on the basis of economic theory of markets. Tan (2014) argues that the neolibral movement instructed a rethinking of the purpose, structure and role of government in the provision of HE. This provided the rationale for reduction in government funding for HEIs while the trend of competition-based policies emerged, leaving HEIs to compete for resources and markets within quality assurance and other regulatory frameworks. However, Christe (2016), Cloete (2016), and Gymareh and Burke (2017) argue that neoliberal rationality thus repositioned HE from being a process of intellectual growth and service to the community to a market-based enterprise where performativity, managerialism, consumerism and enterprise culture define the rules of engagement. Stevenson *et al*. (2014) maintain that the neolibralist era laid the foundation for marketing and branding in HE.

## 2.3.1 Marketing and branding trends in higher education

The discipline, science, process and function of marketing draws on entrepreneurial principles, data-guided decisions and market evidence to make business decisions and thus create both customer and institutional value (Kotler & Keller 2012). In the case of HEIs, these values tend to be composites of the bundle of academic programmes that are offered, communicated and distributed by the universities (Ivy 2008). In an era in which the phenomena of massification and commodification and increasing competition appear to be rife, the chances of generating rational value appeals at the expense of their emotional equivalents remains increasingly realistic (Stukalina 2019). This understanding thus provides the conceptual justification for the introduction of branding as the cornerstone of institutional marketing strategy. Thus, branding and brand management activities of HEIs draw on the emotional requirements of customers to differentiate institutional value offerings beyond the superficial packaging of the physical environment of an institution or enterprise. It draws on the in-depth understanding of

the emotional needs and expectations of consumers to inform the rational packaging of values while generating a consumption experience that is holistic and distinctive (Grewal, Meyer and Mittal 2022). Thus, the application of marketing and branding principles have been found to be a source of competitive advantage in different markets and industry sectors (Pinar *at al.* 2014).

Bialon (2015) observes that university marketing trends indicate a pattern of diversity of approaches. This assertion builds on the earlier work of Filip (2012) and Kotler and Keller (2012), which suggests that the marketing and branding trends in the HE sector indicate a convergence of approaches used in the services and social media marketing arena. These authors argue that the scope of marketing activities in the tertiary and higher education sector appears to be influenced by globalisation, technology advances and deregulation. These views are reinforced by the emerging realities of the global tertiary and higher education sector in the COVID-19 and post- COVID-19 era when national lockdowns and health and safety protocols are disrupting the old normal. This period has introduced a new paradigm in the conception and consumption of knowledge and the configuration of the global value chain, including the HE value chain (UNESCO 2020). The emerging insight is that the COVID-19 pandemic brought added dimensions to the massification and commoditisation of global tertiary and higher education (Wolhuter & Jacobs 2021). It provided an added dimension to the debate on the continuing relevance of the traditional brick and mortal model of university education as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS), Open Education Movement, Open courseware, Open Education Resources (OERs), Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) and Flexible and Blended Learning practice (FaB) appear to provide credible and, to some extent, superior and alternative access to HE (World Bank 2021; Wolhuter & Jacobs 2021; WEF 2020; Bergan *et al.* 2021).

## 2.3.2 Marketisation and commoditisation trends in global higher education

There is evidence of a link between marketing and branding trends and the phenomena of marketisation and commoditisation (Stevenson *et al.* 2014). Hall (2017) describes marketisation as simply the adoption of the economic theory of markets in the provision of tertiary and higher education. Hence, marketisation may be described as a competitive philosophy that makes the assumption that the role of HE has been reconceptualised by environmental trends like globalisation, the phenomeneon of the knowledge-based economy, advances in ICT, rapid demographic and generational shifts, new policy conceptions and the shifting emphasis from abstract knowledge to future skills. Drawing on the views expressed in Nyangau (2014) and Stevenson *et al.* (2014), marketisation may be described as a competitive philosophy that views educational provisions with the fit-for-purpose lens in preference to alternative conceptualisations of the role of HE in the twenty-first century. These authors maintain that the marketisation of HE is akin to corporatisation, managerialism and entrepreneurism in the HE sector.

Walcott (2003) argues that marketisation and marketing and branding practices in the global HE sector are pheneomena that are introduced by neoliberal economics and commoditisation of learning. These scholars argue that the widening participation movement, reduction in government spending on HE, the quest for favourable league rankings and the trend of subsidies for the adoption of new forms of open and distance learning, created the context for competition and standardisation of academic programmes as well as the consultancy portfolios of universities around the world. Stukilinar (2019) maintains that the commoditisation phenomenon provides the incentive for marketing and branding from the institutional, academic programmes, and delivery methods dimensions. The delivery methodology dimension makes reference to the variety of teaching and learning methods and digital platforms that are independent of location and readily available for self-study and guided learning. Thus the internet and associated technologies reintermediated teaching and learning while triggering the commodotisation phenomenon in the sector. As documented in Stukilinar (2019), the global HE sector has undergone the following changes over the last two decades.

Table 2. 3: Evolutionary trends in HE

| Traditional features | New conceptions |
|---|---|
| HE as a public good | Focus on industry, corporatisation, private good |
| HE services | Commoditisation with a focus on consumerism in the sector |
| HEIs as education providers (public good) | HEIs as service providers with focus on consumer (student) needs |
| Cooperation and capacity building | Competitive alliance |
| Quality improvements | Revenue generation |
| Academic partnerships and soft diplomacy | Strategic partnerships for national competitiveness |
| Diversity of prospects | Global prestige and global rankings |
| Students as knowledge consumers | Students as reflective practitioners |

Source: Adapted from Stukilinar (2019)

The evolutionary path displayed in Table 2-3 above appears to mirror the emergence of neoliberalism and thus lays the foundation for marketisation and branding practices in the HE sector. These trends, as shown in the table above, highlight two fundamental issues. The first is that HE systems and practices are not independent constructs.The evidence (Stukalina 2019) indicates that HE systems and practices are amenable to environmental trends (Clark, Chapleo & Suomi 2019). The compelling influences of evolving phenomena appear to have problematised the extension of the traditional university model (Alemu 2018). The evidence (Roskosa & Stukalina 2019; Stukalina 2019; Bhattacharya & Faisal 2020; Cheng 2019) indicates that these phenomena are compelling, evolutionary and, to some extent, revolutionary, especially in their impact on the governance of universities and other HEIs. The second issue is that the philosophical and policy imperatives of neoliberalism, which include reduction in government funding for universities, entrepreneurism, managerism and the widening participation agenda, conceptually validate the substitution of HE as a public good with competitive, market-led

conceptions that take their cue from the evolution of knowledge and data economy models (Wong, Tan, Hew, Ooi & Leong 2020). These imperatives encapsulate epistemic, pedagogic and employability skills requirements that seem evolutionary in diverse economic and social contexts.

### 2.3.3 Competitive positioning trends in global HE market

The assertions made in the preceding sections indicate that the marketisation phenomenon and the resulting marketing and branding strategies are symbolic of institutional and industry change (Rashid 2012). Thus, this evidence indicates that the marketing strategies of universities have not evolved as spontaneous responses to changing industry dynamics but as strategic components of a new business model within the framework of the changing dynamics of a deregulated business environment. Thus, HEIs design and develop learning programmes and consultancy portfolios that provide solutions to the emerging needs of target markets. Scholars (Clark *et al.* 2020; Bhattacharya & Faisal 2020) argue that university managers have sought to develop specific values for differentiated and stratified target markets. These authors argue that universities rely on highly defined institutional identities and market positioning to negotiate market visibility, corporate partnerships national and regional references, as well as desirable rankings in varying university ranging indices (Valitov 2014). Drawing on this, Chapleo (2010) and Clark *et al.* (2020) assert that there is growing consensus that HEIs draw on marketing and branding methodologies that are similar to those used in service organisations. Hence, Popović, Stanković and Đukić (2015) argue that the market positioning process unifies other marketing activities on an organisation's path to the construction of competitive advantage. These authors argue that the pattern that is emerging in the literature suggests that the positioning strategies of HEIs converge around such factors as institutional learning environment, institutional reputation, location of origin, graduate achievements and the cultural integration opportunities that are available to students .

### 2.3.4 The marketing and branding strategy domains of HEIs

The evidence (Clark *et al.*2020; Chapleo 2010; Dean, Arroy-Gamez, Punjaisri & Pich 2016); Chapleo & Simms 2010; Dholakia & Acciardo 2014; Melewar & Nguyen 2014) indicates that the marketing and branding strategies of HEIs mirror those used by service organisations. Clark *et al.* (2020) argue that these approaches recognise the complexities and general features of HEIs and the need to deliberately articulate and communicate a positioning for an institution's differentiated value offers within an increasingly competitive market (Balaji 2016; Dean *et al.* 2016). Thus, the marketing and brand management activities of HEIs appear to converge under the strategic action domains of institutional

brand core, value proposition domain, the stakeholder engagement domain and the positioning strategies domain.

### 2.3.4.1 Institutional brand core

Stukalina (2019) observes that HEIs' goal of building institutional brands prescriptively begins with the articulation of an institutional brand core which derives brand knowledge and consequently projects distinction and engenders sustained consumer response when prompted by a brand's marketing activities (Keller 2013). Thus brand core reflects all elements of the brand as it embodies a blend of values and sub-identities which combine to project the main essence of the brand (Urde 2013). The essence of HEIs is to offer educational experiences that are relevant and authentic within the framework of prevailing environmental realities. These educational experiences thus include relevant academic programmes, student engagement strategies and pedagogical enactments (Stevenson *et al.* 2014) which characterise the institutional brand identity. Drawing on this argument, Mourad *et al.* (2011) maintain that the concept of an institution's brand identity is the first step towards creating brand knowledge, brand awareness and, ultimately, brand equity. Hence, Christodoulides and de Charnatony (2010) advance the argument that brand awareness, which is implicit of brand essence, brand recognition and brand recall, predetermines the types and strengths of associations that consumers ascribe to a brand. Thus, brand identity forms the basis for brand awareness, brand imagery, brand preference and pre-purchase expectations of brand performance (Rashid 2012; Kapferer 2012; Urde 2013; Urde & Greyser 2014, 2016). Implicit in this view is the assumption that the construction of institutional brand identity is an endeavour that requires clarity and affirmation in the articulation and integration of the constructed attributes, benefits, and the cumulative attitudes of the brand into the marketing programmes of the brand (Buil, Martínez, & de Chernatony 2013; Greyser & Urde 2019).

This is supported by Nguyen and LaBalanche (2001), who argue that educational brands are equal to the institutions' academic reputation. Others, such as Francis (2015), identify academic and pedagogical approaches of HEIs, institutional learning environments and the general learning experience of students as components of brand identity in HEIs. Thus, Pinar *et al.* (2011) propose a brand management model that identifies the quality of teaching and research as a core focus of value creation within HEIs. While this view is supported by those expressed in Kepferer (2012), Urde (2013) and Francis (2015), the knowledge gap that remains is evidence of the deliberate integration of enacted pedagogical practices within the brand identity architecture of HEIs and evidence of the impact of such integration on institutional brand image and reputation. As stated previously, this study was constructed to address this gap in the literature.

## 2.3.4.2 Stakeholder engagement

Drawing on extant research (Clark *et al.* 2020), stakeholder engagement activities feature prominently among the marketing and branding strategies of HEIs . This assertion makes the assumption that brand essence, as encapsulated in the institutional brand core and positioning statements (Urde 2013; Urde & Greyser 2015), invokes the soft elements of institutional self-identity. Thus, this process builds the basis for value co-creation between the institution and its stakeholders (Kadlec 2015; Chapleo & Simms 2010) and facilitates the strategic and iterative communication of brand personality to a differentiated stakeholder audience. In buttressing this view, Pinar *et al.* (2014) maintain that the outcome of such communication generates the types of frozen conceptions of institutional perceived quality and expectations and purchase decisions which combine to define institutional reputation. Hanover Research (2015) argues that HEIs seek to professionalise this component of their value chain by recruiting professional marketers as chief marketing officers or managers. Stukalina (2019) maintains that the strategic goal of stakeholder engagement by HEIs includes value co-creation, differentiation, modernisation of teaching and learning, increased student enrollment from a diverse pool of prospects, and preferential collaborative considerations. This supports the views expressed in the earlier works of Muhanna and Murana (2016). These authors contend that HEIs engage in iterative but strategic consultation with industry, social actors, and society as a whole in order to strengthen their institutional reputation, and attract more talent and interest from diverse stakeholder groups.

The resulting insight thus indicates that stakeholder engagement, as a strategic action domain in the management of HE brands, elucidates clarity on the role that institutional pedagogical practices can play in building brand essence and facilitating value co-creation and other dialogic iterations that culminate in the modernisation of teaching and learning and the overall educational experience of different stakeholder groups. With academic programmes as essential elements of the brand core of HEIs, the dialogic engagement of stakeholders at various touchpoints of the teaching and learning interface embodies the potential to evolve artefacts that are akin to institutional identity and reputation. Despite this demonstrable potential of HE pedagogy to elucidate the educational and associative experience of graduates and other stakeholders (Ivy 2008; Pinar *et al.* 2011; Stevenson *et al*. 2014; Francis 2015), no study (to the researcher's best knowledge) has articulated how pedagogical practices, as an active identity element of HE brands, play a role in the brand identity formation of universities. This study sought to explore this link.

## 2.3.4.3 Institutional value proposition

Extant research (Valitov 2014; Dean *et al.* 2016) indicate that the marketing strategies of HEIs draw on two foundamental premises. The first is the identification of target markets. These markets may include primary markets, secondary markets, tertiary markets as well as institutional partners. The second premise is a focus on the value bundles which constitute the instituon's value offerings. Chernev (2014) observes that the market behaviour of university brands indicates a pattern of strategic intent to deliver value through the design, development and delivery of differentiated values that use exclusive features and associations to create value beyond the basic premises of teaching and learning (Kotler & Keller 2016; Chernev 2014). Thus, HE brands emerge as sets of exclusive combinations of learning programmes, academic faculty, learning environment and instructional methods, that are differentiated and positioned within specific philosophical and epistemic foundations.

This view therefore amplifies the need to bring clarity to the notion of brands as organic constructs which draw on the intrinsic and institutional basic values to evolve as by-products of heuristic and phenomenological expeditions of an enterprise and its target customers. The consumption-based experience and interaction that is alluded to in the description above manifests through stakeholder engagement activities at the learning and communication interface. This value co-creation schema implicitly reflects an intellectual enterprise that evokes the notion of brands as HEIs' strategic imperatives. Table 2.4 below explores the findings of selected studies on brand identity elements and positioning patterns that support the marketing of HE brands.

Table 2. 4: Brand identity elements and positioning patterns in HE

| Author and date | Institutional brand elements of HEIs | Implications for institutional pedagogy |
|---|---|---|
| Valitov (2014) | State accreditation, international accreditation, international faculty quotas, academic staff profile, technology culture, availability of facilities, employment history of graduates, institutional artefacts, graduate achievement | Explicit |
| Gatfield *et al.* (2003) | Recognition (quality of teachers) and resources, campus life, university learning environment, existing institutional reputation; graduate career prospects, destinations and cultural integration | Implicit |
| Black (2008) | Quality of teaching staff and administrators as institutional trust agents | Explicit |
| Ivy (2008) | Choice of majors and electives, existing institutional reputation (promotions), tuition cost (price), communication (prospectus), quality of interactions with faculty, premiums | Explicit |
| Grey *et al.* (2003) | Career prospects of students, quality of academic instruction, learning environment, institutional reputation (in terms of rankings) | Explicit |
| Chapleo (2016) | University's cultural environment, institutional cultire, staff and faculty, management philosophy | Explicit |
| Clark *et al.* (2019) | Quality of academic programmes, research output and consultancy, university staff, learner experience, management structure | Explicit |
| Stukalina (2019) | Learning environment, unique career opportunities, experiential learning, degrees on offer, professional and cultural opportunities, institutional expertise, institutional reputation | Explicit |
| Stevenson *et al.* (2014) | Academic programmes on offer, student engagement, institutional pedagogy, institutional self-identity | Explicit |
| Pinar *et al.* (2011, 2014, 2020) | Quality of teaching and research, academic programmes, learning environment | Explicit |

The insight emerging from the sources referenced in the table above indicates that pedogogy in general, and institutional pedagogy in particular, has emerged as a critical component of HE brands. While some sources make implicit reference to pedagogy as an institutional indentity element, others (Pinar *et al.* 2011, 2014; Clark *et al.* 2020; Grey *et al.* 2003; Steveson *et al.* 2014; Miller 2015; Hamilton *et al.* 2017) make implied references to institutional pedagogy as supporting but integral elements of HE brands.

## 2.3.4.4 Conceptual limitations of HE marketing and branding

While the transition to the stakeholder view has since gained momentum in the global HE sector, it has in like manner drawn much criticism from both scholars and practitioners (Naidoo 2010; Gyamera & Burke 2017; Ochwa-Echel 2013). Pinar *et al.* (2014) argue that the complexity of the university entity, with multiple constituent schools and colleges with specialised disciplinary schemas and loyalties, constitute sub-brands within the university brand. These authors argue that these colleges and schools, many of which have the potential for semi-autonomy and self-identification (Stevenson *et al.* 2014), may constitute multiple identities that are implicit of the university brand and ultimately challenge the assumed coalescence of services branding methodologies into the praxis of university branding. Naidoo (2010) draws attention to the contradiction between such policy goals as widening participation in HE and marketisation. She argues that the non-interventionist, managerialist and entrepreneurist frameworks that support marketisation would have a corrosive impact on the potential of universities and other HEIs to contribute to equitable access in a sector that would have evolved into a stratified HE market.

Building on the views expressed in earlier studies, Davis (2017) and Preater (2018) view the functional efficacy of neoliberalism as the philosophical fortress for marketisation. These authors maintain that, rather than demonstrate the imagined capacity for providing solutions to access and equity challenges, neoliberalism has become a Trojan horse that marginalises low-income households, especially those in developing countries where HE enrollment has remained critically low, mostly due to lack of capacity for self-funding. This view is echoed in Gyamera and Burke (2017), who argue that neoliberalism and its market-based antecedents ignore complex social inequalities while advancing no explanation on the ontological and epistemological rationality for market-based outcomes such as competition, competence-based education as well as their pedagogical implications on graduate outcomes (Naidoo 2010; Gyamera & Burke 2017; Ochwa-Echel 2013). Within the broader context of the production of a competitive workforce and the global knowledge economy, the reference to the impact of neoliberalism on epistemic drift is buttressed in Miller (2015) and Barnett (2011). These authors argue that most dissident views on neolibralism in HE (Stevenson *et al.* 2014; Naidoo 2010; Gyamera & Burke 2017; Ochwa-Echel 2013) maintain that marketisation-inspired pedagogy compromises graduates' quality and orchestrates the production of market-based graduates rather than intellectually rigorous ones.

While this debate continues, it is imperative to mention that HE is viewed as an evolutionary process that needs to respond to the changing realities of the business environment, including the evolution of new social and industrial requirements to which tertiary and HE institutions must respond.

Table 2.5 below illustrates the main assumptions of selected sources on emerging trends in the global higher education sector. Evidently, the emerging insight indicates a trend of changes from the traditional conception, design and delivery of HE to the concept of HE that is underscored by intervening environmental factors. As highlighted in Nureev et al. (2020), Stukilinar (2019) and KPMG (2020), these factors insitigate a pattern of changes in the concept, purpose, packaging and delivery of HE. Hence, such phenomena as marketisation, marketing and branding, institutional pedagogy and institutional brand identity have begun to gain traction in the management of higher education systems and institutions. There is evidence (KPMG 2020) which suggests that these phenomena have elicited adpatations in the articulation of the strategic capabilities and operating model of HEIs across the globe.

Table 2.5: Selected sources on trends in HE

| Author and date | Title of article | Theme/Main assumptions | Implications for the present study |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nureev, Volchik. & Strielkowski (2020) | Neoliberal reforms in higher education and the import of institutions | The emergence of neoliberalism and the changing conception of HE. | A majority of these sources undercore the impact of the neoliberal ideologyon the concept and programming of contemporary HE around the globe (KPMG (2020). However, the emergence of the notion of institutional pedagogical identity (Hamilton *et al.* 2017), and its contribution to the brand identity of HEIs, has added to the complexity of factors which seem to characterize the impact of neoliberalism on HE (Stevenson *et al.* 2014; Naidoo 2010). This assertion leaves a gap in our understanding of how the institutional pedagogical identity phenomenon coalesces with or challenges other |
| Stukilinar (2019) | Marketing in higher education: Promoting educational services and programmes | Marketisation and commoditisation trends in global higher education. HEIs as service providers with focus on consumer (student) needs. Higher education as a demand driven service | |
| Jacob, Kearney & Meek (2022) | Higher education and research in the Post Knowledge Society: Scenarios for a future world | The evolution of the Post-knowledge Society and Economy and the role of higher education and research (HER) in it. The role of globalisation, the SDG and HER response. | |
| KPMG (2020) | The future of higher education in a disruptive world | Technological change, new world of work, changing demographics, climate change, competition from non-traditional HE providers, personalisation of learning, and impact on traditional university business model. | |

| | | | neoliberal antecedents in the contemporary programming of HE. There are at least two evidences in the literature which buttress this view. First, is the contention by Gymera and Burke (2017) that the neoliberalist movement offers no explanation on the ontological, and epistemological, rationality of neo liberal pedagogy on graduate employment outcomes . Second, is the situation of the relative neweness of HE in The Gambia and the knowledge gap that accompanies this on the competitive behaviour of the selected HEIs. These evidences provide further rationale for this study's research question as the study seeks to bridge these knowledge gaps to provide preliminary understanding on the pedagogical practices of the selected HEIs withn the broader purview of their competitive behaviour in a neo-liberal environment. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pankaj, Wood & Wharton (2022) | Reimagining knowledge acquisition in UK higher education in a post-pandemic landscape | Disruption and opportunity in the HE sector; the future of blended learning and technology-enabled HE; upskilling and lifelong learning through digitally enabled HE; alternative credentialing | |
| Saso (2021) | Digitalisation and innovation of university education in the post-Covid era | Virtual and blended international mobility | |
| Miller (2015) | A case study of academics' epistemic and pedagogic identity in the context of neoliberalism | Neoliberalism as a driver of change in HE. New directions in the epistemic and pedagogic orientations of HEIs. | |
| Ehlers (2020) | Future skills: The future of learning and higher education | Skills of the future and graduate employability; HE readiness for future skills adoption; HE of the future; the pedagogy of futures skills in HEIs; alternative credentialing systems | |
| Orr, Luebcke, Schmidt, Ebner, Wannemacher, Ebner & Dohmen (2022) | Higher education landscape 2030. A trend analysis based on the AHEAD international horizon scanning | The role of HEIs in a digital era; knowledge and competence needed in a digital era; university didactics-related technological requirements; opportunities for HE in a digital era | |
| Lourdes Guàrdia, Clougher, Anderson & Maina (2021) | IDEAS for transforming higher education: An overview of ongoing trends and challenges | Emerging HE leadership and institutional strategy trends; curriculum and pedagogical innovation; incentives for digital education; massive open online courses (MOOCs); TEL and internationalisation of HE | |
| Hanover Research (2019) | 2020 trends in higher education. Unpack crucial shifts in higher education | The era of non-traditional learners, student diversity and changing value chain. Marketing, branding, and institutional reputation | |
| Torres (2013) | Neoliberalism as a new historical bloc: A Gramscian analysis of neoliberalism's common sense in education | Challenges faced by universities in the neo-liberal context, globalisation, and the development and sustenance of neo-liberal phenomena: marketisation, the challenges of democratic cosmopolitanism vs localism | |
| Preater (2018) | Neoliberalism, marketisation and higher education – University of | Challenges of neoliberalism, and markletisation in HE | |

| | West London public professorial lecture | | |
|---|---|---|---|

## 2.4 Higher education in Africa

HEIs have historically occupied a very important position in Africa's development history. They contribute to the national assest base with great significance to national prestige and competitiveness (Nyangau 2014; Kasozi 2014). However, as governance ideologies and environmental trends continue to evolve along the paths that are suggested by the selected sources in Table 2.5 above, it appears that African HEIs have struggled to transform at the same pace as the evolving environmental trends. This implicit lethargy has resulted in discontinuities and discourses of declining quality of African universities .

### 2.4.1 Reforms and revitalisations

The rapid obsolescence of the global economic order that relied primarily on physical inputs and natural resources paved the way for the emergence of the knowledge-based economy (KBE). The resulting knowledge-intensive activities draw on intellectual capabilities to drive economic growth, thereby bringing a new focus on the role of research, technology and learning to economic performance and social evolution. These neoliberalist antecendents laid the foundation for conceptualising the contemporary role of HE and HEIs in SSA (Kahangwa 2014).This situation triggered reforms and changes in HE policy conceptions across the African region. Kahangwa (2014), however, argues that the fundamental problem that might have been overlooked is the institutionalisation of consequent reforms using the Western template into African economies, societies and universities. The implication is that HE systems in SSA were not ready to handle this change. Lindow (2011) argues that this realisation triggered reform initiatives in areas of strategic planning and differentition within the HE systems, and changes in the models of delivery of instructions (Schendel 2013).

### 2.4.2 Governance and structural reforms

The trend of new conceptualisations of the role of HEIs in general, and HEIs in Africa in particular, triggered reform movements that sought to reposition HEIs from a wholly subvented mandate of public goods production to the status of adaptive, responsive, neo-vocational, quality-assured and entrepreneurial community of stakeholders (Schendel 2013). The strategic implication of this new HE

is that the traditional university models, which were underpinned by the neo-classical theories, needed to be substituted with more market- and efficiency-focused production models (Nureev *et al.* 2020). In the wake of reduction and recurring inadequacy in government funding for HE in Africa, universities and other HEIs charge tuition fees to augment government subventions which histotically constitute very low percentages of their operational budgets. These practices did not only mark the threshold for the use of alternative and complementary funding regimes, they also introduced new governance models that conceptually validate the corporatisation of HE in Africa. While these reform waves mirrored global trends in HE, Gymera and Burke (2017) and Cloate (2016) observe that the HE systems and infrastructure and other supporting socio-economic models that prevailed in the continent served as contradictions to the structural requirements of such reforms.This view is supported in Christie (2016) and Zeleza and Okanda 2021 ). These scholars argue that the participation rate in HE in Africa bears all the hallmarks of profound inequality while reflecting the teasing foundations of neoliberal political economy. While the acknowledgement of rising demand for HE in the continent exists (Campus France 2020), the enrolment rate stands at just twelve percent which is twenty percent below the global average of thirty two percent (Quacquarelli Symonds 2015). Thus, the introduction and the increasing pattern of tuititon fees at varying levels of HE in Africa impose access and enrolment restictions, especially on low-income families, while orchestrating fiscal imbalances that arise from shortfalls in the enrollment targets of HEIs. This situation hinders the capacity of African HEIs to effectively resource teaching and learning in the wake of a global pattern of rising demand, competition and mobility of students across borders (University World News 2020; KPMG 2020; Orr *et al.* 2022).

While this study recognises the diversity of the African continent and variations in the national and historical cricumstances of Africa universities, it makes the assumption that the collective development objectives as unified by the African Union's (AU) 2063 agenda enshrines the supranational charter that needs to guide the framing of HE standards across the continent.

## 2.5 Higher and tertiary education in The Gambia

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST) refers to all formal learning systems and programmes at the post-secondary level and above as tertiary and HE in The Gambia (MoHERST 2015). However, the tertiary side of this hybrid nomenclature is used to describe all non-university and non-degree based post-secondary education. Simply put, tertiary education is the term used to describe technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in The Gambia. However, the overall definition of tertiary education in The Gambia will soon change. This is due in part to the ongoing transformation of the country's main TVET institution into a technical university with full degree-awarding status.

## 2.5.1 The history of tertiary and higher education in The Gambia

Tertiary and higher education in The Gambia dates back to the colonial era when Yundum Teachers Collge was established in 1953 (Gambia College 2020). This institution catered for the training and supply of the national cadet of Early Child Development (ECD) and primary and secondary school teachers. This was critical for the sustenance of the country's education system. The Gambia Teachers' College evolved into the present-day Gambia College.The College has since expanded its programme portfolio to include certificate and diploma programmes in education, nursing, agriculture and public health.While Gambia College catered for teacher training at both tiers of basic education in The Gambia, graduation from its programmes symbolised elitism as it conferred the highest educational awards that were available locally. This profile also created career change channels and opportunities for trained teachers to join the civil service mainstream, which suffered acute shortage of qualified personnel at the time. This switch from teaching career to civil service career was more in the the Ministries of Education, Agriculture, and Health and Social Welfare. These are the Ministries whose personnel requirements were matched by the training offered at the Teachers' College.While this skill diffusion and occupational mobility existed in the social sciences, skills shortages in the management and technical vocations, especially at the middle level and the wider economy, were widespread. In recognition of this, The Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI) was established in 1980 to cater for the middle-level skills requirements of The Gambian economy. The GTTI offered non-degree programmes in construction, engineering, computer science, technical teacher education, and entreprenurship (GTTI 2018). The establishment of the Management Development Institute (MDI) and The Gambia Hotel School (GHS) in 1981 and 1982 respectively, highlighted the developmnet reform efforts of the republican government of Sir Dawda Jawara who led the first republic as a democratically-elected president. The main reason for the expansion of the tertiary education sector was to provide indigeneous tertiary-level education in critical segments of the economy and thus bridge the skills gaps that existed in critical sectors of the economy. Thus, the MDI's statutory mandate includes the provision of research and consultancy services and non-degree and vocational qualifications in the Management subdisciplines (MDI 2020). The GHS, which has since evolved into The Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute (GTHI), was established to cater for the skills requirents of the hospitality services subsector (GTHI 2020). This was against the backdrop of evidence of the potential of the hospitality services subsector to overtake the agricultural sector as the largest contributor to The Gambia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Bank 2022 2).

## 2.5.2 University education in The Gambia

Prior to 1999, when the University of The Gambia was established, there was no university-level education in The Gambia. A small number of Gambians who had university education prior to 1999 received their awards mainly through government and bilateral scholarships from foreign universities in the sub-region and continental Africa, Europian Union, USA, Eastern European Countries (EEC), Russia, Asia and Oceania. The attempt to establish an indigenous university for The Gambia in 1992 generated intense national debate (The Free Library 2014). The view that dominated the national discourse which followed was that The Gambia was not ready to own a university. Although there was no clarity on the notion of lack of readiness, this nonetheless led to the suspension of the Gambian university project by the incumbent government.

Following transition to cilivian rule in 1996, a partnership between the then Ministry of Education and Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Canada, led to the establishment of the University Extension Programme (UEP) in 1997. The first convocation programme of the UEP in February 1999 marked the establishment of what is now known as the University of The Gambia (UTG), with degrees conferred on graduates mainly from the Humanities and Social Sciences (The Free Libray 2014). The university has since expanded its programmes to establish constituent schools of Law, Medical and Alllied Sciences, Business and Public Adminstration, Journalism, Arts and Science, and Graduate School of Research and Consultancy (UTG 2020).

The establishment of the first national university thirty four years after gaining independence from Britian marked a turning point in the development history of The Gambia. However, this belated achievement also provided the opportunity for reflection on the role the belated establishment of an indigenous university might have played in sustaining the national development inertia that had prevailed in the preceding years. The Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE) and the Vison 2020 provided the blueprint for national development in The Gambia. These successive national development instruments had sought to transform The Gambia into a knowledge-based economy through the local production of skills, indigenous knowledge, with special focus on STEM education, youth empowerment, enterprise education and public-private partnerships. These national development objectives and the emergent role of HE as a catalyst for national development did not only provide the impetus for the establishment of the UTG, it also provided the rationale for the establishment of a dedicated government agency that would manage and coordinate the aggregate of tertiary and HE programmes in the country. This understanding led to the establishment of the MoHERST in 2007. Prior to the establishment of the MoHERST in 2007 and the validation of the Tertiary and Higher Education Policy (2015-2023), the statutory instrument that guided the affairs of

the university and other tertiary education instituons was the National Education Policy (2004-2015) under the auspices of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) (MoBSE 2013).

## 2.5.3 Private tertiary and higher education instituions (HEIs) in The Gambia

In recognition of the access and equity challenges that confronted the sector, government libralised the tertiary and HE sector to encourage private sector participation.This is part of government's strategy to increase access and widen participation in the sector. There are currently over 60 registered non-degree-awarding private tertiary education institutions in The Gambia (NAQAA 2020). In anticipation of the quality assurance challenges which historically confront such liberalisation programmes, the National Training Authority (NTA) was established in 2002 (NAQAA 2020) and charged with the mandate to regulate the educational provisions of tertiary institutions.The emerging insight therefore indicates that prior to the establishment of the UTG, Gambia's tertiary and HE sector was constituted mainly of TVET institutions.

Unlike the TVET subsector, the HE sector is relatively new. Just over two decades since the establishment of the first university in The Gambia, MoHERST has granted operating licenses to four private universities between 2010 and 2018 (MoHESRT 2018; NAQAA 2020). The liberalisation of the HE sector followed the limited capacity of the University of The Gambia to meet rising demand for admissions in different disciplines.

Although, as part of their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all universities in The Gambia developed the capacity to offer courses either purely online using web-conferencing tools or through the blended format, two of the licensed universities operate the open university business model.

The resulting complexities of liberalisation, especially in an environment of relative newness to HE, led to the formation of the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Agency (NAQAA) in 2015 (MoHERST 2015; NAQAA 2018). The newly-formed agency, which has MOHERST as its line ministry, was charged with the responsibility of providing institutional and programme accreditation and oversight responsibilities for the tertiary and HE sector. NAQAA by default became a replacement for the NTA, whose statutory mandate and regulatory capacity was limited to the TVET insititutions. The emerging insight thus underscores government's acknowledgement of the regulatory complexities that accompany a new and librealised tertiary and HE sector.

**2.5.4 Ongoing reforms in Gambia's tertiary and higher education sector**

Following the beginning of the third republic, The Gambian government unveiled a 10-year tertiary and HE development plan to provide long term support to the national Development Plan (NDP 2018-2021). Based on this, MoHERST embarked on a series of reforms in the sector. Some of these reforms include research and development, academic staff development, and institutional status upgrade in the case of GTTI which is being transformed from a technical training institute to a University of Science, Engineering and Technology (USET) ( GTTI 2020). However, the absence of a national institution with the capacity for higher skills training in the STEM areas was identified as an infrastructure gap that had the potential to delay the capacity development goals of the NDP. In recognition of this deficit, in 2009 the government of the Gambia launched a 10-year HE development plan to build the coutry's human resource base and strenghten tertiary and HE infrastructure (University World News 2009). This provided the strategic impetus for the expansion of the University of The Gambia, as well as the construction of ultra-modern campuses for the Kanilai Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) and the Ndemban Technical skills Centre (NTSC) in the Western part of the country (MoHERST 2020). This decentralised approach recognises the proximity-based access and equity challenges in Gambia's tertiary and HE sector (MoHERST 2019). In what has emerged to be its flagship project within its reform agenda, under the auspices of the World Bank's African Centres of Excellence (ACE) programme, MoHERST is currently working with the World Bank, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science Technology (KNUST) Ghana and the University of Demonfort, Leicester, UK, to set up the physical infrastructure for the USET, build institutional capacity and provide multiple PhD scholarships to GTTI staff and other Gambians in the Science, Engineering and Technology disciplines (GTTI 2020).

**2.6 Pedagogical theories and practices in higher education**

As highlighted in the preceding secions, there is evidence (Orr *et al.* 2022) that emerging trends in the global business environment clearly challenge the efficacy of traditional university models. Trends such as the advent of the digital economy, environmental turbulences such as the COVID-19 pandemic, neoliberal imperatives such as marketisation, institutional adaptations for the employment readiness of millennials and Generation Z, and other phenomena such as education for sustainable development, and the green and circular economy concepts, introduced a flury of adaptations to the conception of graduate employability and the value chain of HEIs (Stevenson *et al.* 2014; Hamilton *et al.* 2017; Miller 2015; Guàrdia, Clougher, Anderson, and Maina, 2021; Gonçalves and Majhanovich, 2021). Similarly, these trends have triggered adaptations to the epistemic and pedagogic philosophies of HEIs around the globe.

### 2.6.1 Institutional pedagogical identity of HEIs

The historical relevance of HEIs is founded on the ability of such institutions to identify and respond to evolving knowledge trends in their designated environments and communities. Thus, this assumed response to emerging phenomena often evolves simultaneously with pedagogical adaptations (Gioia *et al.* 2000). This premise for an institutional approach to pedagogical practice provides the framework for the subsequent review of the institutional pedagogical identity literature.

### 2.6.2 A framework for institutional pedagogical identity

Institutional pedagogical identity, which emerged as a major construct in this study, is a relatively new concept in the literature of HE, branding and organisational studies. Hamilton *et al.* (2017) view institutional pedagogy as educational design and delivery principles, methods and practices that are frozen within an institution's psyche and consequently imbibed as shared values by all members of an institution. These scholars propose that the notion of institutional pedagogy is centered on the complex totality of settings that facilitate the learner-teacher interaction and the role the institution plays in the process of intervening in the learning interface. This is evidenced in problem-based learning (PBL) doctrines in continental Europe (Chemi & Krogh 2017), the tutor-tutorial pedagogical tradition at the Oxbridge universities and the case-based teaching approach ( Harkrider, Bagdasarov , MacDougallA ,Johnson Devenport, & Munfort, 2013) in a select group of Ivy League universities in the USA (Steiner & Laws 2006; Rebeiz 2011; Guess 2014). Arguably, such settings demonstrate congruence between the emotions and the values of the teacher and the unconscious expectations of learners. This view appears to provide support to the work of Pinar *et al.* (2014), which identifies teaching and research, quality of academic instruction and learning environments as the most salient dimensions in institutional positioning in the HE sector. Drawing on the insight that positioning is an embodiment of an institution's points of difference, Chung (2010), Pritchard *et al.* (2016) and Hamilton *et al.* (2017) argue that emerging trends in the global HE sector include phenomena for which the articulation of clear institutional identity has become an issue of strategic imperative for many HEIs. These authors contend that such an approach draws on the institutional mission and values to enact a unique mix of teaching and learning approaches and general educational practices that are held as shared meanings within the institution.

The competitive benefits of the enactment and integration of institutional pedagogical doctrine as core identity elements of HEIs can be seen in the adoption of inquiry-based teaching and learning philosophy

as the core teaching and learning practice by Howard College in the USA and McMaster University in Canada, the Learning, Teaching and Research Model (LTRM) at Royal Roads University in Canada (RRU 2019), the Pedagogical Model of Victorian State Schools System in Australia, and Maastricht and Auburg Universities' doctrine of PBL (Jansen 2019; Askehave, Prehn, Pedersen & Pedersen 2015; Aalborg University 2021; Unesco & Aalborg University 2020). These institutions exemplify the benefits that are accruable from integrating enacted pedagogical beliefs as core identity elements of HEIs.

In the effort to provide theoretical support to the notion of institutional pedagogical identity, Hamilton *et al*. (2017) propose the use of the Institutional Education Framework (IEF) as a frame for the articulation of institutional pedagogical identity. The IEF identifies the various practices, systems, beliefs, values, their convergent relationships and structures that underscore the emergence of institutional identity. These authors argue that the IEF provides a description of enacted teaching and learning practices that confer differentiation and recognition on HEIs. The IEF thus provides clarity of choice on teaching and learning methods, contexts of application, and how these interact with students' and faculty's pedagogic convictions and personal education theories in order to deliver the identity vision of the institution. The implication, therefore, is that the institutional identity matrix in which the institutional pedagogic identity features prominently highlights the differential teaching and learning attributes of an institution while providing linkages between institutional shared values and its teaching and learning methods. Hamilton *et al*. (2017) maintain that the assumptions of the signature pedagogies literature provide a good example of the types of approaches that can be used at the instance of the IEF to build institutional pedagogic identity. Shulman (2005), Eaton *et al.* (2018) describe signature pedagogies as pedagogic practices and assumptions that are specific to disciplinary learning requirements. While acknowledging that the notion of institutional pedagogical identity is a relatively new concept, Hamilton *et al*. (2017) observe that the pattern of institutional pedagogical identity formation of universities and other HEIs indicates the convergence of institute-wide educational principles, conceptions and convictions that integrate to provide affirmation to insitituions' quest for recognition and differentiation. In reviewing the benefits of institutional identity formation within the context of neoliberalism and marketisation of HE, Coates (2017) highlights the need for the types of institutional transparency and dymystification that a pedagogically-centred identity can enhance. Stevenson *et al* .(2014) argue that the marketisation of HE, the quest for favourable league rankings, branding and discourses of excellence are among the trends compelling universities and other HEIs to craft institutional identities. These authors contend that universities use a range of identity binaries (international reputation versus national reputation, diverse student population versus non-diverse student population, employability skills on offer versus no emphasis on employability skills, widening participation versus traditionalist models, research-led versus teaching-led) as sources of recognition and differentiation. Following this trend, what remains consistent but implicit in the aforementioned

institutional types and self-descriptions is the role of pedagogy in each institutional type. Scholars (Stevenson *et al.* 2014) argue that institutional self-identities tend to reflect claims of academic excellence and superior teaching and learning experience. The evidence that underscores this is located within claims of the impact of pedagogical innovation on globally recognisable research profiles and discursive claims of superior graduate outcomes of branded universities. Hence, market-led conceptions of institutional identity are undertaken in response to competition, while drawing their parameters from rated performances in annual league rankings, market positioning, student enagagement and claims of epistemic superirority. The implication is that the aforementioned pedagogy-centred variations of institutional self-identity carry implications for pedagogic stratification, while highlighting pedagogy as a critical element of institutional positioning and branding.

### 2.6.3 Epistemologies of teaching and learning

The overarching purpose of HE is to acquire knowledge. Given that knowledge and its variants continue to evolve, there is consensus that knowledge is not absolute. This understanding appears to have impact on the way knowledge systems of nations, in which HEIs make critical contributions, are composed. Bates (2015) maintains that the post-modernist view of knowledge highlights the conceptual flaws of the positivist-behaviourist assumptions. Bates further argues that this era conferred theoretical legitimacy on the views of those scholars who argue that knowledge emerges as a function of the epistemological and ontological convictions of individuals and HEIs. The insight that is implicit in this view, as discussed in the preceding sections, is that the pedagogic practices of a HE practitioner depend in large part on the practitioner's beliefs and assumptions about the nature of knowledge, the personal epistemology of students and the discipline-specific consensus on what constitutes valid knowledge. In buttressing this view, Bates (2015) maintains that a HE practitioner's epistemological position underscores his/her pedagogic identity. Thus, Bates approaches the discourse from both empirical and theoretical positions. This author agues that pedagogy is an artistic process that is characterised by the types of constantly changing variables that require good judgement, emotional, cognitive and social engagement of learners at the point of teaching and learning dialogue. While highlighting the scientific and theoretical view of pedagogy, Bates (2015) maintains that the artistiic side of pedagogy must be supported with a practitioner's convictions about the nature of knowledge and a practitioner's own value systems, which have explicit theoretical basis located within an elastic spectrum of teaching and learning theories. Building on this view, Raman (2018) argues that the epistemological positions of HE practititoners as a consequence of their epistemic literacy have direct practical consequence for their pedagogic identity. Raman (2018) traces the evolution of HE pedagogical thought from the modern to the post-modern period. Buidling on the earlier work of Huscon (2016), Raman (2018) lays out how successive epistemic movements paved the way for the evolution of the post-modern learning and

instructional theories of the 19th century and the new millennium. This implies that the post-modern pedagogical practices provide a critique of the postivist position of objectivist knowledge. In this effort, the post-modernist theorists affirm the partiality, the discontinuous, fragmented and contingent nature of knowledge and the existence of multiple, diverse and different ways of acquiring knowledge.

This situation appears to have intensified the efficacy debate between institutions and universities that use the transmissive approach to teaching and learning and those that use the knowledge-building approach (Godino, Rivas Catricheo, Burgos & Wilhelmi 2019). In the specific context of Africa, the notion of outcome/competency-based education is beginning to gain traction against the backdrop of mounting evidence of the relationship between pedagogical practices of institutions and graduate employment outcomes (British Council 2014; McGowan 2016; Cross 2018; UNESCO 2021).

The evidence of this awareness, albeit belatedly, can be seen in the objectives of such initiatives as the Tuning Africa Project (Tuning Africa 2018) and the PedaL projects (PASGR/SPHEIR 2021). In the specifc case of The Gambia, where HE is relatively new, efforts at both the macro and micro institutional levels that recognise the nexus between pedagogic configuration and suitability and gradute employment outcomes are few. Against this background, evidence in extant research suggests a growing preference for the knowledge-building approach to teaching and learning in HE at the expense of its transmissive counterpart. Thus, the debate appears to recognise the existence of a broad spectrum of pedagogical doctrines which converge along the objectivist and constructivist epistemological spectrum (Godino *et al.* 2019). Hence, this section provides a review of extant literature on the epistemologic origins of HE pedagogy while building a synthesis of their theoretical assumptions and applications in varying contexts of HE.

### 2.6.3.1 The objectivist epistemology of learning in higher education

Bates (2015), as well as Gallagher and Garret (2013), posit that objectivism as an epistemic and pedagogical thought assumes that knowledge exists in the form of objective realities which emerge as facts, truths and theories that exist independently of the subjective beliefs of the knowledge holder. The objectivist emphasis on the use of non-contradictory logic to acquire knowledge makes the implicit assumption that there is a real world in which the cognitive structures for the acquisition of knowledge exist for use in the transmission of objective knowledge. Thus, the objectivist pedagogy tasks the teacher to lead in the presentation of the body of knowledge to be transmitted using clearly organised, informative and authentic texts. The learners, on the other hand, must accurately represent the transmitted information within specified epistemic guidelines and hypotheses (Bates 2015; Raman 2018). When analysed from the full dimension of pedagogic configuration, Godino *et al.* (2019)

maintain that objectivism as an epistemology of learning assumes that knowledge is external to individual learners. Thus, the objectivist epistemology underpins the instructional practices which emerge to hold the teacher as the source of objective knowledge. The teacher is thus tasked with the cultural reproduction of objective knowledge using reinforcements of positive behaviour, treating learning as an individual affair that requires little or no student exploration or stimulation.

## 2.6.3.2 The cognitive-behaviourist epistemology of learning in higher education

Anderson and Dron (2011) postulate that cognitive behavioural pedagogies and theories draw on the works of pioneer behaviourist researchers such as Edward Watson, B.F Skinner and John Thorndike to focus teaching and learning design on observable and measurable behaviour, especially behavioural response to repeated stimulus. Thus, the experimental repetition of stimuli evokes cognitions and the capacity for the same behavioural response, even when the stimulus is withdrawn. Bates (2015), however, maintains that learners'cognitive affiliation with the conditioned stimulus depends on a suitable means of reinforcement at the time and point of association between the stimulus and learners' behavioural response. While maintaining the objectivist view of learning as an individual affair, the congnitive behavioural paradigm associates learning not with learners' capacity or attitudes but with their behavioural response. This theoretical limitation paved the way for the emergence of the cognitive epistemology which focuses on observable and measurable learner motivations. On the other hand, cognitivist researchers (Anderson & Dron 2011) maintain that learners' attitudes and barriers to learning are at the threshold of cognitive research on the application of neuroscience to teaching and alearning. These authors contend that cognitive assumptions expanded research on teaching and learning to areas that include learners' memory, its storage and recall capacity and the implications of these for learning design. Gatsby (2015) argues that the cognitive behaviourist epistemology allocates control of the teaching and learning process to the teacher but affirms that the instructional component of the learning process, irrespective of contexts, should follow the linear processes of gaining learners' attention, presenting the learning objectives, stimulating the recall of prior but related information and concepts, presenting stimulus materials, providing guidance to the learner, generating performance, providing feedback, assessing overall performance, and enhancing the intended knowledge transfer opportunities. Thus, the teacher's role is made explicit in Bloom's taxonomy of learning processes as identified in the cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling) and psychomotor (doing) domains (Stanny 2016). The implication, therefore, is that cognitive theory of learning targets the thinking domain to explore learner understanding, recall, application and synthesis of concepts as prerequsite steps to new knowledge creation.

**2.6.3.3 The constructivist epistemology of learning in higher education**

The main assumption of the social constructivist pedagogy is that knowledge is a social construct that is based on perception and the dynamism of mutually-agreed conventions. The consrtructivist epistemology assumes that learning is a social enterprise in which the development of learner agency and self-efficacy is a priority. Thus, learning and knowledge acquisition is viewed as an active enterprise in which the active participation of learners is viewed as being central to the attainment of learner agency and self-efficacy. In buttressing this view, Mohammed and Kinyo (2020) posit that constructivist epistemology evolved from the cognitive and social constructivist research traditions. The cognitive constructivist theorists led by Jean Piaget believe in the exisitence of objective knowledge, truth and reality. They, however, differ with the obejectivst theorists in their belief that learners' conception of reality stems from a reconstruction of phenomena within the frames of their prior experiences. Cognitive constructivists argue that such reconstruction of knowledge draws on pre-existing mental schemas through the processes of accommodation, assimilation, adaptation and refinement. Social constructivism, on the other hand, draws its roots from the works of Vygostky and Dewey to examine the influence of collaboration and social interaction in the acquisition of knowledge. Thus, social constructivist theorists view the acquisition of knowledge as a systematic and incremental process in which learners are guided to construct meanings in an interactive environment that facilitates understanding of the ZPD of all learners. Implicit in these views of constructivism is the consensus (Funa & Talaaue 2021) that knowledge is not the product of rote memorisation or the transmissive campaigns of the all-knowing teacher. Instead, the construction of meanings is achieved through the cognitive processing of new information in relation to existing knowledge, while drawing evidence, observation and consensus on what constitutes valid knowledge. This view contrasts with the deterministic assumptions of the congnitive behaviourist paradigm, which prescribes invariant rules and predictable constants as conditions under which learning occurs. Godin*o et al.* (2019) argue that the constructivist paradigm draws on the idea that the construction of reality is a function of learners' interaction with peers and the learning environment.

There is growing consensus in the literature (Godin*o et al.* 2019; Mohammed & Kinyo 2020; Doolittle 2014; Funa & Talaaue 2021) on the institutional preference for the constructivist pedagogy in HEIs. Godino (2015) and Godin*o et al.* (2019) maintain that preference for constructivist pedagogy, especially social constructivism, is evident in the curricular orientations of countries which affirm that the requirements of global citizenship, the changing nature of the global skills and knowledge landscape, are better served by social constructivist pedagogy. These authors maintain that students acquire deep learning when they are given control of their own learning. This approach thus assumes that students learn better when challenged to construct meanings or deconstruct phenomena through

peer-to-peer learning collaborations without the dominant control of the teacher. Thus, scholars (Antgue & Blomhog 2013) argue that the constructivist paradigm makes the assumption that deep learning is the outcome of collaborative and inquiry-based engagement of learners. Bada and Olusegun (2015) lend support to this view by arguing that the knowledge-building goals of HE need to be pursued through the inquiry- and problem-based pedagogical traditions (Christiansen *et al.* 2013), reflective practices, metacognitive awareness, pedagogical transparency and guided inquiry. Unlike the pedagogical manifestations of objectvism, the epistemic dimensions of social constructivism view knowledge as the subject of mental activity whose structure is instructed by experience, and the personal understanding and interpretations of the learner (Godino *et al.* 2019). These authors maintain that the cognitive dimension of constructivism views students' engagement and reflection as key to constructing meanings and deconstructing phenomena. Drawing on this, the teacher ceases to act as the all-knowing sage on the stage but assumes the role of the guide on the sidelines, who guides learning through the stimulation of cooperative learning environments where learner engagement and active participation in the learning process are premium teaching and learning strategies. The implication is that the learning environment, digital or otherwise, must be learner-centred where social interaction, reflective validation and application of learning to real world contexts are constants (Anderson Dron 2011; Johnson 2017; Gutek 2014; Schiro 2013).

## 2.6.3.4 The connectivist epistemology of learning in higher education

The connectivist theory of learning is relatively new in the sense that it emerged as a consequence of the studied impact of rapid evolution of ICT, including current trends in the way knowledge is produced, stored and disseminated. Stimulated by the advent of the internet, the emergence of web 2.0 technologies has remarkably changed traditional communication and social engagement patterns of society (Bell 2010). Thus, the connectivist epistemology draws on the theoretical limitations of prior theories to elucidate the reality of learning as a process that is independent of space and location. Carrol (2018) argues that the conceptual advantages of connectivism are not confined to its bias with ICT but its sensitivity to the pattern of increasing replacement of traditional social structures which mediated learning exchanges. This author argues that such replacement is done with techno-structures that do not only generate technology outcomes but also generate networks, affiliations, alliances and systems which define the information and digital societies. In his critique of other knowledge theories, Bell (2010) maintains that the main assumptions of prior theories run contrary to the 21$^{st}$ century reality of digitally-enabled techno-structures and networks, their generational pull effect and the impact of this on the nature and production of knowledge. In buttressing the views expressed in Bell (2010), Carroll (2018) traces the theoretical roots of connectivism to Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Latour 2012; Hodder 2012, 2016). According to these authors, rather than reinforce the notion of differential evolution of the

objects (techno parts) and the human components (subjects) of a networked interface, ANT takes a phenomenological and anthropocentric view in its explanation of the relationship between the techno-parts and the human components of connected networks. Latour (2012) highlights the duality of the social and technical components of learning networks, while arguing that the social elements (human components) do not operate independently of the technologies that define the networks. This author argues that rather than view the social elements as 'autonomous protagonist' on the network, they should be seen as hybrid actors whose engagement at the connected interface is a function of the human-centred design of the systems and networks. Anderson and Dron (2011) thus argue that the flexibility and adaptability of the networked connections faciliatate the construction of learning communities that rely on the parallel but overlapping combination of socio-technical networks to enfranchise learning.

In his review of the pioneer works of Seimens (2004) and Downes (2007), Bates (2015) argues that participation in the networked community provides the opportunity for the collective discovery and development of learning in a uniquely connective way. Bates thus identifies the connectivist principles of currency of knowledge as being the goal of connectivist learning, the capacity for further learning as being more critical than current knowledge, the impact of diverse but connected opinions on knowledge as being critical to deep learning across a connected network. Building on this view, Cormer (2011) argues that the connectivist theory of learning lays the foundation for the pedagogical movements of TEL, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and MOOCs as knowledge is longer a product of, but a process that flows on, a series of networks that enable synchronous and asynchronous interactions.

Drawing on this, Anderson and Dron (2011) argue that the connectivist teacher and learners collaborate in the design of the networked space for learning, the creation and recreation of learning content for current and future use. Thus, the learning interface encourages critical reflection and comments, swapping of roles between teacher and students, especially in the use of new technologies. Thus, connectivism as an epistemology of learning makes the assumption that learners have access to digital networks and the right level of digital literacy to enable them to complete the scaffolding phase while staying socially engaged through a selective suite of web 2.0 technologies that are mediated by teacher guidance and institutional time-frames.

### 2.6.3. 5 A mixed pedagogy framework for HEIs

While the aforementioned epistemologies of learning in HE have emerged in the literature, Godino *et al.* (2019) highlight the fallacy of a unilateral pedagogical approach to teaching and learning in HE. These authors draw on the changing nature of knowledge and the unique requirements of some academic disciplines to buttress this view. Godino *et al.* (2019) and Godino (2013) draw on the concept of pedagogic configuration to explain the degree of role exchange that occurs between teachers and

students at different points of the teaching and learning interface. Hence, these authors present pedagogic configuration as any segment of pedagogic activity that is carried out between the situation (beginning) of the activity and the end of the task process. This view thus reveals an activity continuum or spectrum that accommodates role exchange at different points along the teaching and learning activity spectrum. Godin*o et al.* (2019) argue that pedagogic configuration typically reflects three constitutive configurations. The first is the epistemic configuration that includes systems of institutional subject-specific norms, materials and processes. The second is the instructional configuration which embodies systems of teacher-learner functions or instructional approaches that underscore the interaction between different components. The third is the cognitive-affective configuration that embodies an abstract system of personal practices, materials and objects that describe the learning and the affective components that accompany such convictions. The apportionment of roles and exchanges that are demonstrated in a typical pedagogic configuration appear to reinforce the dialogic view (Misra 2015; Nesari 2015) of teaching and learning. This manifests at the points where the teacher swaps roles with students and shares his/her authority with students in the process of enforcing collaborations without exercising teacher omnipresence. Thus, pedagogic configuration forms the criteria for pedagogic suitability, which is defined as the extent to which pedagogic configuration meets the epistemic, ecological, cognitive, affective, interactive and mediational dimensions of learning (Breda, Font & Pino-Fan 2018). In situating the emerging insight within the frames of a mixed pedagogical approach, constructivist teachers believe that students learn better when challenged with problems that enable them to interact and exercise control of their own learning. Hence, constructivist teachers deploy a variety of inquiry- and problem-based approaches which enhance learner agency and stimulate their ability to draw on prior knowledge to construct new knowledge (Artigue & Blomhog 2013).

At the other end of the pedagogical spectrum, is the objectivist teacher who takes full control of the learning process in the effort to map learners' understanding of invariant reality. Thus, the objectivist teacher draws on the trasmissive approach to communicate factual and objective realities to learners. Godin*o et al.* (2019) draw attention to the debate, tension and contestations of the validity of the notion of one best pedagogical approach. These authors argue that the best pedagogy is the teachers' openness to a mixed but contingent approach to teaching and learning. This view builds on the works of Miller (2010), Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich and Tenenbaum (2011) and Svensson, Lundqvist and Middleton (2017). Alfieri *et al.* (2011) maintain that the transmissive approach to teaching and learning would be more effective in certain specific disciplinary circumstances, as well as circumstances where they are used to build the foundation of a learning threshold. Ko,Ho, Hau and Lai (2014) lend support to the views expressed in Alfieri *et al.* (2011). These authors opine that constructivist approaches such as problem- and inquiry-based teaching need not be used as the exclusive one best way approach. Instead, they caution that mixed instructional methods combining aspects of direct instruction and aspects of inquiry-based instruction carry higher potential for deep learning when applied in appropriately

diagnosed contexts. In fact, Miller (2010) and Svensson *et al.* (2017) draw on their integrated teaching framework of transmissive, transactional and transformative modes in entrepreneuship education (the theoretical equivalents of the approaches espoused in the objectivist-constructist continuum) to argue that all three teaching and curriculum orientations are needed to achieve the development of a competent professional. This reinforces the main assumptions of the Pedagogy-Andragogy-Heutagogy (PAH) continuum (Balscke & Mann 2020; Hase & Kenyon 2013). The advocates of the mixed-instructional approach to teaching and learning (Godin*o et al.* 2019) argue that direct instruction can still be used within the tenets of constructivist pedagogy. This insight underscores the importance of institutionally situated awareness of the unique attributes of varying pedagogical methods within the context of the strategic goals of the institution. Hence, Hamilton *et al.* (2017) maintain that such level of awareness will likely manifest in the form of pedagogical policy enactments and identity elements within a broader Institutional Education Framework (IEF). Figure 2.1 has been used to illustrate this view.
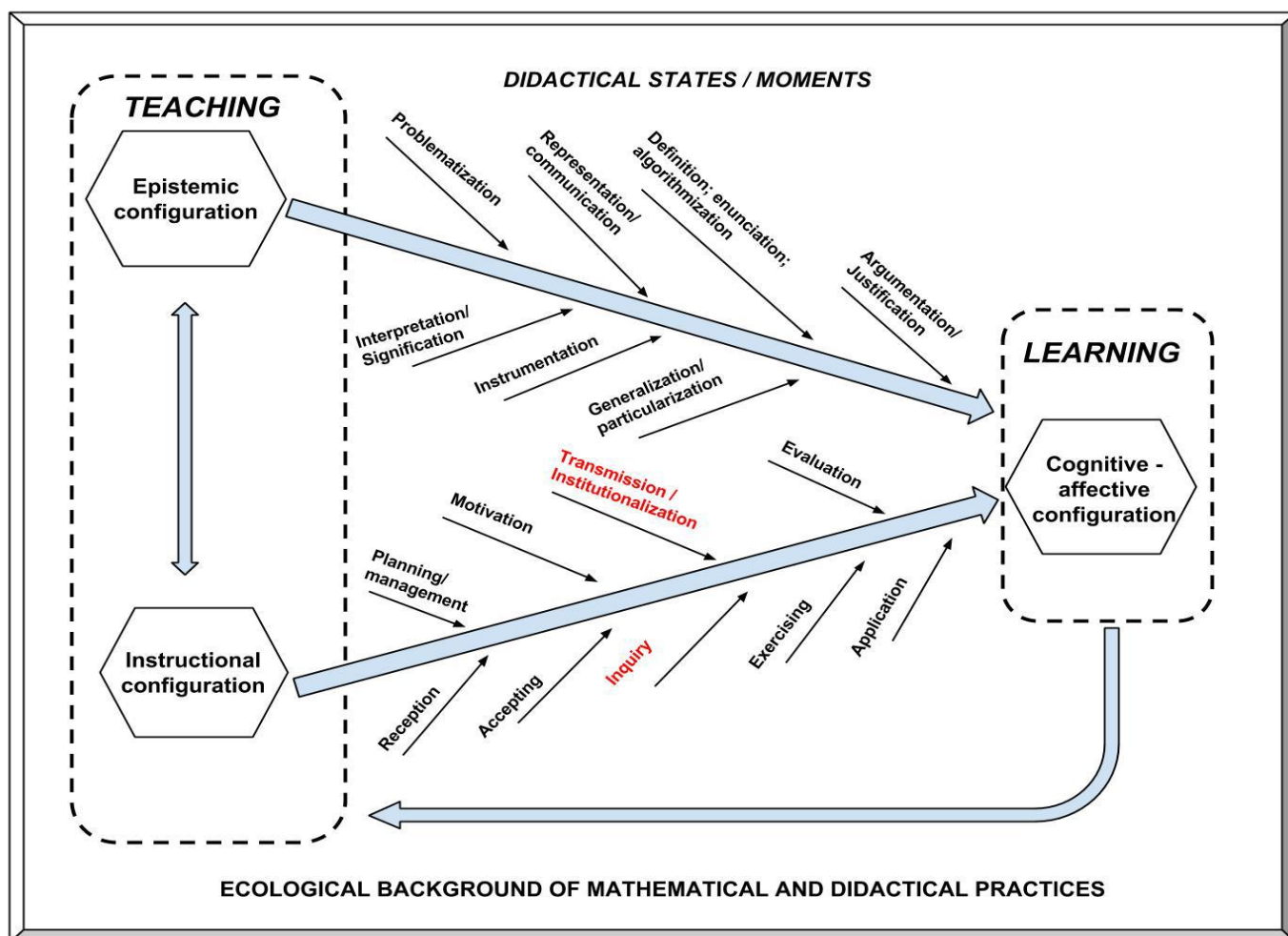


Figure 2. 1: A mixed pedagogy framework for HEIs

Source: Adapted from Godino et al.(2019)

## 2.7 Threshold concepts in teaching and learning in higher education

The notion of threshold concepts emerged from the body of literature that makes the assumption that liminality is a factor that learners encounter either at the threshold of their HE studies or at the boundary of their exploration of cross-disciplinary knowledge. Drawing on the pioneer works of Meyer and Land (2006), Higgs (2014) describes threshold concepts within a discipline as those key ideas and concepts whose understanding serve as pre-requisites for the understanding of subsequent theories and concepts within the discipline. Drawing on the research question and the objectives of this study, the isolation and consequent navigation through a discipline's threshold concepts carry implications for good pedagogical practice at both individual and institutional levels of pedagogical practice. Fry, Heather, Ketteridge, Steve and Marshall (2009), in laying the foundation for the views expressed in Miller (2015), argue that threshold concepts elucidate how teachers' epistemic literacy underscores their pedagogic practice. Higgs (2014) buttresses this view as she indicates that the successful identification and integration of threshold concepts into a practitioner's pedagogical toolkit enhances students' learning experience and enables them to overcome liminality and the chasm between exsiting knowledge and the requirements of an ongoing academic enterprise. Building on the work of Nowacek *et al.* (2010) and Ferrett *et al.* (2013), Higgs (2014) acknowledges the difficulty, and to some extent the ambiguity, that surrounds identification of threshold concepts in different disciplines. Higgs(2014), however, cautions that building familiarity with the characterisitics of threshold concepts can serve as the critical first step in identifying and building these into a practitioner's pedagogical toolkit. Rayan (2010) and Kilcomms (2010) argue that threshold concepts are transformative and act as enablers for continuing learning. These authors maintain that threshold concepts are integrative in the sense that they highlight the knowledge terrain of a discipline and thus build the disciplinary foundation of students.

Zepke (2013) contends that threshold concepts are transformative constructions which significantly enhance learners' understanding of the subject matter. Threshold concepts are thus irreversible and integrative, given that they enforce deep learning and enable learners to draw conceptual inferences about disparate but related meanings within a discipline. Drawing on this view, Artherton and Meulemans (2021) trace the relationship between threshold concepts and the community of practice pedagogy. These authors argue that threshold concepts enhance students' membership of community of practice by enhancing their familiarity with the emergent sub-disciplinary structures, the relationships between disciplinary cocnepts, the dynamic boundaries that exist between these structures, and the overall access of students to the full epistemology of their chosen disciplines (Cross 2018). In the same vein, threshold concepts are dialogic as they build on constructivist pedagogy to optimise dialogue and interaction between teachers and students as both parties explore ways of building

progressive understanding of the subject matter by deconstructing conceptual enablers, especially at the intersection of pedagogy and content.

## 2.8 Emerging pedagogical practices in higher education

Pedagogy as the science and art of supporting learning is well researched in the literature of HE. Scholars argue that research in HE pedagogy has evolved in parallel with research in the epistemologies of learning.The implication is that the nature of knowledge is in continuous evolution. The teaching and learning methods in some national and supranational jurisdictions emerge in compliance with government policy direction on how national tertiary and higher education is programmed to reinforce national development agenda (Jonanssen 2010; Cross 2018). In some cases, pedagogical practices emerge in response to the changing priorities of the institutional environment, while in other cases pedagogical practices emerge in tandem with the professional identity of teachers. The other evidence that is emerging in the literature is the imbalance in the scholarly attention that the changing notion of pedagogy and institutional pedagogy receive in Western universities in comparison to universities and other HEIs that are situated in SSA (McGowan 2016).

There is evidence (British Council 2014) that the pedagogical practices of HE institutions in Africa is underpinned by teaching and learning practices that are located within the objectivist-cognitive-behaviourist thesis. These pedagogical practices, which are predominantly traditional and transmissive, tend to dominate teaching and learning in SSA (Terry, Jared & Keengwe 2010). Recent trends indicate that digital technology and social media have changed educational access and leanrning modalities gobally. These factors have not only contributed to the rapid evolution of the triplication (individualisation and glocalisation) of learning (Cheng 2020), but have also compelled HEIs in Africa to join the e-learning bandwagon as alternatives and complements to face-to-face learning. The emergent and unplanned nature of the e-learning movement, especially in Africa, is accompanied by both epistemic and pedagogical challenges.

These developments have raised questions about the changing nature of knowledge and how this accommodates classical learning theories and traditional pedagogical practices.These views are further espoused in Mintz (2020). While highlighting the need for changes in instructional design and HE pedagogy, he identifies shifting student expectations, the emergence non-traditional students as the global student majority, and changes in employer expectations of graduate skills as factors that have made changes in HE pedagogy an issue of strategic imperative for HEIs. This draws on the works of Ehlers (2020) and UNESCO (2020), where the trend of future skills, new qualifications and competencies and alternative credentialing methods are highlighted among the factors driving pedagogical change in HE. Betham and Sharpe (2013) observe that the internet and its associated

technologies like the web 2.0 series have had profound impact on the way teaching and learning are conducted. HE policies capture and stimulate changes in pedagogy in line with the observed features of the emerging digital society. In other cases, especially in SSA, the policy cycle sophistication that identifies social changes and their implication on HE systems and objectives is non existent (Vaghese 2016). The implication of this lack of scanning sophistication of the policy environemnet vis-a-vis global pedagogical trends, is an entrenched cycle of often outdated educational content through the most familiar teaching and learning methods. Betham and Sharpe (2013) argue that the recognition of the changing nature of knowledge has led to policy pronouncements that steer teaching and learning practices towards self-directed learning, collaborative, problem-based, inquiry-based, experiential and situated learning approaches.

The emergence of the OEM and its implication for learner agency and lifelong learning (OECD 2019) lend support to those scholarly views that suggest that the emergence of non-traditional student majority and connected networks provide the basis for changes in HE pedagogy (Mintz 2020). Halupa (2015), in her review of teaching methods, provides theoretical support for the views expressed in extant research on OEM. She argues that the emerging dominance of the global student population by non-traditional students means that effective teaching and learning would be technology-mediated in terms of access, quality, convenience, relevance and sustainability. Thus, Halupa (2015) draws attention to emerging pedagogies such as pedagoy 2.0, with emphasis on andragogy and heutagogy. She argues that the personalisation, productivity and participation dimensions of pedagogy 2.0 lend support to the changing complexities of HE and the evolving needs of the digital society. While there is ongoing debate on whether or not andragogy is indeed a learning theory, there is consensus (Baschke 2012; Balschke & Mann 2020; Hase & Kenyon 2013) on the effectiveness of its application in industrial training contexts, which have predominantly similar learner demographics as non-traditional students. In an exposition of pedagogy 2.0, Halupa (2015) draws on the works of Baschke (2012) and Hase and Kenyon (2013) to highlight the shifting boundaries of knowledge and the pedagogical movements that have emerged in response to the emerging variations of knowledge.

HE pedagogy researchers highlight the theory of heutagogy as teaching and learning method that is net-centric (Hase & Kenyon 2013; Halupa 2015). These authors argue that heutagogy provides the theoretical underpinning for the use of OERs, capabilities and action learning, critical reflecetion and flexible and negotiated assessments to instruct the principle of self-determined and self-directed learning. Blascke (2012) further highlights the theoretical congruence of heutagogy with transformative competencies which increase at the same pace as the learning maturity and the cognitive abilities of the learner. While discussing these learner engagement philosophies in parallel, Blascke (2012) posits that pedagogy which is an objective-based approach to teaching, initiates a learner engagement continuum with andragogy and heautagogy. In her contribution to the debate on emerging pedagogies, Ganstein

(2016) identifies the Education 3.0 teaching and learning philosophy as a connectivists heutagogy which draws primarily on connectivists principles of multimedia, OERs, the internet and networked platforms to facilitate self-directed learning. However, Ganstein (2016) notes that the connectivist heutagogy may not be effectively deployed without drawing on the rudimentary features of pedagogy and andragogy knowing that self-directed learning has implications for information and digital litearcy. This lends support to the views of those scholars (Godino *et al.* 2019) who contend that context and disciplinary requirements invalidate the notion of unitary pedagogical doctrines within HEIs.

## 2.8.1 Emerging pedagogy framework for HEIs :The Pedagogy, Andragogy, and Heutagogy (PAH) Continuum

The call for changes in teaching and learning practices in HEIs is an area that has received immense scholarly attention (Minzt 2020). These practices have been researched from multiple dimensions that include the organisational management, academic, teacher identity, institutional change management and competitive and behavioural dimensions of HEIs. However, recent developments in the global business environment have strengthened the voices of those who hold the view that a league of emergent factors has increased the necessity for changes in the teaching and learning practices of HEIs. In the views of Ehlers and Kellerman (2019), these factors include the future skills phenomenon, the emerging lifelong learning orientations of industry, the trend of multi-dimensional pathways to education, and the increasing trend of personalisation of learning. Building on this, Blashke and Marin (2020) identify the demand for digital learning experience, digital and instructional design skills, the trend of changing learner motivation, and changes in school-to-work transition patterns, as factors that amplify the need to rethink the teaching and learning practices of HEIs. These findings provide implicit support to the views expressed in Redecker (2017), who identified changing industry requirements, learner autonomy and self-motivation, a pattern of rising demand for graduates' social and emotional competencies, creativity and agility, and learning-to-learn competncies, and the trend of recognition for prior learning as factors that support the need to rethink teaching and learning practices of HE institutions. In some national jurisdictions, HEIs have directed their responses through education and teaching and learning programmes that personalise learning, produce modular programmes and lifelong learning opportunities (Alexandar *et al.* 2019). In fact, the OECD Learning Compass Project (2030) draws attention to the types of future skills for which the universal approach to teaching and learning should be renegotiated (OECD 2019). Drawing on evidence on the changing nature of work, the OECD (2019) identifies student agency, new value creation skills, ability to reconcile tensions, and taking resspsonsibility as transformational educational outcomes to which teaching and learning practices of HEIs should be skewed. While drawing its main impetus from the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDG) project, the views expressed in OECD (2019) also provide theoretical support for the works of Blaschke and Marin (2020),  and Hase and Kenyon (2013). These authors build  consensus on the need for HEIs to adopt teaching and learning philosophies  that use active engagement to support the educational goals of student agency, lifelong learning and the creation of learning environments that simulate 21st century competence requiements.

Using the PAH Continuum as a framework of analaysis, Blaschke and Mann (2020) demonstrate pragmatic scholarship in their emphasis on how heutagogy and its basic assumptions provide the most effective teaching and learning options in the 21st century. The notion of heutagogy as a learning theory was first published in a seminal paper by Hase and Kenyon in 2001. Then, heutagogy was presented as a learning theory that draws on phenomenological principles to challenge teacher-centred learning. As the refined definition of heutagogy (Hase & Kenyon 2007) puts it, heutagogy is the self-determined approach to learning that draws on the principles of phenomenological heurisitcs to distill learner agency and self-efficacy. Drawing on the PAH Continuum (Garnett 2013) as a theoretical framework, Blaschke and  Marin (2020) maintain that the application of heutagogy resides within a learning conception continuum that is located  within the self-determined and self directed teaching and learning principles. These authors argue that pedagogical principles are situated at the threshold of the continuum before the more action-oriented and self-directed  andragogic and heutagogic  methods are respectively used to nurture and support learners' academic maturity. Against the backdrop of the emergence  of non-traditional students as the majority of global student population (Mintz2020), the PAH Continuum can be described and used as an instructional theory that facilitates the progressive  development of the metacognitive and lifelong competencies of learners.

Hase and Kenyon (2013), Blaschke and Marin (2020) and Blaschke (2012) argue that heutagogy as a component of the PAH Continuum  is a learning theory that draws on the core foundations of pedagogy and andragogy to mediate learning. The afrorementioned authors maintain  that heutagogy draws on the learning epistemologies of humanism amd connectivism to instruct learner agency, reflection and metacognitive capabilities.This view thus provides further validation for the works of Miller (2010), Svensson *et al*. (2017) and Godino *et al*. (2019), which  view the notion of 'one best  pedagogy' as an issue of epistemic fallacy.

## 2.8.1.1 Heutagogy as a learning theory

The emerging insight from this review suggests that heutagogy  is a learning theory that is based on the principles of learner agency, learner capability, learner reflection and meta-cognition and non-linear approach to learning (Hase & Kenyon 2013). Thus, the learner agency principle seeks  to empower

learners with the independence to decide their learning paths and contents as well as assessment modalities.The capability principle, on the other hand, seeks to develop the self-efficacy of learners through exploration and experimentation. This process boosts learners' motivation for ongoing self-directed learning. The principles of reflection and meta-cognition seek to enhance learners' meta-cognitive competencies through learning processes that integrate critical thinking and self-reflection at the core of the learning process. Blascke (2012) maintains that the non-linear learning principle of heutagogy provides the basis for learners' full control of their learning process. Implicitly, this principle provides the theoretical basis for the creation of open learning frameworks which enable learners to explore, create, collaborate, share learning materials and experience in open connected environments, while also giving priority to critical reflection as a feedback mechanism. The heutagogic teacher's role, therefore, is to serve as the guide on the sideline and thus provide the opportunity for learners' optimisation of the types of self initiatives that generate full learner agency and self-efficacy. This approach further reinforces constructivist assumptions in a seemingly connectivist and situated learning environment.

However, Blaschke and Marin (2012) caution that the application of the PAH Continuum to classrooms need not be approached with a unilateral epistemological bias. Instead, such application should be negotiated with a variety of methods that support the emergent instructional contexts. Drawing on the humanistic and constructivist bias of heutagogy, Hase and Kenyon (2013) contend that heutagogy-enabled learning platforms incorporate a good mix of problem-based and experiential learning that manifest through the use of direct instruction, scaffolding and other instructional simulations that are contextually supportive of pre-identified learning goals. In reinforcing the timeliness of the PAH Continuum and the emerging pedagogies 2.0 and 3.0, Gernstein (2013) argues that self-determined and non-linear learning assumptions of the heutagogy phase of the continuum blend well with the connectivist epistemology and the affiliated TEL environments.

## 2.9 Teaching methods in higher education

Emerging trends in HE continue to draw attention to the notion of teaching excellence and quality. Being at the core of the functions of HEIs, the teaching and research profiles of universities and other HEIs have featured consistently in the index of measures that are used to assess the performance of universities (Times Higher Education 2021). The challenge that emerges from this, however, is that there is currently no consensus on how teaching excellence and quality should be defined (Steveson *et al.*2014). These authors argue that there exist as many conceptualisations of teaching excellence as there are scholars interested in the subject. However, the work of Skelton (2007) provides an accessible framework for negotiating the notion of teaching excellence across different university types and institutional self-identities. The traditional view of teaching excellence is anchored in an institution's

distinguished mastery of the disciplines within its educational faculties. Thus, the traditional view of excellence is conceptually located within the epistemic and pedogogic frames of HE discourse. Although scholars (Steveson *et al.* 2014; Skelton 2007) view the traditional perspective of excellence with a standalone lens, the theoretical relationship between the epistemic and pedagogic identities as stipulated in Miller (2015) indicates that the traditional view of teaching excellence is integrative and underpinning to the performative and the psychological views of excellence. The performative and psychological views of excellence implicitly draw on the pedagogic prescriptions of Chickering and Gamson's (1997) principles of good practice. The implication is that teaching excellence is akin to pedagogical excellence. This relationship is made visible by the trend of teaching excellence awards that are bestowed on teaching staff in recognition of their contributions to the development of teaching. However, there exists little elaboration on the pedagogic doctrines or criteria that underscore the assessment of excellent teaching. This further highlights the depth of ambiguity that surrounds the notion of teaching excellence and the role that pedagogical practices play in its measurement. Therefore, this section of this review draws on the research questions and objectives of the study to interrogate extant research on the teaching modes and practices in HE within the broader context of their roles in the brand identity formation of universities.

## 2.9.1 The transmissive mode of teaching

The transmissive mode of teaching and learning is arguably situated within the objectivist and cognitive-behaviourist spectrum of learning theories. Bates (2015) , Pokorny and Warren (2021)argue that this mode of teaching and learning relies on traditional pedagogical methods to transmit pre-exisiting knowledge. HE scholars (Boehner 2017; Larsen-Freeman 2013; Miligan & Wood 2010) argue that teacher-centred lecture sessions represent the most common form of transmissive teaching. In his evaluation of traditional pedagogoy, Bates (2015) observes that transmissive lectures can be effective in motivating learning, especially when used in a mixed pedagogic configuration. However, the evidence that has emerged in the literature (Biggs 2003, 2011; Beetham & Sharpe 2007) cautions that transmissive teaching methods are hardly effective in promoting deep learning. These authors argue that teacher-dominated lecture sessions do not promote learner independence and thus minimise the opportunity for learners' acquisition of critical thinking and problem-solving competencies. Transmissive lecture sessions transmit only fact-based knowledge which is superficially absorbed and contains easily-forgotten facts that will eventually become irrelevant or irritrievable in real problem solving situations.
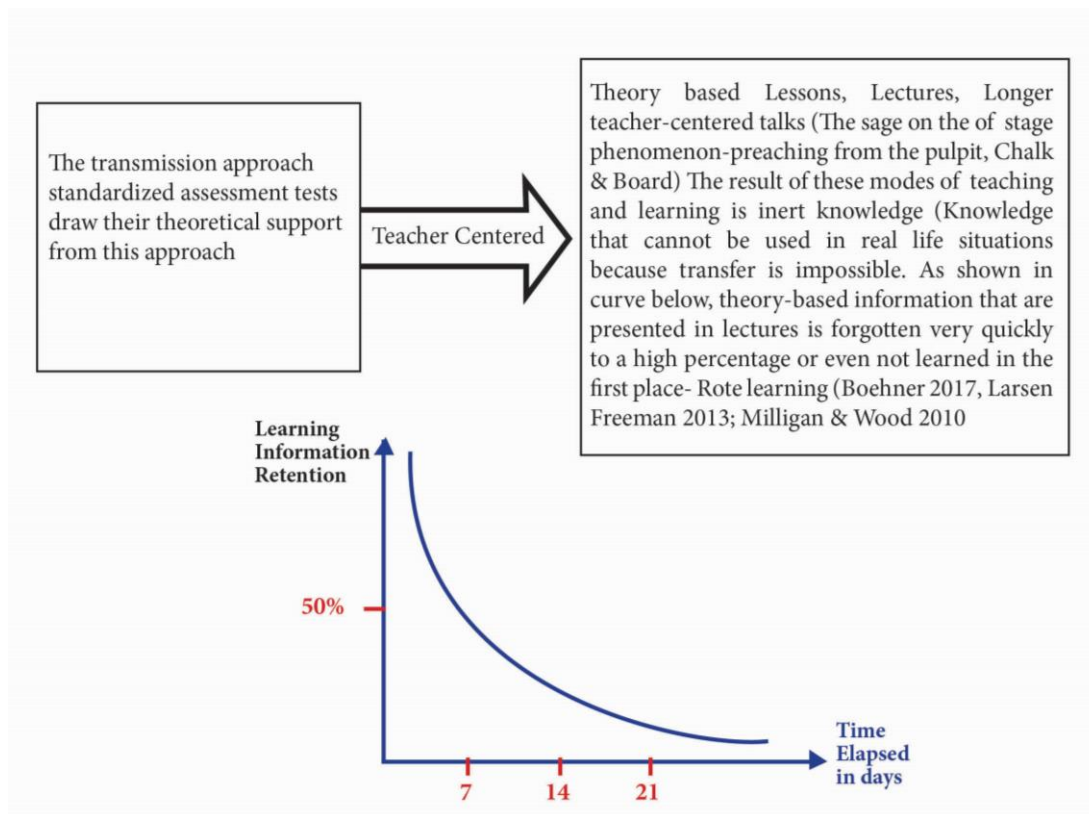
Figure 2. 2: Lecture-based knowledge retention curve

 Source:Boehner (2017)

As shown in Figure 2.3, the transmission approach to teaching and learning yields surface learning - most of the absorbed information is forgotten within a short time period due to teacher dominance and lack of learner stimulation. Bates (2015) thus concludes that transmissive teaching methods are ineffective in facilitating learners' acquisition of the skills and competencies that are congruent with the knowledge economy and digital society models of the 21st century.

## 2.9.2 The problem-based mode of teaching and learning

This study sought to explore the role of pedagogical practices in the brand identity formation of universities. The emerging insight suggests that pedagogical practices and doctrines are located  within the continuum of the objectivist and constructivist pedagogical paradigms. Located within the spectrum of constuctivist paradigm is Problem-based Learning (PBL) pedagogy. PBL is conceptualised as an instructional method that is learner-centric and optimises the opportunity for goal-oriented learning (Simone 2014; Harman, Moberg & Lambert 2013). These authors contend that PBL uses learners'

exposure to complex and authentic real-world problems to develop the cognitive and knowledge retention capabilities of learners. Thus, learners seek solutions for identified problems through guided inquiry and the self-directed exploration of the theory-practice nexus. Simone (2014) maintains that PBL is underscored by a robust apparatus for peer-to-peer collaboration and reflective practice. Within such a collaborative environment, the emergence of multiple perspectives which stimulate the analysis, evaluation and synthesis of credible solutions is encouraged (Harman *et al.* 2013). These authors, however, observe that PBL team cohesion plays a pivotal role on the efficacy of PBL as a teaching and learning method. In their contributions to the debate on the nature of PBL, Gorghiu, Dragwiscescu, Cristea, Petrescu and Gorghiu (2018) sound a cautionary tone in their observation of the goal of developing learners' problem-solving skills using PBL.These authors maintain that learners' capacity to solve problems should not be reduced to single problems in a single context. Instead, learners' exposure to real problems need to be situated across disciplinary and real-world contexts. Thus, problem-solving competence becomes transversal and remains active across instructional, disciplinary and varying real-world contexts.

Typically, in a PBL teaching and learning environment, there exists instructional co-agency between teachers and learners where teachers serve as facilitators. Wood (2012) maintains that PBL clearly identifies learning contexts and learning issues and consequently focuses learning activities on applying prior knowledge, developing learners' cognitive capabilities and preparing them as lifelong learners. Drawing on this view of PBL, Simone (2014) maintains that it is imperative that PBL as an instructional approach makes use of problem-based cases that are authentic and open-ended with multiple paths to solutions. Scholars (Albion 2015; Hartman *et al.* 2013) caution that the negotiation of learning outcomes should not be grounded on procedures but on the conceptual analysis and synthesis of views and emergent insghts. In their evaluation of the strength and weaknesses of PBL, Albion (2015) contends that despite the limitations of being resource-intensive and limited in developing learners' tolerance for ambiguities, PBL has emerged to be effective in nurturing the intellectual growth of learners, enhancing their ability to apply reasoning, critical thinking, collaborative skills, analytical skills and originality in problem-solving (Mohammed & Kinyo 2020). Table 2.6 outlines the distinctive features of the PBL models practiced at Aaborg and Masstrich Universities in Denmark and The Netherlands respectively. These institutions provide good cases of the integration of institutional pedagogical doctrines as criticial elements of institutonal identity. The extent to which the practice has had impact on the brand and reputational equities of these institutions is explored in the latter part of this review.

Table 2. 6:Features of problem-based learning

| Elements of PBL | Descriptions |
|---|---|
| Project-based | This applies to teaching and learning methods that locate learning problems within short-term, educationally-relevant projects and thus optimise the opportunity for investigation, critical analysis and reflection, and synthesis of outcomes. |
| Contextual | The situated problems must be academically relevant and must offer authenticity and promote multiple perspectives in problem analysis and synthesis of solutions. The problem-based activities may require scaffolding and the use of direct instruction to guide students through the introductory phase towards the more challenging, self-directed phase. |
| Theoretical underpinnings: Behaviourist-Constructivist-Connectivist continuum and PAH continuum | The location of teaching and learning activities within an authentic real-world problem needs to recognise learners' prior knowledge. Thus, active collaboration-based activities are used to provide learning guidance. The learning problems often require scaffolding, hence direct instruction may be used at inception, while progressively allowing learners to direct their learning activities. It reinforces the mixed pedagogy principle. |
| Instuctional strategy is collaborative | The pedagogic configuration places emphasis on collaborative and self-directed learning. Thus, teaching and learning activities are designed in way that students collaborate on completing learning projects over a time period. Learning principles like knowledge sharing, collective decision-making, academic discussions, action coordination, mutual and critical feedback are observed. Learning activities are designed using the knowledge transfer partnership (KTP), allowing students and supervisors to work in close collaboration with external partners like businesses, where the real-life problem is located. |
| Instructional strategy is self-directed | Drawing on PBL curriculum, learners play an active role in the planning and monitoring of their learning-centred projects. Students have the responsibility to choose their own projects and thus determine the critical elements of the project for feedback and critical reflection on their own learning. The tutor takes on a facilitation role based on the stipulated learning outcomes and the general provisions of the curriculum. |
| Learning goals | PBL is implicit of exemplary learning. This implies that the learning goals include the acquisition of transversal skills. These are skills that define learners' professional dexterity as they determine their abilities in varying professional contexts. Thus, PBL is an outcome-based pedagogy. Problem solving, leadership skills, critical thinking, self-management, team skills, global citizenship, social responsibility and life-long learning are among the learning goals of PBL. |

*Table 2. 6:Features of problem-based learning*

Source: Askehave, Linnemann Prehin, Pedersen & Thorso Pedersen 2015; Jansen 2019

### 2.9.3 The inquiry-based mode of teaching and learning

Inquiry-based learning (IBL) emerges as one of the instructional philosophies within the suite of inquiry based pedagogies (IBP). Sproken-Smith (n.d) contends that, despite the theoretical origin of IBL being underpinned by constructivist epistemology, its deconstruction and application as a HE pedagogy is fraught with confusion and conceptual debate. The aforementioned author highlights the lack of consensus on the conceptual boundaries between IBL and other constructivist-inspired pedagogies of HE. Sproken-Smith (n.d) obsereves that such names as guided inquiry, research-based teaching, discovery learning, inductive teaching and learning represent a select list of descriptions that have been used to identify IBL. In the effort to provide conceptual clarity on the notion of IBL, Gholam (2019) draws on the works of Caswell and Labrie (2017) and Sproken-Smith and Walker (2010) to present IBL as an instructional philosophy that encourages active learner participation and responsbility using self-directed learning, guided inquiry and reflective practice as central tenets of learner agency development. While the development of learner agency features prominently among the goals of IBL, Albion (2015) and Gholam (2019) contend that IBL draws on the inductive interpretivist philosophy to provide collaborative learning incentives. This lends support to views expressed in Sproken-Smith and Walker (2010), who argue that the IBL approach to supporting learning draws on a complex mix of real-world problems to guide the search for additional information on a predetermined problem. Thus, IBL draws on guided inquiry, identification of the learning issues, and exploring multiple perspectives that emerge as solutions within the context of the inquiry, analysis and synthesis of the most logical outcomes, collaborative decision-making as learner engagement methods. Roblyer and Doering (2013) draw a parallel between discovery learning and IBL in the same way that Sproken-Smith (n.d) identifies PBL as a form of IBL. This is a characterisation that swaps frames with Bates (2015), where PBL is identified as a form of IBL. In their exposition of the types of inquiries that underscore IBL, Mackenzie (2016) identifies structured inquiry, guided inquiry, controlled inquiry and free inquiry as learning methods that underscore IBL. This author contends that the locus of control that is associated with each learning method determines the depth and format of the learner-teacher exchange. This follows the outcome of the earlier works of Marshall (2013), which identified prescriptive inquiry, guided inquiry, open inquiry and teacher-controlled inquiry as types of inquiries that are associated with IBL. Table 2.6 below illustrates efforts at identifying the implicit differences between the constructivist-inspired pedagogies based on the works of Sproken-Smith and Walker (2010) and Sproken-Smith (n.d).

Table 2. 7:Comparison of constructivist-inspired teaching & learning methods

| Feature | IBL | PBL | Project-based | Case-based | Discovery |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Learning context based on pre-defined problem** | By definition | Always | Always | Always | Always |
| **Learning context based on real-world problems that are complex, ill-structured and open-ended** | Possibly | By definition | Usually | Always | Possibly |
| **Learning context based on major projects** | Possibly | Possibly | By definition | Usually | Possibly |
| **Learning context based on case studies** | Possibly | Possibly | Possibly | By definition | Possibly |
| **Learning context focusing on student discovery of course material for themselves** | Always | Always | Always | Usually | Possibly |
| **Learning is primarily self-directed learning** | Possibly | Usually | Usually | Usually | By definition |
| **Learning design focuses on active learning** | Always | Always | Always | Always | Always |
| **Learning design focuses on collaborative/ cooperative team-based learning** | Possibly | Usually | Usually | Possibly | Possibly |

Adapted from Sproken-Smith (2012) and Sproken-Smith and Walker (2010)

Sproken-Smith (2012) sought to bring clarity to the debate on the conceptual differences and similarities amongst the idenitifed constructivist backed pedagogies. This author contends that the differences and similarities that exist among the idenitifed pediagogies lie mainly in the focus of the learning design and the learning context. Thus, Kolb's (2015) learning framework provides the basis for the situated use of IBL as a teaching strategy. In this effort, Kolb's cyclical learning framework provides the basis for facilitators to use concrete experiences to stimulate learner interest, observations and reflection. Sproken-Smith and Walker (2010) argue that such exposure enhances the reflective and meta-cognitive capabilities that consequently build the foundation for ideation (abstract conceptualisation) and learners' audacity for experimental trial and application of novel insghts.

## 2.9.4 The project-based mode of teaching and learning

Albion (2015) and Larmer and Mergendollar (2012) argue that project-based learning is among the family of pedagogies that are underpinned by social constructivism, learning by doing and the active participation of learners. Grossman, Dean, Kavanagh and Hermann (2019) observe that there exists no consensus on the definition of project-based learning. However, these authors indicate that teaching approaches that are project-based espouse disiciplinary traditions and practices that are designed to

bridge exisiting knowledge gaps of learners. Thus, pedagogical strategies that incorporate the identification of threshold concepts, the stimulation of critical discourse and an elaboration of disciplinary practice are symbolic of project-based learning. The emerging insight thus suggests that project-based learning tends to engage learners with complex and authentic real-world problems. Thus, learner engagement goals are pursued  through the guided inquiry approach with a focus on understanding  the project problem, finding  answers to authentic questions, and reflecting on the processes that constitute the project.The cultivation of subject matter expertise, creating relevant experiences, creating an iterative culture of inquiry through timely feedback and reflection have emerged consisitently in extant research (Albion 2015; Dean *et al.*2019) as pedagogical strategies of project-based leraning. While the suitability of project-based learning for all student groups has been identified in extant research, scholars caution that  no single instructional approach is appropriate all the time. This reinforces the views and insights that have emerged in this review. There is consensus (Miller 2020; Godino *et al.* 2019; Blaschke & Marin 2020; Hase & Kenyon 2013) on the superiority  of mixed pedagogical approaches over mono-pedagogies. In acknowledging the confusion over the differences between the inquiry-based pedagogies, Albion (2015) contends that the main distinguishing features of project-based learning include its focus on long-term, iterative inquiry, self-directed learning and collaborative decision-making. In comparing project-based learning with case-based learning, Bates (2015)  argues that project-based learning tends to be broader in scope with the propensity for more learner independence and responsibility. While observing that project-based learning design must take learners' interest in the project area  and the educational purpose the project would be fulfilling into account, Bates (2015) cautions that the design of project-based learning must be carefully articulated to ensure that its tendency to last  for a long period of time does not dilute teachers' focus on essential learning outcomes and the coverage of essential content.

## 2.9.5 The case-based mode of teaching and learning

The University of Michigan defines case-based learning (CBL) as instructional methods that use case studies to situate a problem and thus advance the development of learners' critical thinking, analytical and reflective competencies through purposeful and collaborative discussions of complex and real life scenarios.
 Bates (2015) contends that CBL  is commonly used as the core pedagogical philosophy within business education, law schools and clinical practices especially in some Ivy league universities in North America  and Europe. Massough and Kantah (2015) maintain that CBL combines the constructivist and experiential perspectives of learning to generate immaculate transversal problem-solving and situational coping competencies. These authors maintain that a core principle of CBL is contextual learning  that draws on the location of teaching and learning activities on the practical realities that are depicted in

the chosen case studies. Hertfield (2010) argues that constructivism and experimentalism provide the theoretical underpinnng for CBL. Thus, learners are guided through the processes of discovery learning, dialogue and reflection towards the construction of dissonance, stimulation and motivation for critical thinking and problem- solving.

Drawing on the work of Thistlethwaite, Davies, Ekeocha, Kidd,  Macdougall and Matthews 2012), Massouh and Kantar (2015) highlight three features that are core to the CBL pedagogy. First, these authors contend that CBL pedagogy should be used to support learning in clearly defined contexts that are reinforced by the chosen case.  The second feature is that case studies, irrespective of the discipline, must depict phenomena that are appropriately situated within predetermind learning goals. The third and final feature of CBL pedagogy is that case studies must reflect a balance between the content of the case study and theories and concepts within the learning context and discipline (Massouh & Kantar 2015). Gaicalone (2016) reinforces this view by presenting case-based teaching (CBT) as a participatory learning episode that uses complex and real-life scenarios that are situated within the subject matter  to stimulate the analytical, problem-solving, critical thinking and collaborative competencies of learners. In Gaicalone's (2016) analysis of the framework for the deployment of CBL, the author contends that CBL techniques require learners to be introduced to  situation  that may be real or realistic with varying degrees of complexity. Thus, learners are guided to identify key concepts through which the learning outcomes will be negotiated. Building on this, scholars (Savery 2015; Gaicalone 2016) argue that the pedagogic configuration for CBL within a collaborative learning environment enhances the development of interpersonal and team skills. Learners are thus encouraged to draw on the guidance of the key concepts and their location within the case study to initiate learning directions and pathways in their quest for solutions that realistically reinforce learning goals.

Despite the well-documented benefits of the CBL pedagogy, Gaicalone (2016) observes that CBL may not be as effective as it is generally assumed, due to its reliance on  the assumption that all students have the capacity to integrate prior knowledge into the new situation that forms the facilitated learning perspective. The emerging evidence indicates that CBL works best in situations where it is supported with lectures within a learning cohort of progressively maturing, non-novice learners.

## 2.9.6 The technology enabled-mode of teaching and learning (TEL)

The advent of the internet and related technologies  marked a significant shift in the trajectory of social evolution, including the evolution of knowledge and learning (Betham & Sharpe 2013). The social phenomena that were triggered by the internet-led revolution in ICT had frame-breaking impact on social mobility and plenary communication on networked platforms. Thus, the capability for

synchronous and asynchronous communication across digital networks has grown over the past decades. As observed in Vyngradova, Drokina, Yevtushenko, Darchuck and Irtlach (2010) and Mcdonald and Wilson (2016), the evolution of knowledge and learning tends to draw on the interactive, data-centric, integrative, personalised, disruptive and reintermediaitng nature of the internet to orchestrate the emergence of new industries, new skills and competence requirements, new generations of students (Generations Y and Z) and digitally-mediated learner engagement methods. Another trend that emerged with the rapid advancements in ICT and education technology is the rapid obsolescence of technology. Betham and Sharpe (2013) thus argue that these technological developments underscore the need to re-articulate teaching and learning methiods. These authors contend that the prevalence of the views of authentic knowldege as those forms of knowledge that are represented and replicated in digital formats could no longer be ignored. These views are predicated on such ontological and epistemological trends as the emergence of the OEM that have increased access to authentic educational content irrespective of learners' location. Scholars (Betham & Sharpe 2013; McDonald & Wilson 2016) argue that this trend irreversibly changed the conception of knowledge and employability from the expert acquisition of a stable body of knowledge to the acquisition of cognitive foundations like digital and data literacy, ethical competencies, flexible skills, agency, situational coping capabilities, lifelong learning and continuous professional development capabilities. Bates (2015|) maintains that this trend of technological advancement and its rapid adoption rate by both individuals and HEIs carries implications for pedagogy-related activities such as learning resources development, the adoption of education technology tools and equipment, configuration of teaching and learning and curriculum design.

Thus, the evolution of TEL draws on the changing student population and the evolving nature of knowledge to review the role of reflective practice on the scholarship of teaching. In the wake of this, the web 2.0 and education 3.0 pedagogies emerged.

### 2.9.6.1 Technology-enabled learning defined

TEL simply refers to supporting learning with technology. Kirkwood and Price (2016) refer to TEL as the use of digital technology to support teaching and learning in a deliberate and purposeful manner.The authors contend that TEL involves the use of technology to support learning in a way that increases access and widens the opportunities for educational participation. Thus, TEL draws on a combination of constructivist and connectivist epistemologies to facilitate learning through the purposeful deployment of technology in the teaching and learning environment. Halupa (2015) analysed the transformative impact of web 2.0 technologies on teaching and learning. Drawing on earlier works of McLoughlin and Lee (2008), Halupa (2016) traces the emergence of TEL not just to the rapid advances in ICT but also the rapid adoption of education technologies by individual practitioners and HEIs.

These authors argue that technology has blurred the lines between work, social lives and academic work, thereby revolutionalising the capacity of learners to evolve from the status of passive recipients of knowledge to active participants and reflective practitioners in the co-creation of knowledge. Geisntern (2013) observes that knowledge or content co-creation skills of the technology era and the inquiry and networking skills of the digital era are underpinned by the connectivist epistemology. Thus, digital and networking skills are critical features of pedagogy 2.0 and web 3.0 pedagogies (Geisntern 2013). The emerging insight from this review appears to be that TEL as a HE pedagogy orchestrates the instrumentation of the self-directed approach to learning. This insight also highlights significant learner inputs, variable opportunities for peer-to-peer communication, access to learning materials that are global in scope, context-driven reflection processes, authentic and task-driven experiential learning, as well as scaffolding between peers, faculty experts and community of practice as essential features of effective TEL systems. The further implication of the foregoing is that TEL carries implications for challenging the technological, pedagogical and epistemic literacies of teachers.

## 2.10 Theories of technology-enabled mode of teaching and learning

Bates (2015) contends that the inevitability of the deployment of technology in educational contexts implies new roles for teachers and new pedagogic configurations. Thus, teachers and learners require basic technological skills and familiarity with technology tools and the repurposing of pedagogical practices to align meaningfully with the student-centred learning philosophy of TEL.The implication of this, therefore, is that instructional goals should be made more contextual, constructive, collaborative, goal-oriented and self-directed. Drawing on this view, Garrison (2009) idenfitifes the Community Of Inquiry (COI) model as a framework that unifies the afore-mentioned instructional goals in TEL and traditional classroom contexts.

## 2.10.1 The community of Inquiry (COI) model within TEL

Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) and Garrison (2009) describe an educational COI as an engaged group of individuals who collaborate in critical discourse and reflection with the sole purpose of constructing meanings and mutual understanding of educational concepts.Thus, the formation of a COI as a method of facilitiating learning implicitly demonstrates the potential for enforcing collaborative, deep, goal-oriented and self-directed learning. Cleveland-Innes and Wilton (2018) argue that COI as a TEL model is composed of three interdependent pedagogic principles i.e. social presence, teaching presence and cognitive presence of members of the community. Celeveland-Innes and Wilton (2018) thus describe the COI framework as a constructivist and experiential learning model of inquiry-based

teaching and learning. These authors contend that the concept of 'presence' in the COI model makes reference to an inspired state of receptivity, connectedness and informed belongingness that manifests at the intersection of the cognitive, emotional and physical undertakings of members of the community within the context of their respective learning goals. Thus, COI emerges as a pedagogical framework for TEL that draws on the educational foundations of constructivism and connectivism to foster learning.

The implication of this view, therefore, is that the constitutive and overlapping presence(s) of teachers and learners in a TEL configuration facilitates a negotiated consensus on learning goals and the role configurations and exchanges that foster cognitive engagement, active, deep and self directed learning. Garrison (2016) supports this view by highlighting the educational experience that results from the complex relationship between the different components of a COI-inspired TEL. This author argues that the highlight of COI as an underpinning theory of TEL in a HE context is its potential to inspire and sustain collective educational discourse and reflection across digital networks. Cleveland-Innes and Wilton (2018) draw on this to assert that a significant body of knowledge (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes & Fung 2010; Olplak, Yagci & Basarmark 2016; Ayol & Garrison 2011) has emerged in the effort to understand the efficacy of COI as a pedagogical framework for TEL. These authors maintain that the emerging concensus in the literature is that COI- inspired TEL provides complimentarity to the learning environment within clearly defined disciplinary standards, communications media, educational contexts and applications. Hence, the symmetry of complements that exists amongst the constitutive presences of COI is such that the cognitive presence emerges out of deep and meaningful learning activities that are stimulating, exploratory, integrative and concrete. These authors maintain that cognitive-based activities thus require complementary support from the social and teaching presences (Archibald 2010; Akyol & Garrison 2011). These authors maintain that the teaching presence emerges as a shared presence of the instructor and the learners in a pedagogic configuration that facilitates the transformation of the teaching presence into social presence through practices of peer teaching and other collaborative engagements.

However, the works of Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) broadened the scope of the COI to include the role of emotional presence in TEL environment. These authors concluded that co-ownership of the teaching presence enhances the leaner-agency goals of IBL. They maintain that such enhancement emerges against the backdrop of COI-inspired TEL configurations which foster learning environments in which the tutor co-designs teaching and learning contents with learners while also sharing responsibility in the combined use of the pedagogical mix of facilitation and direct instruction. This reinforces the views expressed in Godino *et al.* (2019), Hase and Kenyon (2013) and Woods (2010) on the superiority of the use of a continuum of pedagogical approaches at the expense of a mono-pedagogical approach to teaching and learning.
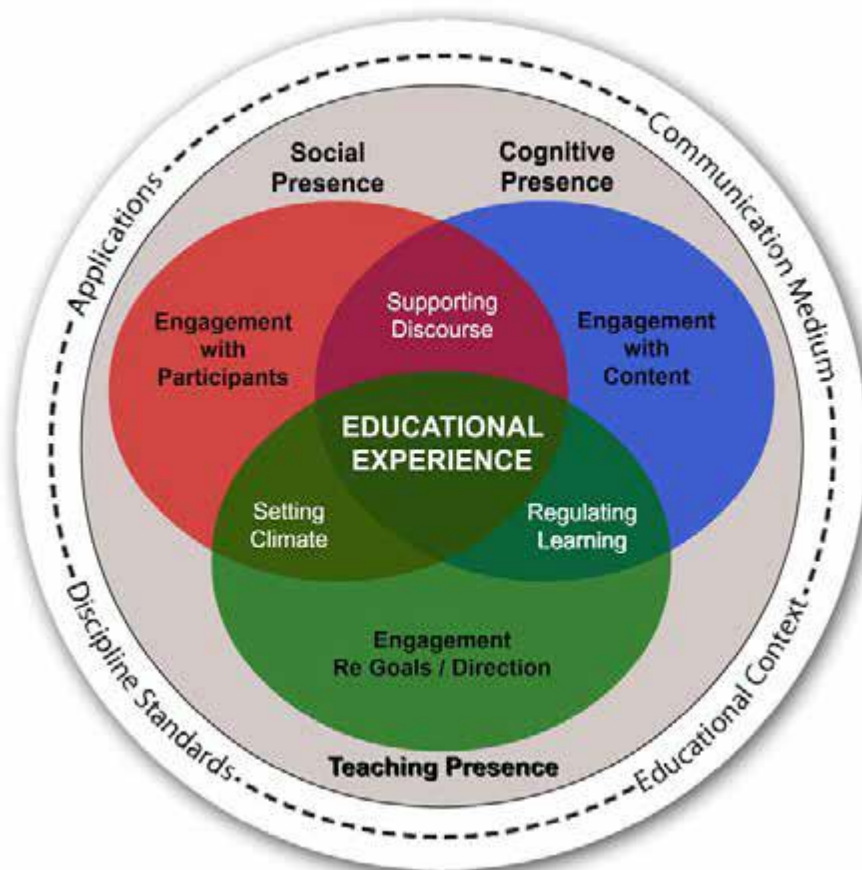
Figure 2 .3: A community of inquiry model in TEL

Source: Cleveland-Innes and Wilton (2018:25)

However, the emerging insight suggests that COI makes pedagogical assumptions that do not provide direct guidance for technology adoption at a TEL configuration. The objectives of this study require an exhaustive review of contemporary trends in pedagogical innovation in HE. This will later draw on the consensus on the impact of HEIs' familiarity with education technologies and theories and the distinctive features and limitations of such technologies on the efficacy of TEL as a pedagogical doctrine of HE. When this is put in the context of Africa, and The Gambia specifically, the emergency deployment of TEL in blended learning formats in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the paucity of research on the efficacy of such deployments in the situated context of Africa, makes this opportunistic review of literature on TEL and blended learning technology adoption models and frameworks an area of immense scholarly interest. Thus, extant literature on Blended Learning models, the Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System (CABLS) and the Technological, Pedagogical And Content Knowledge (TPACK) frameworks are subsequently reviewed.

## 2.10.2 Blended learning as TEL

Blended learning in this review is conceptualised as an educational phenomenon that draws on advances in ICT to support learning using distance- or online-learning platforms. Thus, blended learning has emerged in the literature from two conceptual dimensions. The first is the notion of blended learning as an educational model that provides an alternative to a full-time campus-based educational model. The second is the notion of blended learning as an educational delivery model with constructivist-connectivist underpinnings and technology-based heutagogic principles. The focus of this review would be on the later conceptuaisation of blended learning.
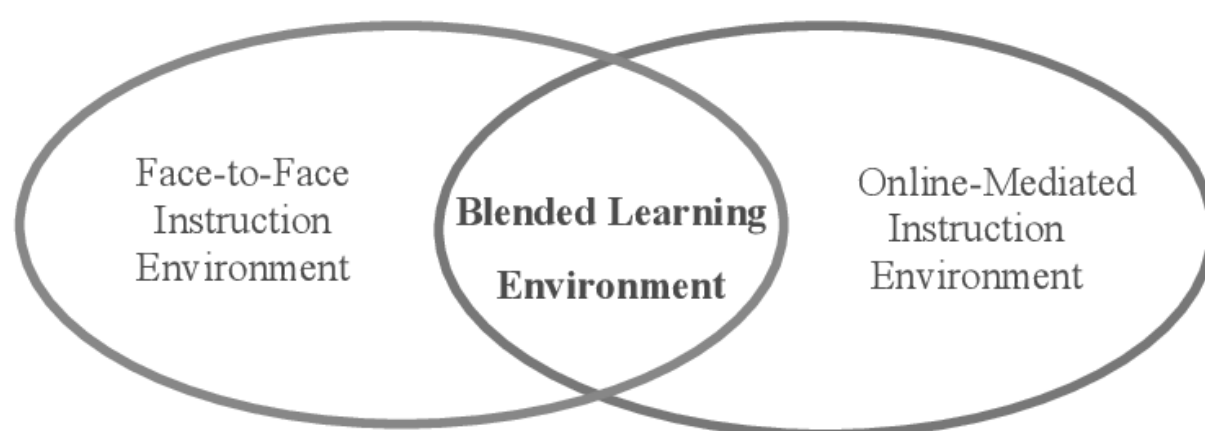


Figure 2. 4: A blended learning framework for TEL

 Source: Adapted from Wong and Noh (2016)

Thus, Cleveland-Innes and Wilton (2018) present blended learning as a TEL pedagogy that employs the thoughtful combination of face-to-face and online enagement of learners. These authors argue that blended learning is a pedagogical practice that involves the fusion of face-to-face campus-based instructional methods and technology-mediated learning. Thus, learners are engaged through a digital network whose configurations represent a complex adaptive system that conveys pedagogic, andragogic and heutagogic implications for practitioners and HEIs. Hence, blended learning is configured as TEL to optimse learner engagement and improvement in the quality of learning outcomes (Brubaker 2013; Hannon & Macken 2014). In buttressing the views expressed in extant research, Wang *et al.* (2015) maintain that the quality of blended learning experience is influenced by the degree of congruence that exists between technology adoption and teaching and learning content, and congruence between the face-to-face content and the online content. These authors maintain that the purposeful adoption of

congruent contents and technologies engender complementary learning experiences and a synthesis of the types of learning insights that reinforce deep learning. In reviewing a growing body of literature on blended learning, Cleveland-Innes and Wilton (2018) draw on the inherent design features and degree of technology integration to distinguish between three variations of blended learning. These authors identified the blended presentation model, the programme flow model, and the fully online model as distinct forms of blended learning. The blended presentation and interaction model uses face-to-face engagement of learners as its primary instructional method while using off-campus online support activities like flipped classrooms, podcasts, and digitally-situated OERs for off-campus collaborative learner support. This argument draws implicit support from Bates (2015), who argues that the programme flow model uses a structured combination of face-to face and online tutorials in a format that is determined by learner context (traditional versus non-traditional learners). Cleveland-Innes and Wilton (2018) maintain that intensive face-to-face instruction may be alternated with block release sessions online while both components are intensively supported with online tutorials and virtual learning groups. Hannon and Macken (2014) argue that the fully online model is categorised as blended learning because it incorporates a blend of synchronous and asynchronous sessions. Building on the works of Hannon and Macken (2014), the table below illustrates O'Connell's (2016) categorisation of different blends of TEL pedagogical practices which are configured as blended learning models.

Table 2.8: Variations of blended learning

| Blended Learning Practice | Basic Assumptions |
|---|---|
| Blended face-to-face class | This model of blended learning situates the core components of the learning process in the face-to-face classroom activities while using online activities as supplements to the in-person classes. Thus, students and faculty share more high-value instructional time that would be supported with online activities. |
| Blended online class | The blended online class, also known as the online driver model, situates the greater part of learning activities online while using in-person class appearance as supplements . Thus, the model could be described as the inverse of the blended face-to-face class. |
| The flipped classroom | Abeysekera and Dawson (2014) describe a flipped classroom as one where students are required to do pre-work, such as group activity, assigned reading, short video-based cases or completing online quizzes, to develop their understanding of learning concepts or new material. While being an effective way of providing scaffolding, the flipped pedagogy also encourages students to stay engaged while taking more responsibility for their own learning. |
| The self-blend model | The self-blend model is configured at the programme level; students choose online course electives that they would take along side their in-person, on-campus based courses. The choice of online courses to blend their on-campus learning with, is entirely the students' decision. |
| The blended MOOC | MOOCs are one of the derivatives of the Open Learning and Open Education Movement. The blended MOOC is a form of flipped classroom in a formal education setting where students access MOOC materials as complements to their registered campus-based course. However, MOOCs are also offered as Open Courseware (OCW) that can be accessed by a large number of people around the world as long they have internet access. |

| | In this format, MOOCs are used in a purely online format for the sole purpose of increasing access to tertiary and higher education. *Zhenghao et al.* (2015) report that 25 million people from different countries registered in MOOCs ocross different platforms between 2012 and 2015. The popularity of MOOCs has been found to contribute to the changing nature of knowledge and the emergence of of new competences and credentialling systems (Ehlers 2020; UNEVOC 2020). Shah (2019) reports that nearly 110 million people subscribed to MOOCs in 13500 courses (Mishra & Panda 2020). |
|---|---|
| **Flexible-mode courses** | This modes provides interchangeable registrations. The core feature is that it offers a variety to flexible-mode courses wherein online and campus-based modes are made available and students are encouraged to decide on which modes and in what course combination they would like to use them. It is also known as the hybrid flexible model of blended learning (Beatly 2016). |

Source: Adapted from O'Connell 2016; Cleveland-Innes and Wilton 2018; Beatly 2016; Shah 2016; Zhenghao, Alcorn, Christensen, Eriksson, Koller, & Emanuel 2015

## 2.10.3 The complex adaptive blended learning system (CABLS)

Wang, Han and Yang (2015) describe CABLS as a framework that underpins TEL in a blended learning environment.Thus, CABLS builds on the pedagogical assumptions of COI but provides deeper emphasis on the location of TEL within the behaviourial-constructivist and connectivist epistemological spectrum (Hase & Kenyon 2013; Godina *et al.* 2019; Gernstein 2016; Balksh & Mann 2016). These authors contend that teaching and learning is a shared enterprise in which teachers, learners and HEIs collaborate within a knowledge production ecosystem. The insight that is implicit in this argument is that TEL as a complex adaptive learning system is composed of the learner, the teacher, the adopted technology, the context of learning, the learning support systems and the institutional environment that is defined to support TEL. Hence, at the TEL interface, these components maintain a complex but dynamic and integrative relationship that manifests in the negotiation of common learning goals. The composition of TEL thus draws on the notion of sociology of associations to assemble a learning system in which the duality of subjects and objects is configured in such a way that the respective roles of the human components (teachers and learners) and the adopted technologies cannot be differentiated from their manifestations in the TEL symmetry (Latour 2012; Braga & Suarez 2017).
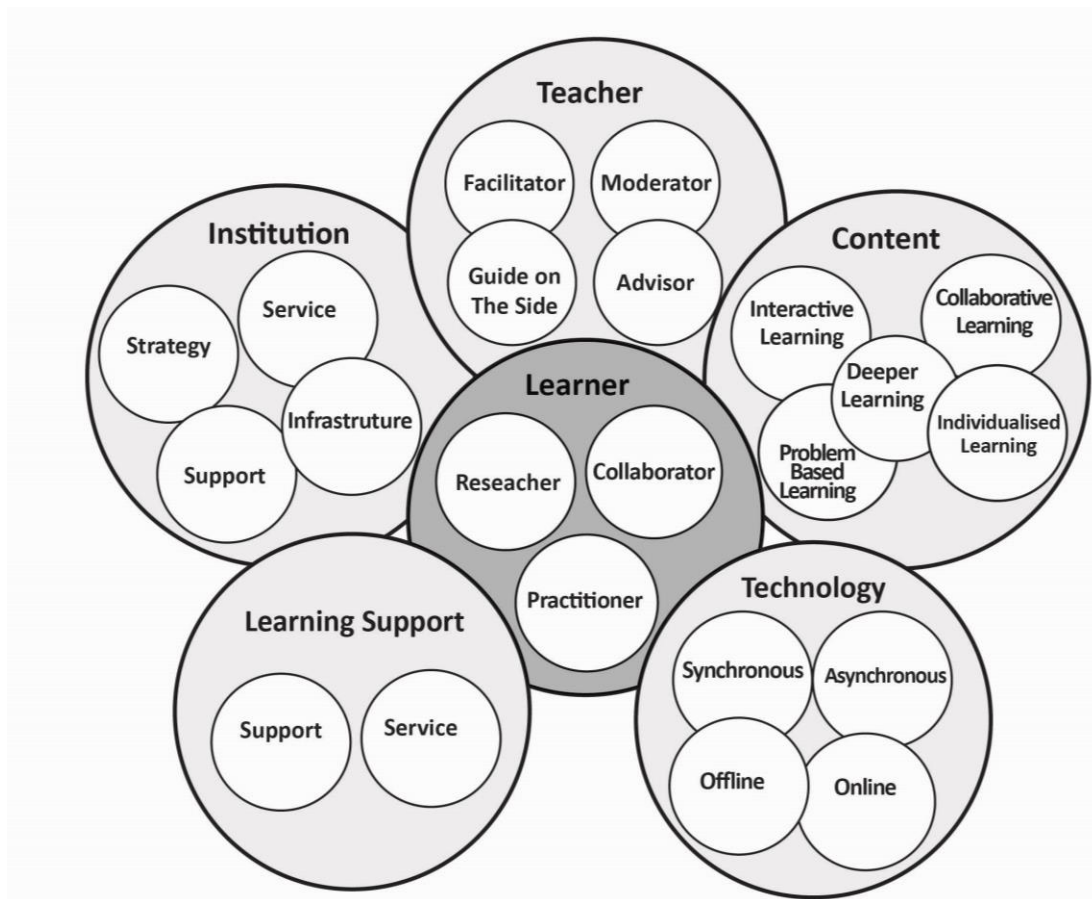
Figure 2. 5: The complex adaptive systems in TEL

Source: Cleveland-Innes and Wilton (2018:21)

Figure 2.5 above depicts CABLS's prescriptions for learner-centred teaching and learning and the constitutive elements in the CABLS-TEL configuration, including the role of technology and its inherent pedagogical adaptations. Thus, teachers and learners draw support from an institutional environment that is TEL-oriented to collaboratively design content, act as mediators who modify emergent meanings through dialogic interaction, critical engagement and reflection. The actor-network relationship that is implict in the composition of CABLS conceptually locates its assumptions within the TEL-connectivist epistemology. Wang *et al.* (2015) maintain that teachers who assume the role of facilitators, mentors, advisors and moderators share responsibility with learners and adopt pedagogies that draw on learners' self efficacy, exploration and experimentation to the support the pursuit of learning goals. The CABLS framework assumes that learners aim to become active participants with the long-term goal of acquiring life-long learning competences. Thus, the production of interactive, media-rich materials becomes a function of the dynamic relationship between the learner, the teacher, and the adopted technologies, the learning support systems and insititutional misson and vision. COL

(2018) opines that the technology component within the framework plays a critical and integrative role in TEL. These authors argue that the choice of technology within the broader context of teaching and learning is underpinned by a deep understanding of the learing contexts, learner unique needs and the institutional environment (culture, learner demographics, and so on). COL (2018) maintains that such choices aim to foster collaboration, co-creation of learning contents, assessment and customisation of learning design and the enhancement of the social presence of learners. These authors argue that the learner support component within the CABLS framework includes scaffolding and other process-based engagements which enhance learners' knowledge and use of the technology tools at the TEL interface.

## 2.10.4 Technological, pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK)

Advancements in TEL research indicate that teachers require knowledge that is outside their disciplinary expertise in order to effectively integrate technology in their teaching (COL 202). With the evidence of the inevitable use of technology in supporting learning in HE, scholars (Mclain 2021; Loelev, Mishra, Kerekuik, Shin & Graham 2014) concede that TEL pedagogies need to be guided by a teacher's content knowledge, his/her level of pedagogical literacy, knowledge of appropriate technologies and competence in using them. Thus, TPACK emerges as a model that bridges the gap between TEL and the traditional teaching and learning methods. TPACK prescribes the extent to which teachers' understanding of emerging technologies and their competence in using them may interact with their understanding of subject-specific content and their pedagogical literacy in their effort to teach effectively. COL (2018) maintains that the constitutive elements of the TPACK do not exist in isolation. Instead, they interact to project a teacher's pedagogical-content knowledge, technological-content knowledge and technological-pedagogical knowledge as new knowledge themes and competencies that are essential for facilitating TEL. Koehler *et al.* (2014) argue that TPACK reinforces the assumptions of prior frameworks like the pedagogical-content knowledge (PCK), while stipulating that TEL requires teachers to understand the capabilities and limitations of emerging technologies in the context of their application to pedagogical and content development innovations (Mishra & Koehler 2006). These authors draw parallels between TPACK and prior frameworks like PCK and the signature pedagogies (Shulman 1985, 2006). These authors maintain that PCK makes the assumption that effective teaching and learning requires teachers and HEIs to understand learners' unique contexts while drawing on discipline-based knowledge to develop appropriate instructional strategies. Signature or subject-specific pedagogies (SSPs), on the other hand, draw on the shared assumptions about the framing of teaching and learning within specific disciplinary domains. Shulman (2005) maintains that such pedagogies emerge as assumed regiments, prescriptions and uniformities that are akin to subject or departmental loyalties through which the entity may seek institution-wide distinctiveness and legitimacy. Shulman maintains that SSPs do not only enforce learners' 'habits of mind' through surface

and deep structures of the teaching and learning practice, but also enhance their professional attitudes and situational coping abilities.

The emerging insight supports the assumed uniqueness of the TPACK and its assumptions about the rapid obsolescence of technology and the impact of this on teachers' ability to select the right set of technology tools, and the instructional strategies and innovations that accompany such tools, using an understanding of learners' unique needs and preferences.

Table 2. 9:TPACK as a pedagogical model

| TPACK Component | Description of component |
|---|---|
| **Content knowledge (CK)** | This refers to teachers' knowledge of the discipline and subject. This knowledge would include teachers' knowledge of subject-based concepts, threshold concepts, theories, emerging knowledge trends, evidences, knowledge of established practices in the subject area. |
| **Pedagogical knowledge (PK)** | This refers to teachers' pedagogical literacy, which Koehler and Mishra (2009) describe as deep understanding about the methods, processes and practices of teaching and learning. This includes understanding about learners' context, educational goals, institutional pedagogical norms, learning theories, assessment methods, and lesson planning and implementation. |
| **Technology knowledge (TK)** | Technology knowledge refers to teachers' understanding about advances in information technology, especially education technology, including knowledge of specific technology tools, their specific benefits and limitations, as well as having the ability to use them in supporting learning. |
| **Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)** | This refers to the knowledge that is required by the teacher to interpret and transform content knowledge using learned pedagogical skills. The PCK manifests in how the teacher draws in knowledge of learners' specific contexts to orchestrate the design and development of instructional materials to support leaners' specific needs. It is simply the manifestation of pedagogical knowledge in varying teaching and learning contexts. |
| **Technological content knowledge (TCK)** | This draws on a teachers TK and CK to foster an understanding of how specific technology tools can be adapted to optimise the opportunity for learners' understanding of the subject matter on a phased and progressive basis. This includes teachers' sensitivity to variations in learning contents and the need for changes in the adopted technology tools to achieve optimal and effective learning engagement. |
| **Technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK)** | The TPK refers to teachers' understanding of the affordances and limitations of a range of technology tools and how the purposeful deployment of these tools at the teaching and learning interface can impact positively of learners' development. The TPK illustrates the manifestation of the conversion of technology tools into pedagogical tools that blend well with institutional and personal instructional philosophies. |
| **Technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK)** | TPACK refers to the full complement of what is required to effectively facilitate TEL. While providing guidance for effective learner engagement on a generic basis, it provides specific advantage on its emphasis on how TEL should be facilitated. The combined (CK+PK+TK+PCK+TCK+TPK) provide comprehensive guidance on how teachers formulate TEL pedagogical techniques through deep understanding of a subject matter, including the epistemological foundations and the threshold concepts in the subject, knowledge of learners' context and learning goals, forming pedagogical strategies that will stimulate and sustain learners' interest, and supporting these with knowledge of appropriate technologies and how they can be used to build on learners' prior knowledge with the goal of developing learners' academic maturity and developing new epistemologies. |

Source: Adapted from Mishra & Koehler 2006; Koehler & Mishra 2009

## 2.11 Technology tools and  TEL pedagogies

Scholars (Bates 2015; Wang *et al.* 2015) contend that an unguided deployment of technology at the learning interface may not bring the desired outcomes without clear understanding of learning goals and  contexts. Thus, TEL practices like blended learning need to be guided by clear concpetualisations. Hence, Bates (2015) maintains that the focus of TEL should not be on the general notion of technology but on education technology, which he  defines as problem-solving tools (hardware, software, systems, digital platforms, virtual worlds and networks) which serve specific purposes in varying educational contexts. Thus, learning management systems (LMS) (e.g. Moodle, Blackboard Collaborate), web conferencing tools (e.g. Zoom, Google Meet, MS Teams), e-portfolios, simulations, games and virtual worlds have been identified in the literature (Bates 2015; Wang *et al.* 2015; Cheng 2019,  2020) as educational technologies that have had impact on the evolution of teaching and learning in the 21st century. In buttressing the need for conceptual clarity at the point of integrating technology into teaching and learning, Brubaker (2013) cautions that such ambition must be underscored by intelligence on how the unique design features of the identified technology tool will complement learning.

Brubaker (2013) further argues that education technology may be deployed to support learning in a variety of roles. This author opines that the substitution role of technology involves the deployment of technology tools as substitutes or complemets in the teaching and learning environment. The difference lies only in the experience of doing face-to-face tasks using a technology tool. The goals here would typically be to test the application of technology tools or to digitise learning tasks. The augmentation role brings dimensions to the learning experience that would not be available in a traditional teaching setting. The goal here would be to enhance learning experience through automated results and experiences like instant feedback on activities or algorithm-based auto-response to learning queries. An example of this could be in the form of interactive computer-based multiple-choice questions with voice-over features. The modification role of technology emerges in the way of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning sessions through the types of learning effects  and impacts that are experienced when using web-conferencing  platforms  in varying educational contexts. Brubaker (2013) contends that the redefinition role of technology in HE pedagogy draws on institutional understanding of the learners' needs to bring completely new ways of engaging learners. The experiences and features that are inherent in the  virtual learning platforms and LMS like Moodle and  Blackboard Collaborate demonstrate the redefinition role of technology in HE.

In their description of good teaching practice in the digital age, Vaughan and  Garrison (2013) draw on the works of Chickering and Gamson (1997) to  argue that good practice in TEL must include designing courses for collaborative  engagement, designing  courses for critical discourse, creating  and sustaining

a sense of community within the learning environment, supporting purposeful inquiry through dialogic learning and problem-based learning, ensuring learners sustain collaboration through opportunities for initiative and appropriate use of technology, ensuring that inquiry leads to concrete experience and resolution, and ensuring that assessment is congruent with intended learning outcomes. These views signal a departure from the analogue to the digital instructional era, where technology must feature in the list of pedagogical tools for effective practice while contributing to the definition of professional values in HE practice.

Table 2. 10:TEL pedagogy platforms

| TEL | Description |
|---|---|
| **Video learning platforms** Mishra and Panda 2020; Koumi 2015 | This refers to the presenatation of educational content using videos as primary or secondary contents. The popularity of the use of video platforms and contents to support TEL is exemplified in the number of subscriptions on YouTube and Instagram. Global Media Insight (2020) reports that YouTube has over 2 billion active users as at 2020. This is growing against the backdrop of rapid penetration of smartphones around the world. Mishra and Panda (2020) report that the 2019 State of Video in Education Report noted that the majority of students view video skills as work-essential skills that educators must include in their teaching. Koumi (2015) highlights the pedagogical benefits of video-based learning to include the provision of authentic experiences, the motivation to learn and the engagement of lrarners as co-creators of educational content . However, the teacher's understanding of multimedia learning and cognitive load theories, the coherence, segmenting, continuity and signaling principles as TEL pedagogical capabilities are critical in the cooperative production of video-based educational contents. |
| **Mobile learning** Mishra 2009; Mishra & Panda 2020 | The application of mobile leraning in HE draws on the rapid adoption of mobile technologies and increase in accesss to active mobile broadband subscriptions and household internet access. These ICT developments are transforming learning by increasing opportunities for mobile and retail teaching and learning. Using smartphones and other handheld devices, educational contents including educational games (gamification) are co-created and stored using subscription-free educational apps. Mishra (2009) suggests that mobile technology like smartphones support small bite-sized content delivery, meaning that its application has to be for the release of learning contents in small nuggets, while considering the storage and playing capacities of the device in [the] possession of the target group. . |
| **Learning management systems** Holmes & Prieto-Rodriguez 2018; Daniela 2019; Mishra & Panda 2020; Klobas & McGill 2010 | These are broadly defined as information systems that facilitate synchronous and asynchronous communication within a connected network with the extra capacity for learning analytics and administrative tasks. Holmes and Prieto-Rodriguez (2018) maintain that the adoption and adaptation of LMS in HE has become common practice. Drawing on an assortment of social media and interactive features like blogs, wikis, chat rooms and discussion tools, LMS such as Moodle, Blackboard Collaborate, Udemy and others facilitate constructivist approaches to learning in contrast to traditional transmission models of learning. |
| **Social media** Joseph & Thomas 2020; Mishra & Panda 2020 | These are inexpensive, easy-to-use digital tools that facilitate social interaction and collaboration, across connected networks. These technologies include blogs, wikis, media like audio, photo, video, text, sharing tools, networking platforms (including Facebook and Whatsapp) and virtual worlds which characteristically facilitate collaboration and the use of user-generated content as critical components of the TEL. |
| **OERs & MOOCs** UNESCO 2012; Butcher & Moore 2015; OER Africa 2021 | OERs emerged under the umbrella TEL phenomenon of OEM which includes OERs, Open Courseware (OCW) and Open Access (OA). OERs are therefore categorised as educational materials in media that are available in the public domain.Such media might have also been released under open licensing agreements. These agreements are aligned with the existing framework of intellectual property rights as defined by relevant international conventions and |

| | respects the authorship of the work (UNESCO 2012). Thus, OERs include copyleft educational materials (book chapters, theses, monographs, software, images, digital or non-digital materials) licensed under the General Public License (GPL) and the Creative Commons Share-Alike (CC) licensing regimes. Depending on the authorisation license used, users are free to use, adapt, repurpose and distribute OERs across connected and non-connected paltforms. The significance of OERs in TEL is grounded in the views of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, which argues that Open Education is based on the vision of knowledge as a public good in which technology and the world wide web in particular provides the opportunity for everyone to share, use, and reuse knowledge. Butcher and Moore (2015) argue that OERs draw on the global citizenship and knowledge enfranchisement principles to provide learners and faculty with access to world-class education content, support independent and life-long learning, while encouraging educational collaborations between teachers and students. This led to the OER Africa initiative where 35 institutions including the Open University of Mauritius, Africa Virtual University, University of Cape Town, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Zambia Open University, Zimbabwean Open University, Open University of Tanzania, Arab Open University of Sudan, South Africa Institute for Distance Education (Saide), University of South Africa (UNISA), National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), University of Cambridge and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) collaborate to produce Africa-relevant OERs in different disciplines (OER Africa 2021). The challenge that remains in the use of OERs as componets of TEL pedagogy, especially in SSA, includes faculty skills to select and curate appropriate OERs, as well as access to broadband connections |

## 2.11.1 Open learning and open pedagogy and TEL

The widespread adoption of OERs, as documented in OER Africa (2021), appears to be evolving at the same pace as the Open Learning and Open Pedagogy Movement. OER Africa (2021) presents open learning as a teaching and learning approach that aims to eliminate learning barriers, including access to learning content, while stimulating an education system that is sensitive to learners' specific needs within multiple learning arenas. Thus, open learning makes the assumption that effective and deep learning focuses on understanding learners' contexts, their prior experiences and using active engagement techniques to reinforce learners' critical thinking and self-directed learning abilities (Saide 2019). This view of open learning reinforces the views expressed in Conole (2010). This author seeks to situate the notion of OERs as the by-product of open learning and open education practice by conceptualising the latter as set of activities that support the creation, use and repurposing of OERs. Thus, Wiley and Hilton, (2018) argue that open learning is a form of TEL that is grounded in open pedagogy and OER-Enabled Pedagogy, and open educational practice (OEP). This view is predicated on the views expressed in prior research (Wiley 2013) which attributes open pedagogy as teaching and learning practices that are situated on the principles of free access and freedom to reuse, revise, remix and redistribute educational content. Hence, Witt (2020) proposes that open pedagogy be defined as teaching and learning practices that are informed by the practitioners' conscious association with the open education movement including open access and open educational resources. In situating open

pedagogy in the direct context of TEL, Hegarty (2015) identifies open pedagogy with attributes such as participatory technologies, connected learning communities, learning analytics and reflective practice.

## 2.12 Knowledge gap and the emergence of a  pedagogy model for HEIs

The emerging insight from this review indicates that the best pedagogical  practices stem from institutions' and practioners' openness towards understanding learners' needs within the unique context of an institution's environment. Thus, the right mix of pedagogical approaches that would facilitate the timely attainment of learning goals would be configured. In this effort, insituional environment incorporates insitutional mission and vision, an enacted pedagogical doctrine that draws on its sensitivity to the changing institutional environment to instruct a shared orthodoxy in teaching and learning practices within the frames of an envisioned identity for the institution. Drawing on this evidence and the findings in extant research (Hase & Kenyon 2013; Ganstein 2016; Halupa 2016; COL 2018; Godino *et al.* 2019; Mishra & Penda 2020; Blaschke & Mann 2020), different pedagogical approaches can be deployed  at different points of the teaching and learning dialogue. These authors contend that such deployment would be determined by  predetermined suitability and convergence of the chosen methods within  learners' unique context. In this effort, contemporary trends in pedagogical innovation in HE support the blend of different teaching and learning methods with TEL and the open pedagogy phenomenon.
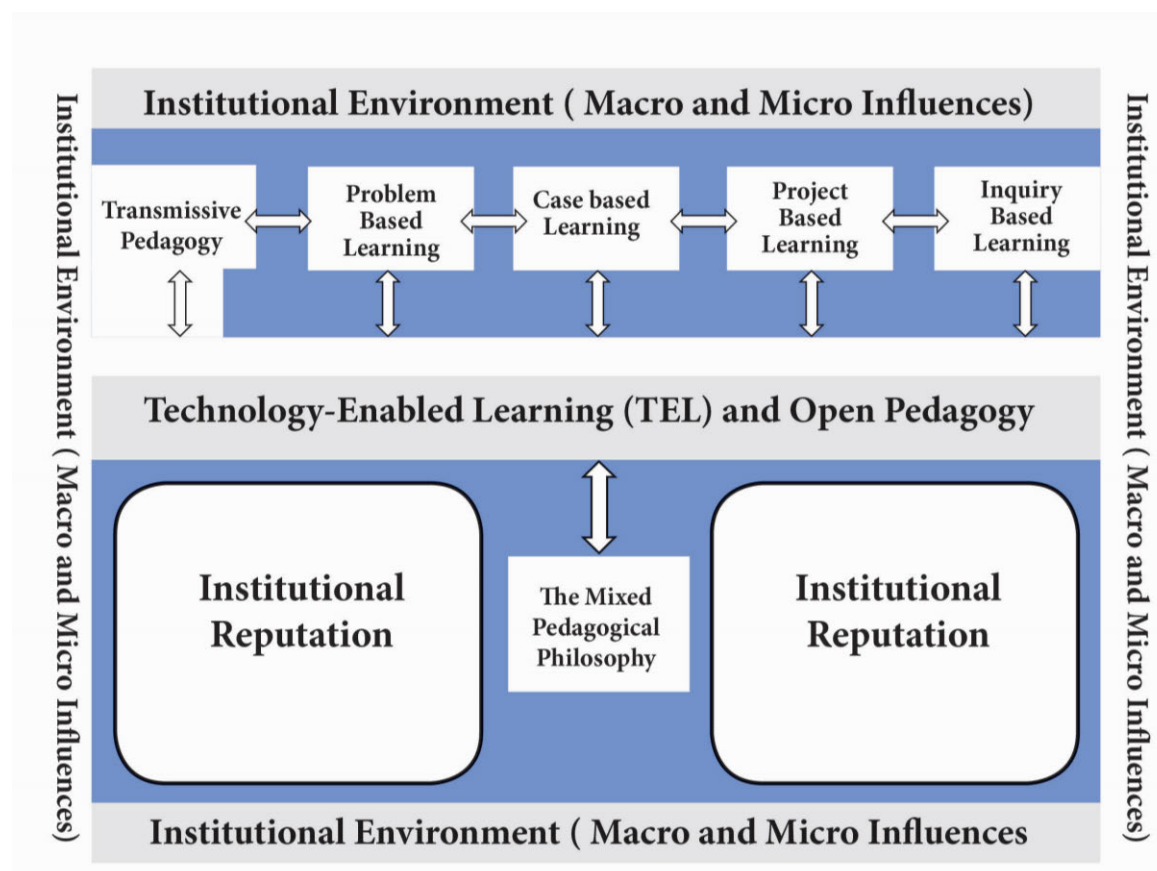


Figure 2. 6: Teaching & learning model for HEIs

Source: Researcher's construction

Figure 2.6 emerged as a teaching and learning model for HEIs. The model lends support to the views expressed in Godina *et al.* (2019) and Hase and Kenyon (2013). It demonstrates implicit recognition of the changing nature of knowledge and the adaptive role of HEIs in a changing knowledge environment. The model makes the assumption that there is evidence of observable antecedents of the knowledge society model around the globe. Hence, the decision to make mixed pedagogical adaptations in HEIs should be located within the connectivist epistemological spectrum where the attainment of the technology-enabled agency (TEA) of learners is an essential educational goal. It is based on this assumption that the model prescribes the configuration of mixed pedagogy using TEL open pedagogy (including OERs) as the underpinning pedagogical doctrine. The model then draws on the works of Hodgkinson-Williams (2010) and Butcher and Moore (2015) to link an institutional pedagogical configuration that is underpinned by TEL and open pedagogy with the emergence of positive institutional image and reputation.

In giving more theoretical depth to the model presented in Figure 2.6, Hodgkinson-Williams (2010) and Butcher and Moore (2015) identify the benefits of OERs as integral elements of TEL pedagogy along four perpsectives - the government perspective, the institutional perspective, the teacher/educator perspective and the learner perceptive. This outcome directly addresses the search for evidence of a relationship between institutional pedagogy and institutional identity. Thus, these authors maintain that the use of OERs as essential components of the TEL pedagogical toolkit brings the benefits of institutionalised knowledge sharing, a culture of currency in all areas of faculty expertise, preference from prospective learners at the point of enrolment decisions, and ultimately enhancement of the public image and reputation of the institution.While lending support to the views expressed in Hamilton *et al*. (2017) and Stevenson *et al*. (2014) on the link between institutional pedagogy and institutional identity, this insight locates the competitive benefits of enacted pedagogical practices at the institutional or corporate level. However, despite practices of institutional pedagogical doctines (Inger-Askehave *et al*. 2015; RRU 2019; Jansen 2019; Aalborg University 2021; Unesco & Aalborg University 2020), a gap still remains in our understanding of the extent to which the insertion of enacted pedagogical doctrines within the identity elememts of HEIs enhances the reputational equity of those institutions. The search for this understanding forms the core of the conceptual framework of this thesis.

Drawing on this evidence and the additional insight of the nexus between environmental trends such as changes in HE policy conceptions, global political economy and its impact on the concept of knowledge, the emergence of the future skills era, new conceptions of employability, and new credentialing systems, the pedagogy model in Figure 2-6 has emerged to guide the institutional conception of teaching and learning within a consistent and differentiated position for learner engagement and teaching excellence.

## 2.13 Higher education pedagogy in Africa

The traditional African university draws its orgin form the traditional university movement which was set up to produce elites through the behavourist and objectivist templates of the colonial university system, including languages and methods of instruction (Vaghese 2013). These institutions, which emerged mostly in the aftermath of colonialism, distorted national identities, imported curricula and inherited HE systems. Further to this, is the profound diversity in the political orgins and national aspirations across the continent. The result of this diversity of orgins and aspirations is that Africa became a continent of profoundly diverse educational systems, disparate professional standards, diverse challenges, diverse instructional strategies, and diverse educational outcomes. This breadth of diversity posed additional challenges in the ability of HE managers to harmonise efforts to implement uniform HE quality benchmarks across the continent.

Drawing on this view, Obasi and Olutayo (2009) argue that one of the earliest efforts aimed at pursuing a harmonised HE system in the continent was the unsuccessful Arusha Convention for the Recogntion of Qualifications in HE in Africa. This has since been succeeded by the Tuning Africa Project (Tuning Africa 2018) and the PedaL project that is initiated by the Association of African Universities (AAU) (PASGR/SPHEIR 2021). Although each of these initiatives had been implemented over a decade ago, they still have very limited uptake by universities across the continent, especially in the effort to harmonise and transfer HE pedagogy. This view is supported by a British Council (2014) report which argues that evidence of the recognition for the need for frameworks and infrastructure that unifies the concept of HE padagogy and its impact on HE quality is not widespread. This source argues that, at the expense of overwhelming evidence on the need for innovative pedagogical practices and dialogic discourse of learning, HEIs across the continent appear to lack clear pedagogical convictions, hence their dogma with traditional teaching methods. This evidence emerges against the backdrop of insight on the relationship between institutional pedagogical practices, graduate employability and national development (Schinder, Mazimhaka & Ezeanya 2013; Oketch & McGowan 2017). These affirmations draw on on the works of Ajayi *et al*. (1996), which trace a direct relationship between institutional pedagogical practices and national development. These authors maintain that gaps in the quality and substance of graduates will result in inferior contribution to the effort to proffer solutions to the emerging challenges of that period.

Drawing on the works of Chen (2019) and Oketch and McGowan (2017), it could therefore be argued that the efficacy of the traditional pedagogy in education in general and HE in particular was tested by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This emergency disrupted access to education around the world in terms of lack of technical infrastructure to facilitate the substitution of TEL. The pandemic also introduced a pedagogical crisis that had simmered prior to the outbreak of the pendemic. As other

regions of the world leverage the pre-exisiting culture of pedagogical currency while innovating around TEL, SSA awakened to its viulnerability in the two fronts of evolutionary pedagogical currency and the acute shortage of basic technical infrastructure which instructs TEL. While the emergency response of the PedaL project through the AAU has begun to address the pedagogic and consequent epistemic inefficiencies of SSA universities, it also highlights the urgent need for African universities to begin to enact pedagogical practices and traditions that could subsequently feature as active and important elements of their institutional identities.

However, given the relative neweness of HE in The Gambia and the paucity of research in the Gambian higher sector in general and on higher education pedagogy in particular, there is currently no evidence in the literature on the extent to which Gambian universities and other HEIs have embraced initiatives like the PedaL and the extent to which such initiatives might feature in the insitituional self-identity and reputational equity of such institutions.

Table 2. 11:Selected sources on pedagogical theories and practices in HE

| Author and date | Title of article | Theme/Main assumptions |
|---|---|---|
| Tuning (2021) | Competences for the future: Trends and challenges | HE pedagogy, the future and global competences |
| Aalborg University (2021) | Educate for the future: PBL, sustainability and digitalisation 2021 | Pedagogical innovation and the construction of institutional identity through problem-based learning |
| Hamilton, Grundy, Agger-Gupta, Veletsianos & Marquez (2017) | Change leadership and the development of institutional education frameworks | Responding to leadership change in HE through the enactment of Institutional Education Frameworks (IEF). IEFs as a collection of institutional shared values including learning and teaching features that help frame the unique identity of a university. |
| Royal Roads University (2019) | Cultivating change leaders for better world: Learning teaching and research model | The enactment of teaching and learning model as a symbol of institutional identity |
| Cheng (2020) | The future of education after COVID-19: Multiple disruptions and lessons. | The Pentagon Theory of New Learning; a paradigm shift in teaching and learning; evidence of a shift from the traditional learning paradigm toward the new Contextualized Multiple Intelligence (CMI) Triplization paradigm |
| Gonçalves & Majhanovich (2021) | Pandemic and remote teaching in higher education | The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the transformation of HE pedagogy. The phenomenon of blended and hybrid environments in global HE |

| Godino, Catricheo, Burgos & Wilhelmi (2019) | Analysis of didactical trajectories in teaching and learning Mathematics: Overcoming extreme objectivist and constructivist positions | The mixed pedagogy framework and its implications for graduate competences and the strategic goals of HEIs |
|---|---|---|
| Witt (2020) | Towards a working definition of open pedagogy | A conceptual framing for open pedagoy with OERs as the practitioner outcomes and the pedagogy implications of the open education movement. |
| Mattenberger & Hinterberge (2018) | Green pedagogy: From theoretical basics to practical sustainable learning activities | Sustainability theory, New HE, teaching and learning and the green pedagogy concept. |
| Bates ( 2015) | Teaching in a digital age: Guidelines for designing teaching and learning | An evaluative approach to teaching and learning practices and methods in HE |
| Mishra & Panda (2020) | Technology-enabled learning: Policy, pedagogy and practice | Pedagogical theories and contemporary technology-enabled learning tools and trends within HE |
| Blaschke & Marín (2020) | Applications of heutagogy in the educational use of e-portfolios | The adaptation of teaching and learning theoretical spectrum in an era of learner agency and lifelong learning |

## 2.14 Chapter summary

This chapter sought to review extant research on the role of pedagogical practices in the brand identity formation of HEIs. Hence, literature on global issues in HE were explored with specific focus on the cocnepts of graduate employability, marketisation and commiditisation of HE, marketing and branding of HE, and the historical evolution of higher education in Africa and The gambia . The implications of these trends on HE pedaogy was consequently explored. Drawing on the insight that emerged, the theoretical underpinnings of HE pedagogy were explored to understand the extent to which pedagogical adpations evolve to support the environmental trends in the global HE market. The emergent insight highlights the veracity of TEL as a pedagogical philosophy that can be configured with other teaching and learning approaches in the effort to project a disitinctive identity and image for HEIs. This built on the framework for examining pedagogical practices of African HEIs. The resulting insight culminated in the conceptualisation of the emerging notion of institutional pedagogical identity and its impact on the formation of the brand identity of HEIs.

# CHAPTER 3:  BRANDING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of brands and brand management practices in the HE sector. As a major construct in this study, the identification and location of branding practices and brand management research over the past decade emerged as an imperative that facilitated insight into the pattern of the application of marketing and branding to the management strategies of HEIs. Drawing on this background, this chapter begins with a contextual review of extant literature on the epistemology of branding in HE. This provided the premise for the  interrogation of prior research on the contested role of branding in engineering the competitiveness of HEIs in Africa. The insight that emerged underscored an evolutionary symmetry between branding and HE pedagogy. The implication of this is that this chapter highlights  branding practices origins from the positivist  and conservative era of the rational economic man to the constructivist and connectivist notion of brands as socially-constructued assets whose ownership is shared by the triad of the institution, the consumer and the community. This section is followed by a review of HE branding in Africa and the analysis and synthesis of the main assumptions of the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) . The situation of branding process within the CBIM framework sought to  facilitate insight into the potential location of institutional pedagogy within the symmetry of factors that integrate to identify an institutional brand. Hence, the concluding part ot this  chapter sought to interrogate literature on the teaching and learning philosophy statements within the context of their roles as brand  identity vignettes and  the integration  of insitutitonal pedagogical philosophy in the institutional brand identify formation process of HEIs.

## 3.2 The concepts of brands and branding

 Branding and brand management research has evolved from multiple research strands that include brand development, brand management and brand improvement (Kotler & Keller 2012;  Aaker 1991; Kapferer 2012; Urde 2016; McDonald & Wilson 2016). While these strands of branding research have yielded enormous insight into the branding phenomenon, they have also thrown up contextual ambiguities about branding, especially when investigated in traditionally non-business settings and contexts. One such context is HE, traditionally viewed as a non-business sector. However, contemporary trends indicate gradual evolution of the global HE sector into a global HE market, where competition for students, funding and favourable rankings has become common practice. The resulting ambiguities in the context of  the emerging realities of the marketisation of HE, have left a compelling need to explore the branding phenonomenon in this non-traditional setting and thus bridge  gaps in our understanding  of brand development, brand management and brand improvement in the HE sector.

### 3.2.1 Brands and branding defined

Scholars (Rashid 2012; Kotler & Keller 2012) describe brands as value enhancers. The implication is that brands are known to confer superior value on products and services. Kotler and Keller (2015) define a product as any value bundle that is developed to convey satisfaction for human wants and needs. Services, on the other hand, are acts or deeds that are essentially intangible and encompass a heteregeneous range of deeds that may be produced and consumed simultaneously. Both products and services, including HE services, are thus conceptualised as value clusters that may be offered in the competition for consumer preferences. Drawing on marketing orientation theory (Himan & Kahappen 2014; Gheysani, Rash, Roghamain & Norhalim 2012; Narver & Slater 1991), from which branding practices have evolved, business organisations and institutions need to demonstrate sensitivity to consumer needs and behaviour and thus mobilise cross-functional resources in order to pursue identification, differentiation, recognition and legitimacy. These objectives dominate the strategic imperative of brands and the brand development process (Effah 2017; Rashid 2012). Drawing on this view, Kotler and Keller (2015) describe the branding process as one whose outcomes culminate in the conferment of brand powers on a product or service.

De-Chernatony and McDonald (1998) describe a brand as a recognisable produce or service, person or place that is augmented in a manner that conveys messages of relevance, uniqueness and superior values congruent with consumer needs and aspirations. While Barlow and Stewart (2004) define brands as unique symbols or identities, Davis (2010) presents the American Marketing Association (AMA) definition of a brand as customer experience that is represented by images, ideas, logos, slogans and design schemes through which a product can be differentiated and recognised. Effah (2017) supports this view of the brand by highlighting the impact of the consistency of brand design schemes, values and attributes as brand identity elements which confer differentiation and recognition on the brand. In buttressing the view expressed in De-Chernatony and McDonald (1998), Effah (2017) notes that brands are social constructions that embody a complex mix of ideas, attributes and associations that are configured to uniquely identify and differentiate a product or service. This view thus portrays a brand as an identity construct whose essence or promises incorporate functional capability and symbolic and service features, name notation, ownership, risk reduction, legal protection and a strategic direction (De Chernatony & Riley 1998).

Rashid (2012) contends that branding research has evolved from the identification (Keller 2013; Kapferer 2012; Kotler & Armstrong 2012) and the differentiation (Keller 2013; Pinar *et al.* 2011) dimensions. The body of literature on these dimensions of branding research are not exclusively aligned. Instead, both research strands draw on thinly differential pathways to generate insight on the management of a brand. The pathways alluded to become more complex where the branding process is

applied in a non-traditional business context, such as the branding of HEIs and services (Pinar *et al*. 2011). The identification pathway tends to focus on building insight into how the visual and rational attributes of a brand interact to stimulate brand identity formation. The insight that remains implicit in this is that brand identity formation through the salient articulation of logos, name notation, brand values and other non-visual attributes, conceptually lay the foundation for brand differentiation. However, scholars (Effah 2017; Kotler & Armstrong 2012) argue that the identity-driven differentiation potential of brands remains dormant until the positioning strategy of the brand is articulated, operationalised and communicated .

### 3.2.2 Branding in higher education

Branding in HE has attracted immense scholarly interest over the past few decades. This is especially so in the circumstances of the continuing evolution of knowledge and the changing role of HEIs (Melewar & Nguyen 2014). Marketing and HE scholars have sought to bridge the knowledge gap that exists in the application of traditional commercial branding principles to the HE sector. Thus, research on different dimensions of HE branding has emerged. There is evidence of scholarly interest in HE brand equity (Mourad *et al*. 2011; Ivy 2008; Hannan 2021; Valitov 2014; Pinar *et al*. 2011; Mogaji 2019). These authors have investigated HE branding from the perspective of brand building. Other scholars (Chen 2019; Pinar *et al*. 2014, 2020; Clark *et al.* 2019; Wayne *et al*.2020) investigated the brand identity phenomenon within the HE sector. Studies on internal branding and HE brand communities have been led by Sujchaphong *et al.* (2014), Clark *et al.* (2019), Chapleo and Clark (2016) and Dean *et al.* (2016). Chen (2019) examines the brand capital phenomenon within the context of the mediating effects of brand identity on brand knowledge within the HE sector and concludes that brand loyalty (which is a function of brand identity, brand awreness, brand image and brand experience), builds the foundation for brand partnership and advocacy. These findings emerged against the backdrop of rising competition in HE and thus provides thoeretical support for the main objectives of this study.

### 3.2.2.1 The brand ecosystems framework for university brands

Pinar *et al.* (2011) propose a Brand Ecosystem Framework for university branding. This proposition makes the implicit assumption that extant branding models such as the ones propounded by Aaker (1991), the brand equity model (Aaker 1992), the brand personality model (Aaker 1997), the brand building model (De Chernatony 2001), the brand planning model (Aaker 1996) and the corporate branding model (Hatch & Schultz 2003) were not designed for the HE sector and therefore do not provide adequate theoretical support for the branding of HEIs. The Brand Ecosystems Framework draws on value chain research (Dorri, Yarmohammadianb & Nadic 2012; Anastasiu 2019; Lauridsen

2011) and relationships to identify students and their learning experiences as the brand core of HEIs. Pinar *et al.* (2011, 2014) argue that the brand core of HEIs must not be viewed as isolated nodes in the value chain but as authentic components of institutional essence whose effective and sustained delivery can only be accomplished when they are proposed in a symmetry that includes the support of varying stakeholders. These authors maintain that stakeholders such as parents, employers, donors, alumni and the local university community are integral constituents of the university ecosystem whose interest should be considered during the framing of the brand identity of HEIs.

While the the university brand ecosystem makes no direct reference to the role of institutional pedagogical practices in the reputational equity of HEIs, it highlights the extent to which faculty's engagement of students manifests and defines learning experience while serving as the building blocks of the brand. Thus, faculty-student engagement, and faculty-mediated student-to-student interaction within the university's complete series of interlocking activities, form critical components of the parrameters for the construction of the reputational equity of HEIs. Pinar *et al.* (2011, 2014) maintain that the emergence of the perceived quality of teaching staff and university reputation (emotional environment) as the most salient dimensions of university brand equity places a premium on institutional pedagogical practices and its impact on university brand reputation. These authors assert that the emergence of the perceived quality of staff at the top of the university brand equity dimensions carries significant implications for the extent to which students enrollment preferences and positive response to subsequent marketing activities of universities are achieved and sustained .
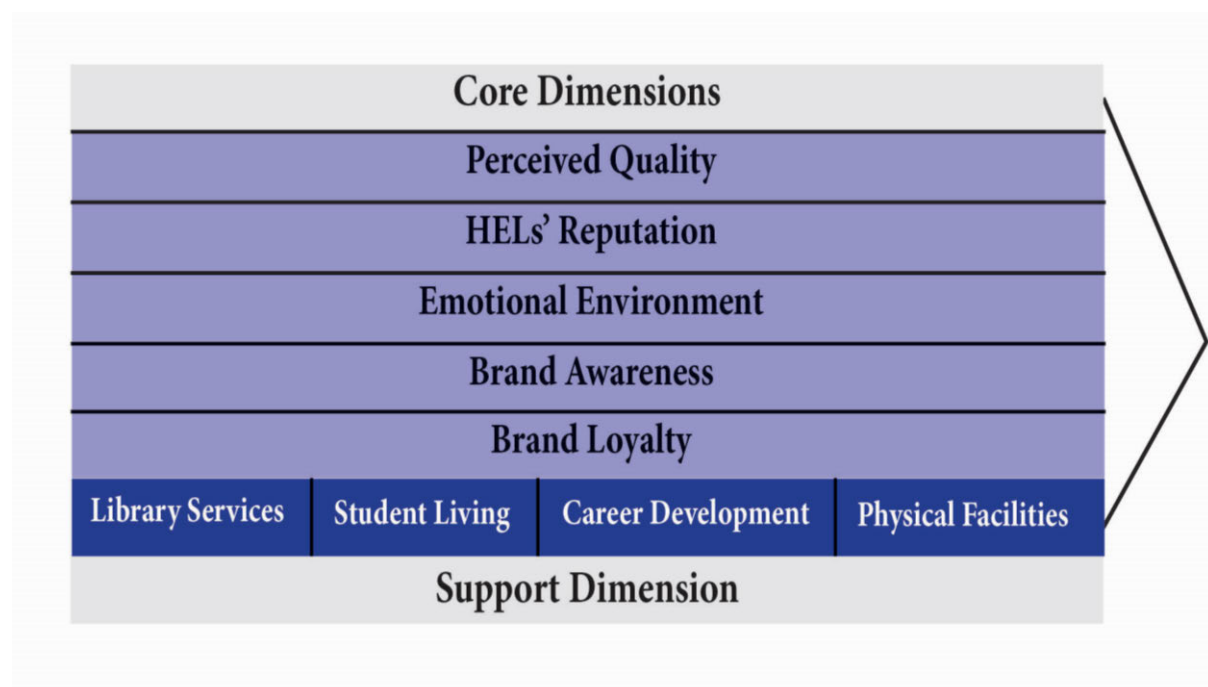


Figure 3. 1: Dimensions of a university brand

Adapted from Pinar et al. (2011, 2014)

As shown in Figure 3.1, Pinar *et al.* (2011) report that four out of the five core dimensions of HE branding emerged as the most important dimensions of HE brands. This is because these dimensions emerged with the largest mean values. The dimensions that emerged, in order of their importance, include the perceived quality of teaching staff, university reputational assets, emotional environment of the university, the loyalty base of the university, and its institutional brand awareness. The perceived quality of teaching staff being the most important core dimension, emerges as a function of stakeholder perception of the level of expertise that faculty members hold in their field of specialisation. The perceived expertise of faculty emerges in tandem with stakeholder perception on faculty's routine in learners' engagement and feedback. Pinar *et al.* (2011, 2014) maintain that university reputation emerges as a function of the discipline- and practice-based reputation of faculty, as well as graduate employment outcomes. These authors maintain that the perceived quality and insitutional reputation dimensions define the brand experience and, to some extent, the loyalty trajectory of university brands. Although the impact of institutional pedagogical practices on university brand reputation was not directly explored in Pinar *et al.* (2011, 2014), the emergence of the perceived quality of teaching staff and university reputation as variables that are implicit of the pedagogical prowess of staff and institutions lend support to the notion of a relationship between institutional pedagogical practices and brand identity formation of universities and other HEIs.

### 3.2.2.2 The  pedagogy paradox  in higher education  branding

The pedagogic doctrine of specific academic disciplines or institutions, whether enacted or inherited, serves as the main channel of value exchange between HEIs and their stakeholders. The emergent teaching and learning traditions thus become weaved into a distinct pattern of shared institutional cognitions, while taking a leading role in engendering the emergence of the reputational equity of the institution (Butcher & Moore 2015). This is how HEIs in the period that preceded the neoliberal era constructed reputations whose benefits they leveraged in framing their institutional self-identity programmes. The ontological implication of this insight is that the notion of pedagogy and HEIs  is a metaphor that informs the conceptual holism of HE brands. Hence, HEIs on the one hand are embodiments of epistemic and pedagogic sub-identities, while the notion of epistemic and pedagogic stretch, on the other hand, are constitutive symbols of HEIs. This assumption therefore creates the context for the emergence of a paradox in the relationship between HEIs and pedaogogy. Like the learning paradox where learners are provoked to transcend their previous capacity by their own efforts, the quest for distinctiveness by HEIs needs to be led by the unambiguous  championing of the potential of  their pedagogical metaphors. With the exception of several notable university brands (RRU 2018; Aalborg University 2021), the paradox that emerges from the evidence in extant research suggests that

pedagogy, as a critical compenent of the HE holism, hardly features in the insittiuional brand identity architecture of HEIs .

This paradox notwithstanding, a few studies seem to carry implicit validation of the effectual role of pedagogy in university branding. These studies include Peruta *et al.* (2015), Ng (2016), and Grewal, Meyer and Mittal (2022). While situating their investigation in the Western context, Peruta *et al.* (2015:5) posit that the positioning of universities can be underscored by the notion of 'pedagogical brands'. These authors assert that Schulman's concept of signature pedagogies can be applied in the modelling of teaching and learning in specific disciplines to reflect the assumed future practice environment of trainee professionals. The implication of this view is further espoused in the argument which maintains that the culture of teaching and learning interaction that exists between faculty and students, the cumulative educational experiences of students, and the dominant pedagogical styles used by faculty, all weave into the frozen impressions of the distinct pattern of values upon which the brand identity of a university can be anchored. This resonates with the following positioning statement articulated by Johnson and Wales University in the USA: "Johnson and Wales University is a recognised leader in career education.We prepare driven students seeking a competitive advantage in the global economy by integrating academics and professional skills, related work experience, leadership opportunities and career services" (Peruta *et al*. 2015:6).

In highlighting the role of pedagogy in the branding of HEIs, Ng (2016) highlights the role of institutional pedagogical doctrines in the brand identity evolution of HEIs in Singapore. Drawing on the pattern of competition within the HE sector of Singapore, Ng (2016) maintains that pedagogical doctrines at the level of HEIs convey a sense of distinction and superiority of being within the frames of the predetermined expectations of students, parents and employers. These distinctions emerge in the following pedagogy statements of a select number of HEIs in Singapore:

- We engage learners with an interactive teaching and learning philosophy, a unique learning environment and a sure way of unlocking learners' hidden potentials (Ng 2016) .
- "Dynamism, growth and a pioneering spirit especially in our pedagogical approaches, operational processes and overall engagement of students and graduates" (Ng 2016:11).
- A training approach that is applicational and development driven,. We oioneered a knowledge and skills enterprise that integrates variations of of real world experiences with the university's learning environment (Ng 2016).

In buttressing the growing importance of marketing and branding to HEIs, Grewal *et al.*(2022) highlight the emerging body of literature on stakeholder impressions based on the research and teaching profiles of business schools. The insight that is implicit in these evidences is that marketing and branding practices of HEIs is emerging as a sine qua non in the competitiveness goals of such institutions.

### 3.2.3 The importance of branding to higher education insititions (HEIs)

Drawing on contemporary trends like marketisation, corporatisation and commodisation of HE, the competitive landmarks of the private sector business models now apply to HE (Chapleo 2015). Grewal *et al.* (2022) assert that successful brands deliver sustainable value and market advantages to their organisations or institutions. In the specific context of HEIs, Stevenson *et al.* (2014) argue that the essence of HEIs is to offer educational experiences that are relevant and authentic within the framework of prevailing environmental realities. These educational experiences thus include relevant academic programmes, student engagement strategies and pedagogical enactments which characterise an institution. Drawing on this argument, Mourad *et al.* (2011) assert that the development of a brand marks the critical first step towards the strategic positioning of a HEI.

In building theoretical support for the views expressed in Mourad *et al.* (2011), Christodoudes and De Chernatony (2010) advance the argument that brand management (which is implicit of developing and communicating brand essence, brand values and brand recall), predetermines the strengths of associations that consumers ascribe to branded institutions. Thus, the branding process forms the basis for brand awareness, brand imagery, brand preferences and purchase expectations of brand performance (Rashid 2012; Urde 2013; Urde & Greyser 2014). Implicit in this view is the assumption that brand development and management is an endeavour that requires clarity and affirmation in the articulation and integration of the constructed attributes, benefits and cumulative attitudes of the brand in the marketing programme of the brand (Buil, Martínez & de Chernatony 2013; Greyser & Urde 2019). In buttressing the importance of branding to HEIs, Ivy (2008) narrows the discourse to the identity of university brands. He identifies academic programmes, institutional reputation, tuition fees charged, marketing information, the people, promotion and premiums as sub-identities within the university brand identity. This is supported by Nguyen and LaBalanche (2001), who argue that educational brands are equal to the institutions' academic reputation. Others, such as Francis (2015), identify academic and pedagogical approaches of HEIs, institutional learning environments and the general learning experience of students as components of brand identity in HEIs.

Hence, the emerging insight indicates that manifested benefits of branding lie in the construction of brand equity. Hence, Chapleo (2016), Roper and Fill (2012) and Keller (2013) contend that brand equity is the value or the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumers' response to the markeing of a brand. In affirmimg brand equity as the ultimate goal of branding, Aaker (1990) describes brand equity as the sum total of assets and liabilities that a brand commands within the framework of its

perceived quality, brand associations, brand awareness levels, and the level of trust and loyalty that consumers demonstrate with a brand.

### 3.2.4 The brand building process: Exisiting gaps in the literature

The brand has emerged as a strategic asset of organisations and institutions. Despite this understanding, the continuing lack of consensus on how branding should be applied in the HE sector has led to the emergence of conceptual variations that continue to hamper the ability of HEI managers to draw on branding as a durable source of competitive advantage. Thus, this study sought to explore literature on the brand management practices of HEIs and the role of the integration of enacted pedagogical practices as institutional brand elements, in the evolution of HE brands. This objective thus requires the review of extant research on brand building and brand management. This is also against the backdrop of the relative newness of HE in in The Gambia, where university education was first introduced only two decades ago (GOTG 2017). Thus, this situation implicitly validates the view that HE managers face challenges in articulating and managing the identity aspects of their institutions (Melewar & Akel 2005; Balmer & Liao 2007). Further to this, is the recent emergence of the notion of institutional pedagogical identity (Hamilton *et al.* 2017; Burke *et al.* 2015; Stevenson *et al.* 2014) as a composite concept in HE branding (Nguyen & LaBalanche 2001; Pinar, Trapp, Girard & Boyt 2011; Francis 2015). As a major construct in this study, the relative newness of the institutional pedagogical identity concept further highlights the challenges faced in articulating and managing the institutional identity of HEIs.

The brand building process has been variously researched. Rashid (2012), Effah (2017) and Chapleo (2015) maintain that there is a growing body of literature on the construction of a brand. Rashid (2012) maintains that Kepferer's (2012) brand identiy prism, Aaker's (1997) brand equity model and De Chernatony's (2001) strategic brand building model remain the primary models that have guided brand building research. Rashid (2012) and Piner *et al.* (2014) argue that these branding models that were originally used in the private sector have become the foundations of HE branding. Drawing on the works of Shultz (2002), Vallaster and De Chernatony (2005) maintain that brand building involves the strategic articulation of the mix of value bundles that are used as sources of identification, differentiation, recognition and durable value for a product, service, personality, organisation, institution or a place. However, there is consensus in the literature (Piner *et al.* 2011, 2014; Vallaster & De Chernatony 2005; Rashid 2012) on the notion of brand building as a process that generates multiple outcomes. Drawing on product brand research (Kotler & Armstrong 2010), brand building results in the articulation of brand vision, brand identity, brand objectives, brand essence, brand equity and brand core (Urde 2013). Thus, Park *et al.* (2013) assert that the brand is a composite of aesthetic, functional and symbolic components which integrate to produce a holisitic consumption experience. A summary of this view of the brand is illustrated in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3. 1:Conceptual components of a brand

| Branding Component | Description |
|---|---|
| **The aesthetic component**<br>Con & Lee 2016; Krishna *et al.* 2010; Kumar & Garg 2010 | The aesthetic component of a brand refers to the physical and external brand self which draws on consumer perceptions and other features to influence purchase decisions of buyers (Patrick & Hagtvedt 2011; Joo-Eon Jeon 2017). |
| **The functional brand**<br>Park *et al* .2013, 2010; Joo-Eon Jeon 2017 | Scholars argue that that the functionl components of a brand are often designd to appeal to the rational needs of consumers. In other words, the functional components offer rational value that is defined as those needs that stand at the threshold between consumer stimulation and needs recognition. These components thus form the fundamenetal elements of the motivation to conduct product or service research on a brand and its competing alternatives. Thus, brand promises and performance are built around the functional component while the visual and aesthetic representations may be used to convey and remind consumers of the distinctive features of the brand. |
| **The symbolic brand**<br>Park *et al.* 2013, 2010; Joo-Eon Jeon 2017 | The symbolic components of a brand are designed to appeal to the emotional needs of buyers. This draws on the marketing maxim that suggests that consumers do not buy products or services, but emotional and rational benefits that are encapsulated in a brand. Park *et al.* (2013) argue that  the design of the symbolic component of the brand draws on an understanding of consumers'social identities and self-concept to incentivise an aesthetic experience associations and attributes such as exclusivity, prestige, aspiration, exercising the self-image of target customer groups while generating repeat purchase decisions, loyalty and commitment. |

## 3.2.5 The evolution of brand management practices

Heding *et al.* (2015) argue that brand management research has evolved from the positivist and constructivist paradigms over the past four decades.

### 3.2.5.1The positivist-constructivist-connectivist branding paradigms

The emergence of branding as a business orientation coincided with the later stages of the industrial society and the transition to the information society (Heding *et al.* 2016). These authors maintain that

this period marked a departure from the positivist conception of the brand to the constuctivist or interpretive conceptions of the brand. These developments can be viewed from an industrial development perspective, where societal evolution passed through the invention of machines and manufacturing and the transactional engagement of consumers to the era of information-based society. Runyantsev (2015) argues that the societal transformation paradigms underpinned the transition from the industrial to the information and then to the knowledge society and catalysed the conception of corresponding industrial, information and knowledge products that underscore branding activities. Thus, this era influenced the evolution of brand management practices from the positivist stance on the brand as a promotional and monologic enterprise into a cooperative asset that is socially constructed and enjoys joint ownership by the company, the customer and the community.

The interpretive and constructivist branding paradigm, on the other hand, evolved at the intersection of the information and knowledge society paradigms. Hence, brand management activities and the resulting brand equity are viewed as social constructions and by-products of the active engagement and participation of the customer. Heding *et al.* (2020) identify seven branding approaches that are driven by changing societal development paradigms.These authors maintain that brands are social and economic assests that have evolved through the era of the rational and economic man (the economic approach), through the identity,the consumer-based and the personality views , to the relational , community and cultural conceptualisations of the brand.

### 3.2.5.2 The economic approach to branding

The economic approach to branding is grounded in positivism and marketing theory which assume that brands are institutional assets whose design and development should be directed mainly by management perception of consumer needs (Srivastava 2017). This conservative view of the brand thus reinforces positivist assumptions and the principles of the rational economic man to communicate brand positioning within the context of building the aesthetic, functional and emotional components of the brand, based on the institutionally-centred transactional calcualtions of brand economics (Bronnenberg, Dube, Moorthy 2019; Forbes Insight n.d ). Thus, the theoretical underpinning of this approach is based on transactional consumer engagement .

### 3.2.5.3 The identity approach to branding

The identity approach to branding reinforces the economic approach based on the assumption that consumers form impressions of companies, organisations and insitutions based on their encounter with all aspects of the enterprise. Thus, consumer interaction with an institution's employees and systems

play significant roles in the construction of corporate or institutional brand equity. Thus, Srivastava (2017) and Heding *et al.* (2020) argue that strong brands require the creation of a unified and recognisable visual and behavioural identity that generate unifying, reflective and contextually refractive benefits for the organisation. The identity approach to branding thus postulates that all brand communication actions should take the strategic approach in articulating, developing and communicating corporate brand identity. Scholars (Aaker 1997; Ohns 1978) assert that corporate or institutional identity formation should start with the articulation and positioned integration of visual expression of identity and the non-visual and soft attributes of an institution (Rashid 2012). These authors maintain that the outcome of corporate branding activities should be an enhancement of the reputational equity of the organisation or institution. This insititutional view of the brand conceptually reinforces the assumptions of the positivist approach to branding while contradicting the views of those scholars who view brand identity, including corporate brand identity, as evolutionary, non-linear, context-dependent and the by-product of deliberate negotiations between the insitution and its stakeholders (Miller 2010).

### 3.2.5.4 The consumer-based approach (CBA) to branding

The consumer-based approach (CBA) to branding assumes that the brand is recognised as a cognitive construct whose success is determined by the extent to which the cognitive behavioural attributes of the consumer are shaped to recognise, differentiate, accommodate and recall brand associations at the expense of competing alternatives (Heding *et al.* 2020). Thus, the CBA taps into the learning and sensory profiles of consumers to stimulate due diligence, initial and repeat purchase decisions. Consumer due diligence thus draws on the assumptions of the information processing theory to explain the sequence of processes that precede brand choice and initial purchase decision.

### 3.2.5.5 The personality approach to branding

Grounded in the positivist notion of consumer engagement, the personality approach to branding underscores the efficacy of imbuing brands with human personality attributes (Heding *et al.* 2020; Aaker 1997; Rashid 2012; Urde 2016). This approach draws on the understanding that the consumer quest for emotional benefits plays an important role in purchase decision-making (Park *et al.* 2013, 2010; Joo-Eon Jeon 2017). Thus, the brand owner or the institution draws on marketing intelligence on consumer attributes and contexts to design the functional and symbolic values that resonate with consumer personality and conceptions of self (Kotler & Keller 2012). These authors maintain that the personality approach to branding is controlled by the branding organisation but draws on human

personality constructs to develop brand values. Heding *et al.* (2020) maintain that the brand personality statement must be used for the long-term management of the brand.

### 3.2.5.6 The relational approach to brand building

The relational approach to branding is grounded on using the lived experiences of consumers with the brand to construct inner beliefs and realities which validate the brand proposition. Thus, branding evolved from the positivist paradigm and principles that are encapsulated in the economic, identity and consumer-based approaches. This phenomenological view of branding draws on deep understanding of consumers' personal contexts to design a brand value proposition that is grounded on intensive communication of brand positioning and co-ownership, co-value creation and exchange between the brand and the consumer. Thus, brand experiences of consumers, especially in cases of intense engagement, amplify the reality of brand essence within the frames of consumers' existentialist principles (Francis 2015; Kelchertmann 2009, 2018). Heding *et al.* (2020) maintain that the personality approach to branding signalled a shift from the institution-manipulated branding regimes that are represented in prior approaches, to a branding process that is participatory, experiential, experimental and phenomenologically driven in ways that reinforce the principles of a connective and knowledge-based society. Thus, the relational approach substitutes the transactional branding regimes with methods that harness consumers' experiences, inputs and relationship in the construction of brand identity.

### 3.2.5.7 The community approach to branding

The community approach draws on the nature of brands as social constructions to reinforce the relational view of branding. The proponents of this approach maintain that the brand is a cooperative asset whose ownership revolves around the triad of the institution, the consumer and the community. Thus, brand owners incentivise the formation of brand communities where members are unified by their commonality of values and shared moral obligations as salient features of the brand community. While deepening the relational structures of the brand, the community approach to branding liberalises brand ownership, identifies community norms and constructed channels, rituals and iterations which differentiate the brand. Thus, the emerging insight from this review, in relation to prevailing environmental and consumer trends like consumerism, the phenomenon of digital brands, customisation of consumption, and the purposeful branding literature (De Beers 2019; Accenture 2018; Branding Magazine 2014; Radley Yealder 2018), provides the conceptual and theoretical bases for the emergence of a new branding paradigm that may be called the connectivist branding paradigm.

## 3.3 The emergence of a new branding paradigm

Drawing on the conclusions in the preceding sections, this study sought to argue that, contrary to the views expressed in Heding *et al*. (2020), the cultural view of branding is subsumed in the community approach as both approaches draw on prior branding paradigms to set community and societal principles that facilitate the convergence of the visual and behavioural attributes of brands. Thus, the community view of branding stretches the theoretical boundaries of the constructivist branding paradigm to pave the way for the emergence of the heutagogic-connectivist branding paradigm. This emerging branding landscape mirrors the assumptions of the digital society to focus on the views of brands as digital assets which seeks to create purpose-driven values through the customisation and personalisation of brand value and the technology-enabled agency (TEA) of the brand. Thus, the TEA emerges as a salient brand identity attribute that is underscored by the constructivist-connectivist credentials of the brand within the purview of a digital/knowledge society. The implication is that brands and brand building must recognise the changing tracjectory of societal transformation, the accelerated pace of the deployment of technology to consumption and the trend of technical obsolescence as anchors for the design and development of the TEA as integral components of the identity of brands in general and services brands in particular (Mogaji, Restuccia, Lee and Nguyen 2022). The integration of TEL as integral parts of the identity of HE brands, thus draw on this premise to instruct the enactment of institutional pedagogical frameworks that would highlight the role of TEL in the TEA attributes as sustained basis of institutional recognition and sustainable competitive advantage (SCA).

### 3.3.1 Brand identity

There is consensus in the literature (Mogaji 2019; Urde 2016; Heding *et al.* 2020) that building a successful brand begins with the articulation of brand vision within the frames of an insitution's business environment. The pioneering work of Aaker (1997) outlines the role of strategic brand analysis and audit of institutional environment (customer analysis, competitor analysis, and self analysis) as forebearers to the articulation of brand identity (Rashid 2012; Urde 2016). These authors maintain that the pre-requisite processs of of strategic brand analysis facilitates insight on the strategic conception of the brand vision., brand culture, brand personality and brand essence. Heding *et al.* (2020) thus argue that the emergence of evidence from the strategic brand analysis underscores management decision on the design and integration of the visual and behavioural elements of brand identity. These authors contend that brand identity is made up of four sub-identities - organisational identity, corporate identity, image and reputation. Dowling and Otubanjo (2011) maintain that these sub-idenitites can be viewed from the perspectives of internal and external elements of brand identity. This is illustrated in Figure 3.2 below .
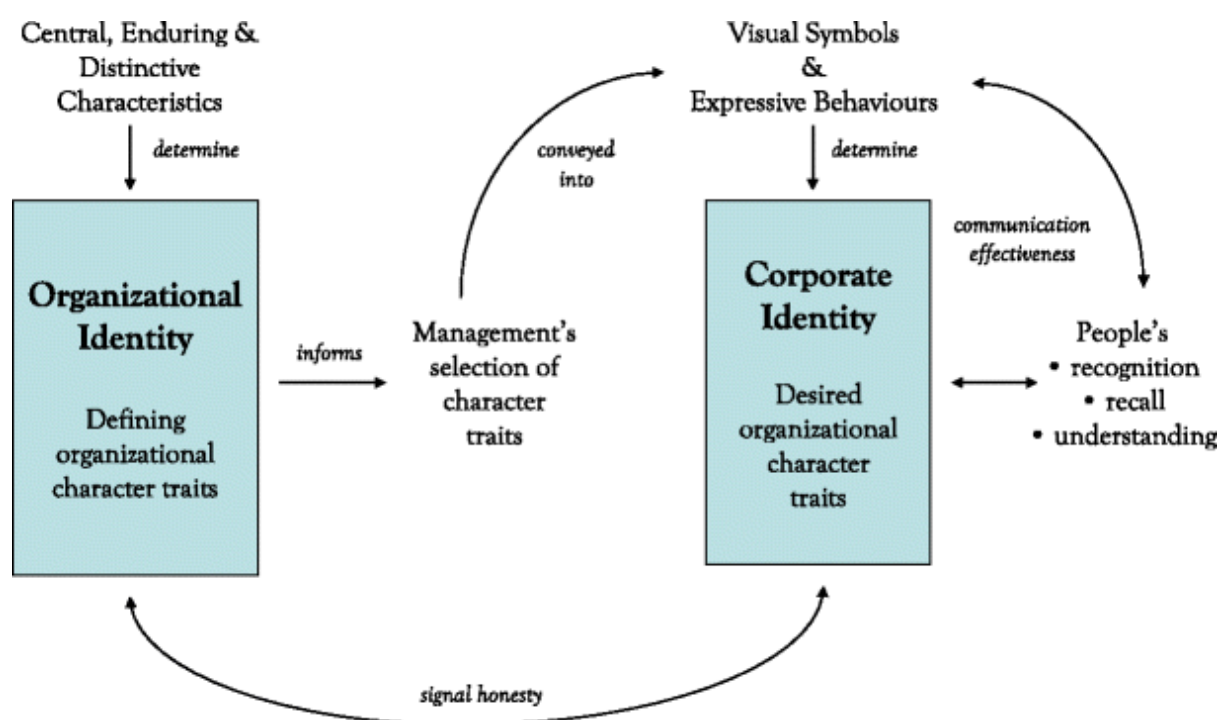
Figure 3 .2: A model of organisational and corporate identity

Source: Dowling and Otubanjo (2011:7)

The model draws on corporate identity literature (Dowling & Otubanjo 2011) to identify the distinction and evolutionary relationships between organisational identity and corporate identity in the formation of corporate image and reputation. These authors argue that organisational identity draws on organisational core values and other attributes to present an assembly of trait alternatives which direct the construction of brand physique including other visual and behaviourial attributes that manifest institutional identity and reputation. The implication is that organisational identity represents a manifested galaxy of an institution's structures, distinctive competencies and resources that are weaved together to manifest its corporate brand identity (Abimbola 2009). Drawing on this, Heding *et al.* (2009) contend that brand identity assumes a continuous discontinuity, captures institutional essence and makes claims of institutional distinctiveness by drawing on the organisational and corporates identities as internal resources for institutional image and reputation. The implication of the views of brand identity expressed in Abimbol (2009), Heding *et al.* (2009) and Dowining and Otubanjo (2011) is that brand identity emerges as a construct of sub-idenities. This is made manifest in in Balmer, Lao and Wang (2001, 2010). Drawing on their AC2ID (actual, communicated, conceived, ideal and desired) identity framework, these authors assert that brand identity, and corporate or institutional brand identity in particular, is a construct of the five sub-identities that are explained in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3. 2: The AC2ID  identity framework

| Sub-identity | Description |
|---|---|
| The actual identity | The organisation's true sense of self |
| The communicated identity | The communicated positioning  of the organisation |
| The conceived identity | The impression that emanates from how the organisation executes its stakeholder engagement strategies |
| The ideal identity | The recognition that the positioning of the brand enjoys relative to emerging environmental trends |
| The desired identity | The identity which the brand manager wishes to achieve. |

Source: Wang (2001, 2010)

From a corporate branding perspective, the later works of Hatch and Schultz (2003), as illustrated in Figure 2.7, sought to provide theoretical support to the views expressed in Aaker (1997). These authors articulated a corporate branding cone that envisions branding or corporate brands as the authentic outcomes of the triad of linkages between an instittuion's vision, culture and image.
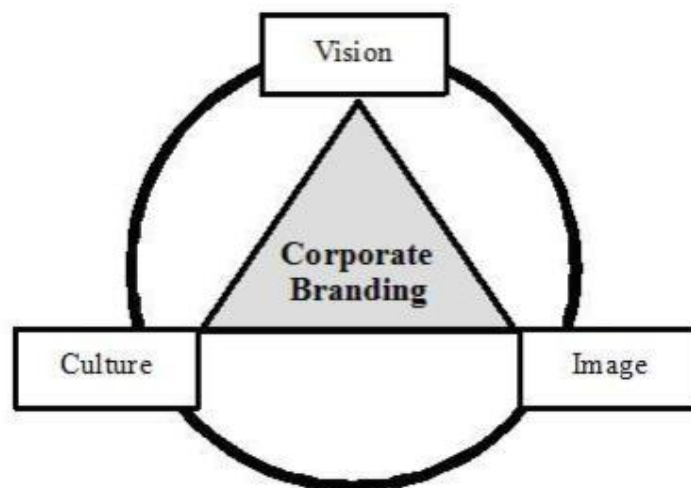


Figure 3. 3: A corporate branding framework

Source: Hatch and Schultz (2003:7)

The corporate branding pyramid thus elucidates how institutional vision influences the beliefs, structures, stories and shared meanings of an institution. Thus, institutional shared meanings tend to influence the symbolic resources that are reflected in institutional image. In conceptualising branding as a strategic communication tool, Kapferer (2012) and Rashid (2012) identify brand identity as a composite of six elements which interact to differentiate and confer recognition on a brand.

PICTURE OF SENDER
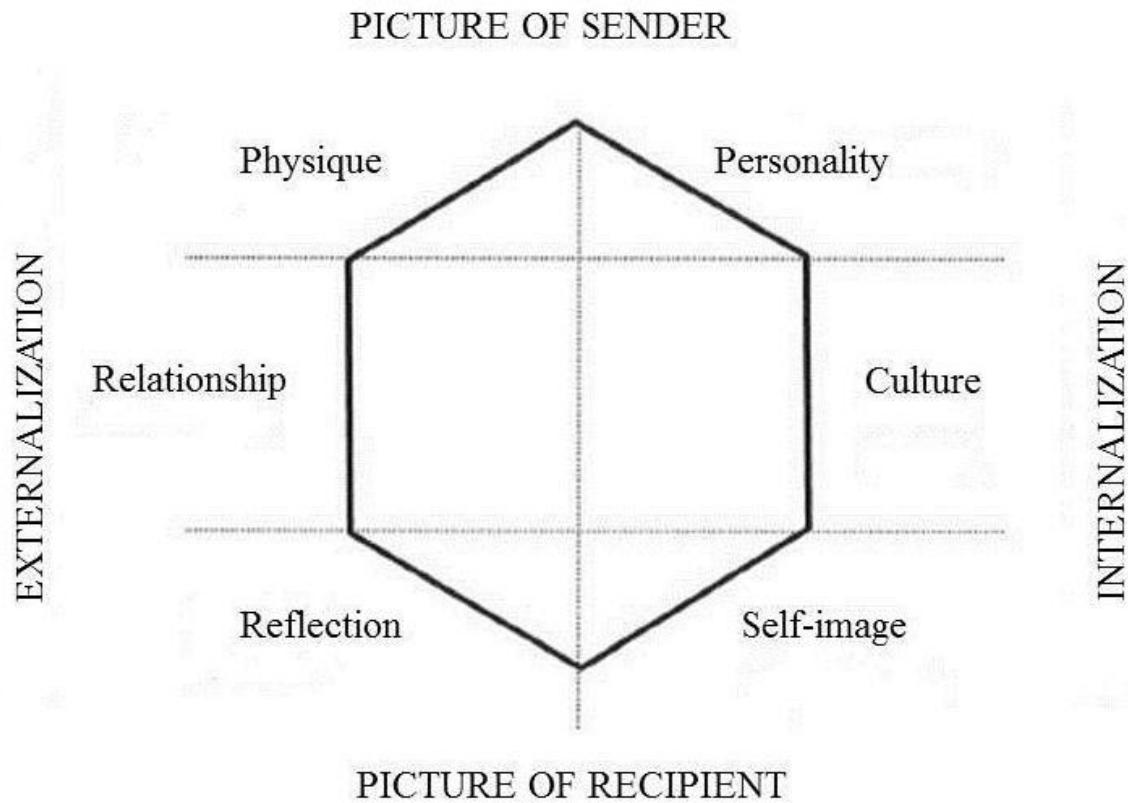


Figure 3. 4: Brand identity prism

 Source: Andreea (2013: 2)

As illustrated in Figure 3.4, Kapferer (2012) proposes that brand identity includes behavioural representations of a brand that differentiate and confer recognition on a brand. Thus, the brand identity prism identifies the brand as a communication medium and strategic asset through which the institution or company draws on the weaved elements of its DNA (at the product and corporate levels) to stimulate impressions within a target audience. Thus, the brand identity prism manifests the brand as a six-sided prism that can be recognised, differentiated and evaluated based on a binary of internal (non-visual elements like personality, culture and self image) and external and mostly tangible and visual components and outcomes like the brand physique, relationships and reflection. Kapferer (2012) mainatains that successful brands require recognisable human characteristics that draw on institutional norms and values to encapsulate an institutional sense of self. Hence, Kapferer (2012) and Rashid (2012) maintain that the value distillate that emerges from the integration of institutional personality and culture and self-image, manifest in the combination of functional attributes that emerge as the brand physique while orchestrating an impressionistic and reflective threshold with target consumers. The insight that is implicit in the views expressed above is that companies, organisations and institutions draw on the combination of market trends and institutional/corporate values to aticulate brand

personality, institutional self-identity and the types of self-image that are used as double inputs in the construction of the types of functional and emotional attributes that resonate with the needs and aspirations of consumers.

Table 3. 3: A deconstruction of the brand identity prism

| Kepfer's brand identity dimension | Description |
|---|---|
| Brand physique | The physical attributes that visualise the brand and evoke consumer emotions |
| Brand personality | Human attributes (e.g. sincerity, exceitment, competence, sophistication, ruggedness) which serve as the building blocks of the brand physique |
| Brand culture | The systems of values and principles that underscore the the behavioural and, to some extent , visual identity of the brand |
| Brand relationship | The evoked consumer response based on the extent to which the other identity elements convey and fulfil promises on the emotional and rational needs of customers |
| Brand reflection | The index of users who typically consume the brand. Thus, brand reflection serves to represent the complexity of users from whom the brand seeks relationships |
| Brand self image | The emotional connection that the brand seek to evoke based on the understanding of the target customers' view of their ideal selves. |

Sources: Andreea (2013); Kapferer (2012)

However, the classicsl works of Aaker (1997), Vallaster and De Chernatony (2005) and Kapferer (2012) on brand identity formation conceptualise branding with the assumptions of the positivist branding paradigm, which articulates the brand as an organisationally-controlled asset in an era that is dominated by passive recipients of brand information (Heding *et al.* 2009). These authors maintain that the prevalence of the digital society phenomenon and consumerism are trends that appear to invalidate the notion of brands as non-communal assets and consumers as passive recipients of monologic branding information.

Scholars (Edelman 2010; Adlmaier-Herbst & Heinrich Musiolik 2015; Rowe 2014, 2017) argue that while digital branding practices have attracted widespread practitioner and scholarly attention in the manufacturing and services sectors, studies that have investigated brand building and brand identity formation from a technology-enabled consumer agency perspective appear to be few or non-existent. This is against the backdrop of non-existence of studies that have investigated the constructivist and connectivist branding paradignms in a purely SSA perspective. Having been categorised as services in extant literature (Ng & Forbes 2009), this study seeks to bridge the existing knowledge gap in HE branding by examining the role of institutional pedagogical practices, including TEL and its connectivist assumptions, on the brand identity formation of Gambian universities. The increasing digitisation of relationships and consumption invalidates the notion of brands as private assets. Edelman (2010), Adlmaier-Herbst and Heinrich Musiolik (2015) and Rowe (2014, 2017) maintain that brands have evolved as community assets that are sensitive to societal trends, collective ownership, value co-

creation, and active communication and engagement. Scholars maintain that these trends must reflect in the brand identity building process.

## 3.5 Branding of HEIs in Africa

Research interest in HE branding has gained momentum. There is evidence (Stevenson *et al.* 2014; Cymera & Burke 2017; Clark *et al.* 2019; Effah 2017) that the growing scholarly interest in HE branding is driven by trends such as marketisation, corporatisation and entrepreneurism in the HE sector. These trends provide support to the view that economic development of nations is a goal that is driven by deliberately engineered HE systems (Kruss *et al.* 2015; Oketch, McGowan & Schendel 2014). These trends and views have over the years triggered a seismic shift in policy and structural conceptions of HE across the globe. This situation has since resulted in the emergence of such phenomena as branding, managerialism and pedagogical contestations in the global HE sector. However, there is growing debate (Mushemeza 2016; Varghese 2016; Doran 2017) on whether HEIs of Aftican origin have demonstrated adequate ablity and willingness to adopt and adapt to this sequence of intervening themes in the same way their counterparts in other parts of the world appear to be doing.

Drawing on these views, the evidence (Mogaji 2019; Kieu, Mogaji, Mwebesa, Sarofin, Soetan & Vululle 2020) indicates that HE branding research with specific focus on SSA is limited and scattered. The majority of the few extant publications on HE branding in Africa focus on investigating conceptions of visual brand identity (Mogaji 2019; Wayne, Farinloye & Mogaji 2020) and brand communication channels (Fomunyam 2020). The only accesssible investigation on the branding of African universities to date is documented in Effah (2017); Mogaji (2019) and (Wayne *et al.* (2020) The paucity of research unpacking the complexities of HE branding in a purely African context has left a knowledge gap that appears to contribute to the competitive disadvantage of African HEIs in an increasingly competitive global HE market. In his investigation of student-based brand equity (SBBE) and university preference in Ghana, Effah (2017) reports that SBBE is a construct of identity-driven variables which includes institutional reputation, institutional image, graduate outcomes and perceived institutional service quality. This author reports that each of these variables correlates positively with students' university choice-making. However, Effah (2017) reported somewhat of a weak relationship between university identity and students' university choice making. This evidence notwithstanding, the pervasive role of university identity in the construction of other positively related variables like brand image and reputation, and perceived institutional service quality, supports the conclusion that inactive or the projection of incomplete identity (in the case of the projection of visual identity alone), without positioning and active stakeholder engagement, will result in weak enrollment preferences from students. The implication of this view is that visual identity has a weak relationship with students' university choice-making patterrns. These findings are congruent with the findings in Pinar *et al.* (2011, 2014) . The insight that is emerging from these prior works is the implicit role of institutional pedagogy

in building the reputational equity of HEIs.  Mogaji (2019) explored the role of brand names and brand logo in the identity formation of private university brands in Africa. Limiting conceptualisation of university brand identity to the visual components of selected African universities, Mogaji (2019) reports a lack of congruence between the orchestration, design and adoption of university names and logos and how these are used to underscore university brand essence across different media channels. This author observes that there is evidence of lack of consistency in the content creation strategy of the studied case universities across different media channels. The implication, therefore, is lack of a clear theoretical underpinning and clarity on how university managers can use branding as a source of competitive advantage. In their review of the corporate visual identity of 200 universities in 24 countries in Africa, Wyne, Fariloye and Mogaji (2020) observe that the thought process behind the design and projection of corporate visual idenitity of African universities is questionable.

These views are reinforced in Fomunyam (2020). While exploring  the social media perspective of the branding strategies of universities in SSA and Egypt, Fomunyam (2020) observes that African universities demonstrate understanding of the competitive benefits of social media presence. This author identifies Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and university websites as the social media of choice for Africa universities. However, while noting that the marketing and branding activities of the selected universities across different social media platforms do not demonstrate messaging consistency, Formunyam (2020) cautions that lack of evidence of consistent communication of the brand essence of universities across social media platforms emerges as cases of missed opportunities against the backdrop of the demonstratble engagement powers of social media platforms.

The emerging insight from this section of this review can be subjected to further analyses from two perspectives. First, is that branding in HE is hugely under-researched. The second analytical perspective is that the paucity of research in this area appears to have left a knowledge gap on how the contextual realities of Africa's business environment can be exploited to institutionalise the types of brand management practices that are compatible with the competitive trend in global HE. The absence of studies that investigated HE brands beyond the visual identity research domain is consistent with the evidence of documented difficulties that are faced by the managers of African universities in deploying branding in their toolkit of competitive strategy.

## 3.5 The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix

Drawing on  its conceptual framework, this  study sought to unify the marketing and HE disciplines by examining the institutional pedagogical identity concept and the role it plays in the construction of brand identity of HEIs in The Gambia. Within this context, the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) (Urde 2013; Urde & Greyser 2015), as depicted in Figure 3-5, was used as the main framework of analysis.

As the theoretical outcome of a qualitative study (Urde 2013), and having been used in other qualitative exploratory studies such as Urde and Greyser (2015) and Matsuda (2017), the methodological and conceptual congruence of the CBIM and this study's objectives validates the use of qualitative research design principles and schemas in this study. Further to this, there is evidence (Colman 2022) that the use of the CBIM as a managerial tool has been gaining traction in practitioner literature. The matrix has been used in building or re-building the corporate brand identities of such companies and organisations as the Nobel Prize Organisation (which manages the Nobel Prize), Cargotec (a cargo-handling equipment manufacturer with operations in over 90 countries), Bona (a multinational wood floor decoration company), Intrium (a debt equity company) and Trellborg (a polymer technology manufacturer) (Greyser & Urde 2019).
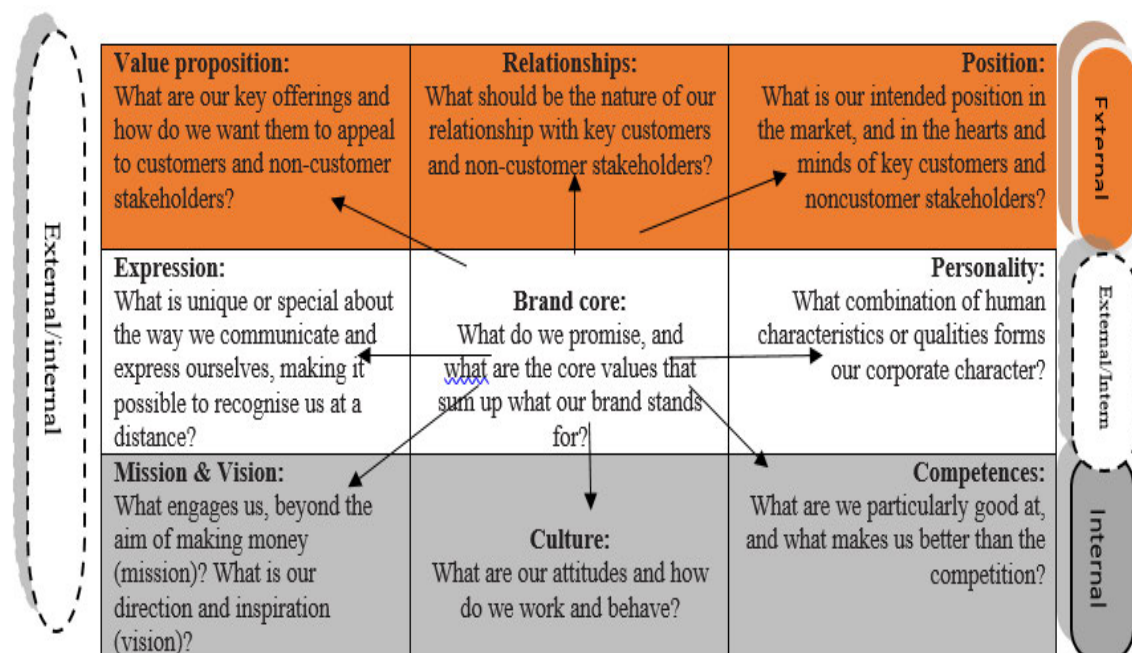


Figure 3 .5:Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM)

Sources: (Urde 2013; Urde and Greyser 2015)

In providing the framework for the pursuit of the managerial and theoretical contributions of this study, the CBIM identifies nine elements which interact vertically, horizontally, and diagonally to project how organisational values (bottom row), core values (middle row) and exernal values (top row) integrate as institutional sub-identities to form institutional brand identity. These sub-identities consequently interlock during the brand management process to emblemise the desired brand soul, stimulate brand knowledge and influence consumer response to the marketing of a brand to reflect the rational and emotional aspirations of pre-determined stakeholder groups. It is against this background that the CBIM (Urde 2013) presents institutional brand identity as a phenomenon that is derived from the interaction between nine identity elements which relate diagonally within the composite layers of an institution's business environment. As depicted in Figure 3.5, the elements in the bottom row serve as the internal

elements which underscore the formation and emergence of all other elements. The elements in the middle row emerge as the hybrid elements that are sandwiched between the internal and external environments. The hybrid elements tend to emerge as the functional variations of the internal elements while helping to project the communication roles of the external elements in the upper row.

### 3.5.1 The bottom row of the corporate brand identity matrix

The bottom row of the CBIM represents the internal elements, which reside in the micro environment of the institution. Urde (2013) identifies these elements as institutional mission and vision, institutional culture, and institutional competence. These elements emerge as symbols of organisational values which lay the foundation for the articulation of the subsequent six elements. The insight that is implicit in this view is that institutional brand identity can be viewed as an instrument of institutional affirmation and distinctiveness that needs to be anchored in widespread understanding of institutional purpose and aspiration, shared institutional values, beliefs, enacted patterns of behaviour (culture), and shared understanding of the distinctive capabilities of the institution. The CBIM, in the context of this study, provides the framework for conceptualising institutional pedagogy as a distillate of institutional mission and vision, and institutional culture that crystallises through institutional resource mobilisation patterns that culminate into superior institutional performance.

### 3.5.2 The middle row of the corporate brand identity matrix

The middle row of the CBIM are brand expression, brand core, and brand personality. Urde (2013, 2016) maintains that these elements emerge as intermediate elements that draw on the harmonised prescriptions of the internal elements to make brand promises while pursuing brand awareness goals (Bhargava & Bedi 2021). Urde and Greyser (2015) describe brand core as a distillation of all the values that unify to project the essence of the brand (Barnham 2021). The insight that is emerging from this view appears to be that brand core, while being the nucleus of the CBIM, emerges as a controlled manifestation of all other elements of the brand. Brand expression, for its part, includes all insititutional identification symbols (verbal or visual) which project easy identification of the brand. This may include tangible cues such as logos and trademarks, as well other emotional attributes which convey brand promise. Thus, brand promise stimulates consumer expectations and perceptions that are expressed through brand communication and verified at the points of value exchange or service encounters. Institutional brand personality, on the other hand, refers to the combination of features (employee and environmental features) that are consistently identifiable with a brand (Urde 2016). The implication appears to be that the elements in the middle row of the CBIM fulfil a hybrid role in projecting the combined intentions of the internal elements and the value conduits they embody to

external audiences. This projection emerges as the tangible and intangible value propositions, relationships, and positions which manifest in the upper row of the matrix .

### 3.5.3 The upper row of the corporate brand identity matrix

The three elements that constitute the upper row of the CBIM emerge as identity icons or symbols through which target markets interact with the brand. Urde (2013) argues that institutional value proposition, as an element of institutional brand identity, represents the external and market-based manifestation of the internal and middle elements that are designed to appeal to the rational and emotional aspirations of customers and non-customer stakeholders. Relationships, on the other hand, represent the organic evolution of customer-brand relationship from the inception of brand awareness, brand knowledge through repeat purchases, referrals and other partnerships. The consistency of brand-customer relationship has emerged to be very reliable in determing the extent to which brand promises and experience resonate with the needs and aspirations of the target market. Implicitly, the position element represents an evolutionary institutional self-identity element (institutional position relative to the competition) that seeks to reinforce institutional mission and vision while guiding managers to formulate brand positioning strategies. Thus, the elements in the upper row merge as the externally-situated institutional brand identity touchpoints through which stakehlders generate the impressions that culminate in the construction of brand image and reputation.

The implications of the CBIM as a managerial tool is that it enables brand managers to build strong brand identity by focusing on four managerial action points in the brand-building process. The first of these managerial action points include the identification and alignment of corporate elements that align the brand with corporate strategy. The second is the identification and alignment of corporate elements which define a brand's competitive values and market behaviour. The third is the identification and alignment of institutional or organisational elements which facilitate the definition of brand culture and stakeholder relationships .

The fourth is the identification and alignment of orgisational elements which facilitate brand positioning and stakeholder engagement. The analytical summary of the managerial action focus of the CBIM is presented in Table 3.4 .

Table 3.4:The managerial implications of the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix

| CBIM managerial action focus A: Corporate strategy formulation & alignment (A right-leaning diagonal relationship) | | |
|---|---|---|
| What is our positioning strategy? | What is our intended position in the market? Does this reinforce our brand promise? | **Brand position (strategy)** |
| What is our brand promise? And how does it reinforce our brand positioning, our core values and corporate mission? | **Brand core (strategy)** | What are our core values? |
| **Mission &vision (strategy)** | What is our mission? | What is our vision? |
| **CBIM managerial action focus B: Formulation of competitive portfolios, behavioural intentions & alignment (A left-leaning diagonal relationship)** | | |
| **Value proposition (competition)** | What is our value proposition? Are these in alignment with our competences? Do they have strategic fit with our core values? | What are the strengths and weaknesses of our competitors? |
| What is our brand promise? | **Brand core (competition)** | What are our core values? |
| Who are our competitors? | What are our distinctive competences? Are these in alignment with our value proposition? Do they have strategic fit with our value poposition? | **Competences (competition)** |
| **CBIM managerial action focus C: Formalisation of organisational norms and building stakeholder relationships (A vertical relationship)** | | |
| Who are our stakeholders? | **Relationships (interaction)** | What types of relationships do we intend to have with our stakeholders? |
| What is our brand promise? | **Brand core (interaction)** | What are our core values? |
| What organisational values should underscore our interaction with our stakeholders? Do such values resonate with our stakeholders? | **Corporate culture (interaction)** | What elements constitute our corporate culture & how do they underscore our market behaviour? |
| **CBIM managerial action focus D: Stakeholder engagement through strategic internal & external communication (A horizontal relationship)** | | |
| What is our communication style? | What is our brand promise? | What communication styles and channels should we engage our stakeholders with? |
| **Expression (communication)** | **Brand core (communication)** | **Personality (communication)** |
| What are our stakeholder categories? | What are our core values? How do we express this to the understanding of our target markets? How do they reflect in our value proposition? | What are our corporate personality traits and do they reinforce our corporate culture, competences & brand core ? |

Source: Urde & Greyser (2015); Greyser & Urde (2019)

### 3.5.4 Application of the corporate brand identity matrix to the higher education sector

The matrix presents institutional brand identity as a phenomenon that emerges from the deliberate integration of attributes to create shared meanings, practices and convictions that are unified and promoted through marketing communications (Greyser & Urde 2019). Drawing on this view, brand identity and institutional brand identity emerge as a symmetry of institutional/organisational values (internal elements), core values (hybrid elements) and external values (external elements) (Urde 2013). These elements interact to project a reflexive scheme of preferences and perceptions which ultimately identify and differentiate a brand.

The essence of HEIs is to offer educational experiences that are relevant and authentic within the framework of prevailing environmental realities. These educational experiences thus include relevant academic programmes, student engagement strategies and pedagogical enactments (Stevenson *et al.* 2014) which characterise the institutional brand identity. Drawing on this argument, Mourad *et al.* (2011) maintain that the concept of an institution's brand identity is the first step towards creating brand knowledge, brand awareness and, ultimately, brand equity. In this effort, CBIM provides the framework that draws on good understanding of the internal, competitive dynamics, and market dynamics, to harness latent and active institutional resources (staff and their pedagogic convictions, institutional teaching and learning infrastructures, institutional mission and vision, and core values) in the effort to nurture distinct institutional capabilities. Fundira (2021) argues that such capabilities must be valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, hard to substitute and weaved into the value chain of the institution in order to sustain emergent market advantages while reinforcing institutional brand reputation (Bobe & Kober 2015; Fundira 2021) .

The managerial implication of the forgoing view highlights CBIM with reference to institutional mission and vision in the managerial role of mobilising institutional resources (teaching and learning philoophies, academic programmes, knowledge transfer partnerships, academic staff reputation, industry linkages, and learning experience) into recognisable levels of insitutuional dexterity and observabale patterns of value chain activities. These activities tend to manifest in the brand identity elements that are represented in the upper quadrants of the CBIM. This is akin to the characterisation of brand identity by Mogaji, Maringe and Hinson (2020) as the global positioning systems (GPS) metaphor in university brand management. The integration of the aforementioned institutional resources, in alignment with the strategic direction of the institution, convey institutional distinctions that are valuable, relevant and adpatable to changing environmental trends (Fundira 2021; Mogaji *et al.* 2020).

Implicit in this view however, is the assumption that the construction of institutional brand identity is an endeavour that requires clarity and affirmation in the articulation and integration of the constructed attributes, benefits, and the cumulative attitudes of the brand into the marketing programmes of the brand (Mogaji *et al.* 2020; Buil, Martínez & de Chernatony 2013; Greyser & Urde 2019 ). Table 3.5 illustrates the application of CBIM to HE branding .

Table 3. 4: Application of the CBIM to HE

| CBIM brand ID elements | Application to higher education brands |
|---|---|
| **Institutional mission, vision and core values** | Institutional mission and vision statements that are responsive to emerging environmental realities, including teaching and learning philosophy statements |
| **Institutional brand culture** | Institutional shared mranings including pedagogic and epistemic philosophy, institutional reputation |
| **Institutional competence** | Symmetry of academic programmes, knowledge transfer partnerships, academic staff reputation, industry linkages, teaching and learning infrastructure |
| **Institutional brand core** | Academic programmes, teaching and research quality, teaching and learning philosophy (Valitov 2014), staff reputation, industry linkages |
| **Institutional expression** | Consistent communication of brand promise across multiple media. This may include generation-based, pedagogy-based, research-based, reputational-based positioning and the impressions conveyed through visual representations of the brand. |
| **Institutional personality** | Academic programmes, teaching and learning philosophy, institutional mission and values and other attributes that form the core character of the brand |
| **Institutional value proposition** | Academic programmes, industry linkages, teaching and learning philosophy, learning environments, institutional positioning on research |
| **Brand position** | Graduate employment outcomes, Academic staff reputation, exchange programmes, university positioning, reputation, graduate career prospects, learning environment (Ivy 2008; Pinar *et al.* 2011) |
| **Institutional relationships** | Stakeholder relationships based on the principles of co-ownership and value co-creation. |

Drawing on the main assumptions of the CBIM and its adoption as the main theoretical framing in this study, the emerging insight suggests that enacted pedagogical practices can feature as organisational shared meanings within the framework of the institutional brand identity formation efforts of HEIs. This insight further highlights the emergent pedagogy paradox in the brand management practices of HEIs, especially those in SSA. As stated previously, this study was constructed to address the knowledge gap that accompanies this paradox.

## 3.6 Institutional brand identity and institutional pedagogical practices

Drawing on the assumption of the CBIM, institutional brand identity emerges as a construct that is constitutive of institutional shared meanings and practices that are unified for the purpose of identification, recognition and a desired differentiation within a sector, industry or market (Urde & Greyser 2015). Institutional pedagogical practices, on the other hand, have emerged as institution-wide teaching and learning philosophies which underscore teaching and learning and research experiences, and other forms of student engagement. Institutional pedagogical practices are thus conceptualised as the spectrum of learner engagement methods that are driven by policy and institutional vision while demonstrating the skewed ontological and epistemological positions of HEIs (Hamilton *et al.* 2017). While there are currently very few studies (Peruta, Hamula & Gayeski 2015; Ng 2016) on the link between institutional brand identity and institutional pedagogical practices, evidence in practititioner literature indicates that universities and other HEIs that have pedagogical enactments tend to use such enactments for purposes that are beyond the construction of institutional behavioural identity (Heding *et al.* 2009; RRU 2019; Askehave *et al.* 2015; Jansen 2019). Hamilton *et al.* (2017) and Stevenson *et al.* (2014) argue that such institutions also use enacted pedagogical practices as integral elements of market positioning and communication. This claim is made manifest in the teaching and learning philosophy statements of universities, especially universities in Europe, North America and a select number of countries in South East Asia.

## 3.7. Teaching and learning philosophy statements of selected universities

The literature on teaching and learning philosophy statements has been confined to faculty's expression of their conceptions of teaching and learning in a global HE enivornment that is replete with change. Scholars note that such expressions are expected to embody faculty's pedagogical convictions and their underlying justifications.Thus, teaching and learning philosophy statements demonstrate faculty's reflective practice while also communicating their professional values. This insight therefore raises the argument that teaching and learning philosophy statements are essential in the performance management functions of HE managers. The added dimension of the view of teaching and learning philosophy statements as a performce management tool, is the fact that such statements run symmetrical with institutional mission and the pedagogical identity of HEIs (RRU 2019; Hamilton *et al.* 2017). Drawing on this, Sharma, Tripathi and Pankag (2020) argue that statements of teaching and learning philosophy emerge as the outcome of the recognition of perceived quality of staff and institutional environment as core dimensions of the brand identity of HEIs. Thus, HE managers tend to draw on the discourses of faculty's teaching and learning philosophy statements in their assessment of the degree of congruence that exists between the triad of faculty, institutional mission and institutional core values. Hence, the symmetry that emerges elucidates frozen conceptions of institutional purpose and

institutional brand identity. It is against this background that the teaching and learning philosophy statements of a select list of universities have been reviewed against the backdrop of the context of the role of such statements in the brand identity formation of those institutions (Pinar *et al*. 2011).

Table 3. 5: Teaching & learning philosophy statements at RRU

| HEI | Country of Origin | Teaching & Learning Philosophy |
|---|---|---|
| Royal Roads University (RRU) | Canada | Learning and Teaching Research Model (LTRM) |

**Underpinning Principles:** Teaching and learning are grounded in social constructivism (which suggests that learning occurs as we interact with others and the world), and social constructionism (which assumes that effective learning occurs through exposure to multiple, interpretivie understandings, attitudes and beliefs about the world through shared dialogue). This framework is thus grounded in UNESCO's five pillars of learning: learning to know, to do, to live together, to be, and to transform oneself and society. This philosophy is applied through ACT (Applied and Authentic, Caring and Community-Based, and Transformational).

Table 3 .6: Teaching & learning philosophy statemens at Aalborg & Maastricht universities

| HEIs | Country of Origin | Teaching & Learning Philosophy/ Framework |
|---|---|---|
| Maastricht University Aalborg University | The Netherlands , Denmark | Problem-based Learning (PBL) |

**Underpinning principles:** The location of teaching and learning activities within an authentic real-world problem needs to recognise learners' prior knowledge. Thus active collaboration-based activities are used to provide learning guidance. The learning problems often require scaffolding, hence direct instruction may be used at inception, while progressively allowing learners to direct their learning activities. It reinforces the mixed pedagogy principle. Learners play active role in the planning and monitoring of their learning-centred projects. Students have the responsibility to choose their own projects and thus detertmine the critical elements of the project for feedback and critical reflection on their own learning. The tutor takes on facilitation role based on the stipulated learning outcomes and the general provisions of the curriculum.

The pedagogic configuration places emphasis on collaborative and self-directed learning. Thus, teaching and learning activities are designed in a way that students collaborate on completing learning projects over a time period. Learning principles like knowledge-sharing, collective decision-making, academic discussions, action coordination, mutual and critical feedback are observed. Learning activities are designed using the knowledge transfer partnership (KTP) and this allows student and,

supervisors to work in close collaboration with external partners like businesses where the real-life problem is located.

Table 3. 7: Teaching & learning philosophy statement at Victoria University

| HEI | Country of Origin | Teaching and Learning Philosophy/Framework |
|---|---|---|
| Victoria University(VU) | Australia | Engaged Learning in Block Mode |

**Underpinning principles:**The underpinning principles to Victoria University's teaching and learning philosophy include: active & inquiry learning, team-based learning (working collaboratively in teams in real-life problems), work-integrated learning (working in real work settings and interacting with professionals), Intercultural engagement and cultural diversity (developing the intercultural awareness levels of graduates through inclusive approach to learning, remote learning and teaching (promting graduates ability to collaborate virtually/'remotely), and universal design for learning (UDL) (which promotes a framework for designing learning environments that respond to learners' needs, rather than expect them to fit into a pre-exisiting learning environment (McCluskey, Weldon & Smallridge 2019).

Table 3. 8: Harvard University teaching & learning framework

| HEI | Country of Origin | Teaching and Learning Philosophy/Framework |
|---|---|---|
| Harvard University | United States of America | Case-Based Learning |

**Underpinning principles:**Experiential, problem-based, collaborative, and inquiry-based learning through nine centres for teaching and Learning: Strengthening Learning and Teaching Excellence (SLATE) at HKS, Teaching, Learning & Curriculum Solutions (HLS), The Academy (HMS), The Learning Incubator (SEAS), Active Learning Labs (SEAS), Christensen Center for Teaching and Learning (HBS), Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning (FAS), Global Health Education and Learning Incubator (GHELI), Teaching and Learning Lab (HGSE).

Table 3. 9: Teaching & learnng framework of Uniersity of Illinois at Urban Champaign

| HEI | Country of Origin | Teaching and Learning Philosophy/Framework |
|---|---|---|
| University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign | United States of America | Case-Based Learning (CBL) |

**Underpinning principles:**The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's pedagogical philosophy is grounded on participatory teaching and learning, real-life problem solving, collaboration through discussion-based learning. This goal of this philosophy is to enable students to gain critical thinking,

communication skills, and group dynamics competences. The approach seeks to optimise partnership between students and teacher and among students, contextual learning (and knowledge transfer partnerships with industry),

Table 3. 10: Teaching & learning philosophy of London Business School

| HEI | Country of origin | Teaching & learning philosophy |
|---|---|---|
| London Business School (University of London) | United Kingdom | Problem/Case-based learning (CBL) |

**Underpinning principles :**The core principles that underpin teaching and learning at Londn Business School (LBS) are 'Research -driven, diversity in learning experience, innovation, learning in practice'. The problem/case-based teaching and learning philosophy draws on the core principles of inqury-based learning (research) to expose learners' to complex and authentic real world problems using teaching and learning contexts(business cases) that encourage guided and independent discovery, collaboration, dialogue and reflection .

Table 3. 11:Teaching & learning philosophy of University of Pretoria

| HEI | Country of Origin | Teaching and Learning Philosophy/Framework |
|---|---|---|
| University of Pretoria | South Africa | Inquiry-based Learning (IBL) |

**Underpinning Principles :**The inquiry-based teaching and learning philosophy reinforces the university's status as a research-intensive university. Thus, teaching and learning activities are guided by the shared meaning of guided inquiry from the outset. This philosophy is based on university's goal to graduate independent learners who are are critical, adaptive, intellectually curious and competent at identifying and solving problems drawing on their understanding of a variety of knowledge paradigms.

These universities, especially Aalborg, Maastricht and Harvard, identify themselves as champions of PBL and CBL teaching and learning philosophies respectively. The RRU and VU, on the other hand, developed specialised models - the Learning, Teaching and Research Model (LTRM) and the Block Model - as enacted pedagogical instuments that underpin teaching and learning practices across all schools and faculties. Implicitly, these pedagogy-based distinctions and competencies feature prominently in the institutional pedagogy ststements of these universities. In the case of Harvard University, the institution demonstrates its case-based pedagogical identity by recognising the epistemic variations across disciplines and designing its teaching and learning philosophy along the frames of the epistemic requirements of various disciplines (Harvard 2020). This evidence demonstrates how enacted institutional pedagogical philosphies can be used to form institutional shared meanaings on the mix of teaching and learning methods that may be practised across disciplines. This evidence therefore supports the view that variations in disciplinary requirements should not pose any inhibition on the

enactment of institution-wide pedagogic philosophy (Hamilton *et al.* 2017). While the relationship between the pedagogical identities of these institutions and their global competitiveness using a broad range of criteria is yet to be investigated, there is evidence that their pedagogical identities facilitate the types of positoning  and distinctions that is visible in their comparative student and faculty enrollment information (Effah 2017; Pinar *et al.* 2011, 2014; RRU 2017; VU 2019). However,  there is no evidence in the literature on the widespread enactment of institutional pedagogical philosophy and the use of such in the competitive positioning of HEIs in Africa. With the exception of University of Pretoria in South Africa, there is no evidence of  managerial awareness of the potential branding benefits of writing institutional teaching and learning philosophy statements  and the integration of such  in the positoning strategies of African universities. This situation thus supports the rationale for the PedaL and Tunning Africa initiatives that are just beginning to gain traction across the continent. Unlike the websites of universities in other regions of the globe, African universities tend to focus their marketing and branding efforts on the visual components of laissez faire insituional brands. This conclusion is drawn from a visible pattern of elaborate and often times stale web listings of courses and programme portfolios (Mogaji 2019, 2020). The implication for this situation therefore is that there is currently no pattern of institutional enactments of pedagogical practices within African HEIs.

## 3.6 An emerging  gap in the literature

The knowledge gap that is emerging from this review is a lack of understanding on how institutional pedagogy can be fully integrated as a critical element of institutional identity formation. As indicated in Table 3.12 below, the only studies that have reported the closest indication of the potential of pedagogy in the brand mamangemt of HEIs are Peruta *et al.* (2015) and Ng (2016). However, these studies provide no theoeretical underpinning on how institutional pedagogical doctrines may be used in building the brand identity of HEIs. Peruta *et al.* (2015) acknowledge that the most important product of HEIs is arguably the teaching and learning experiences that they offer.  Although evidence of a link between pedagogy and university brand identity emerged from their findings, these authors argue that such link remains tenuous, as it remains unclear how pedagogy reflects on institutional brand identity. The further insight that is implicit in this is that there exists an acknowledgement  that teaching quality and learners' experience, which themselves are constructs that are underpinned by pedagogy, are pivotal to the value-proposition of HEIs. Drawing on this, therefore, it could be inferred that the speculation about the tenousness of the the link between pedaogy and institutional brand identity would not only amount to a depiction of a paradox, it would also embody anecdotal conclusions given the absence of solid evidence in support of the claim. Ng (2016) identifies pedaogy as an institutional metaphor that is critical in the  positioning and  characterisation of HE brands. Without proposing any theoretical guidelines, Ng (2016) asserts that institutional pedaogy is critical especially when using the experience/emotion-driven approach to the characterisation of HE brands. While Peruta *et al.* (2015)

and Ng (2016) acknowledge some links between pedagogy and the brand identity of HEIs but offer no theoretical guidelines, the other sources identifed in Table 3.12 below report HE branding studies in varying settings without any focus on the link between pedaogy and the brand identity of HEIs. The resulting knowledge gap provides further rationale for this study.

Table 3. 12:Selected sources on higher education branding

| Author and date | Title of article | Theme/main assumptions |
|---|---|---|
| Ng (2016) | Hottest brand, coolest pedagogy: approaches to corporate branding in the Singapore HE sector | Personalisation and characterisation of brand using experience/emotion-oriented approach. |
| Mogaji, Maringe & Hinson (2020) | Strategic marketing in higher education in Africa | Marketisation, strategic marketing and branding of universities in Africa. Theoretical and managerial perspetives in developing university brands in Africa. |
| Peruta, Hamula Gayeski (2015) | The complex challenge of branding in HE. Where is the pedagogy? | Elements of a university brand. The notion of pedagogical brand. The link between HE brand identity and pedaogy is tenous. No clarity on how pedaogy impacts university brand identity. |
| Palmer, Keonig-Lewis & Asaad (2016) | Brand identification in HE: A conditional process analysis | Academic and social experiences of students as distinctive components of HE brands |
| Foroudi, Dinnie, Kitchen, Melewar & Foroudi (2017) | IMC antecedents and the consequences of planned brand identity in higher education | Service attributes, public relations & country-of-origin (COO) effect as essential compoanents of university brands |
| Clark, Chapleo & Suomi (2019) | Branding higher education: An exploration of the role of internal branding on middle management in a university rebrand. | With a focus on public sector branding, the paper examines how internal branding may be used to improve the objectives of university brands |
| Melewar & Akel (2005) | The role of corporate identity in the higher education sector. A case study | The adoption of Melewar and Jenkins model of corporate identity components (communication & visual identity, corporate behaviour, corporate culture, market coditions) in the HE sector |
| Kieu, Mogaji, Mwebesa, Sarofin, Soetan & Vululle (2020) | Moving from research to practice: Marketing higher education in Africa | Strategic marketing of African universities. The branding philosophy in an era of deregulation and competiton in HE. Marketing and branding as sources of sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) in Africa's HE market |

| Mogaji (2019) | Branding private universities in Africa: An unexplored territory | Branding trends and practices within private universities in Africa |
|---|---|---|
| Wayne, Farinloye & Mogaji (2020) | Analysis of African universities' corporate visual identities | Universities as brands. Theories of coporate visual identity and visual identity framework for universities |
| Dean, Arroy-Gamez, Punjaisri & Pich (2016) | Internal brand co-creation: The experiential brand meaning cycle in higher education | Managing university brands as socially-constructed assets through the co-creation of brand meaning with employees. Employee brand experiences and internal interactions as assets that are framed to be symbolic, historical, and phenomenological. The extent to which these interactions can be harnessed to set institutional brand knowledge and positioning objectives. |
| Chapleo & Clark (2016) | Branding a tertiary institution by committee: An exploration of internal brand analysis and management processes | The effectiveness of stakeholder committees in managing university brands. The theoretical underpinnings of inclusive brand management strategy in building brand knowledge and brand awareness |
| Chen (2019) | The mediating effect of brand identity on brand knowledge and the operational development of universities | Brand identity and brand knowledge as significant variables in the construction of the brand reputation of universities |
| Balmer, Mahmoud & Chen (2020) | Impact of multilateral place dimensions on corporate brand attractiveness and identification in higher education | Social idenity theory as the theoretical basis for brand identity formation. Employees and customers alike identify themselves in the context of their insitution's corporate brand identity. Thus, brand identity emerges as a logical outcome that is used by customers as an outpost for their association with the institution (emotional associations) |
| Pinar, Trapp, Girard & Boyt (2011) | Utilizing the brand ecosystem framework in designing branding strategies for higher education | The Brand Ecosystems Framework and the value chain of HEIs. The framework idenitifies students and their learning experiences as the brand core of HEIs. The study proposes a symmetry of relationships between the core and support dimensions of HE brands in the effort to construct the reputational equity of HEIs |

## 3.7 A conceptual framework

The emerging insight from the review of extant literature in the preceding chapter and sections suggests that African universities are yet to demonstrate the ability or willingness to initiate the types of strategic and tactical responses that emerging trends in global HE require. Although no empirical or theoretical reasons have been ascribed to this strategic lethargy by HEIs in SSA, Nyangau (2014) hints at the sequence of intractable conceptual and structural challenges that hinder quick response to change at all levels of HE management in Africa. It is against this background that this thesis draws on the research question to facilitate preliminary understanding of the pedagogical and marketing and branding practices of the selected HEIs. Thus the study aimed to generate insight into the extent to which institutional pedagogical practices feature as institutional identity elements that may be leveraged to influence institutional brand identity. As shown in the framework below, this study draws on exisiting learning theories (Vygotsky 1978; Dewey 1998; Piaget 1985; Bruner 1996), as well as the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) (Urde 2013; Urde & Greyser 2015), to explore the notion of institutional pedagogical identity within the framework of institutional branding of HEIs. Although significant epistemological variations exist in the basic assumptions of the aforementioned theories, they espouse varying blends of interpretivism as a shared epistemology of learning. Hence, the review of extant literature in this study is underscored by the progressive evolution of learning theories (from the behaviourist to the connectivist perspectives) and their roles in shaping the evolution of knowledge and the pedagogical practices and identities and brand identities of HEIs.
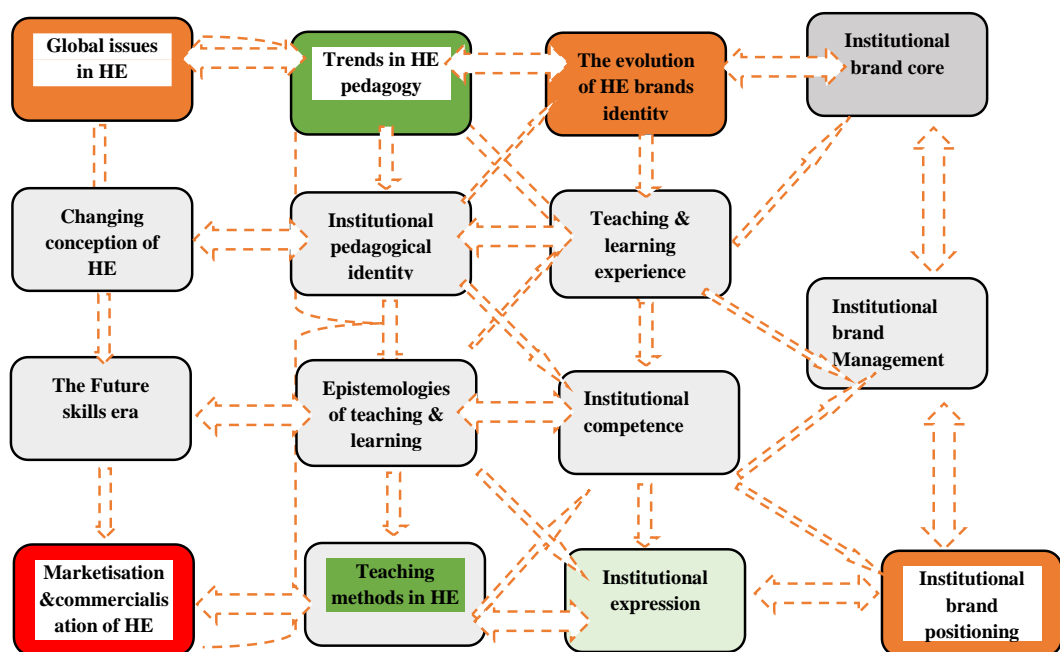
Figure 3. 6: Aconceptual framework of the study

Source: Based on Burke et al. 2015; Hamilton et al. 2017; Vokatis & Zhang 2016; Urde 2013

The assumptions that are implicit in the conceptual framework include those of Bruner (1996), who argues that models of effective learning are founded in guided discovery, simulation, incidental and problem-based learning. Piaget (1985), on the other hand, proposes that effective teaching and learning must recognise the successive stages of assimilation, accommodation and equilibration during which learners evolve into the readiness to adapt and construct meanings within the learning interface. Dewey (1998) rejects the notion of repetitive transmission of knowledge by the all-knowing sage on the stage (Biggs 2003, 2013). Instead, he proposes that the directed learning approach (in which experiential and problem-based approaches to teaching and learning are foregrounded) be enacted within educational institutions, with the goal of unlocking the creative potential of learners while using interaction and collaboration as the norm at the learning interface. In buttressing this view, Bluden and Scmolze (2004), in their evaluation of Vygotsky (1978), assume that cognitive development is rooted in the social interaction of learners and mediated by tools that are themselves the creations of the interactive evolution of socially-active learners. Hence, effective learning should result in the acquisition of critical thinking skills, independent problem-solving and other transferable skills. Vygosty's theory of cognitive development (Wass, Harland & Mercer, 2011) thus identities the zone of proximal development (ZPD), scaffolding and learners' self-efficacy as the three schemes that ought to inform how HEIs structure learning. While the ZPD assumes that learners develop higher cognitive levels when the learning process is supported by interactions and groups, scaffolding facilitates learners' implicit

link at the threshold of the learning process and thus stimulates learners' interest by creating the context for the independent construction of meanings and the extension of existing knowledge. The scaffolding process thus lays the foundation for active learning. The notion of active learning that is defined in extant research (Hartikainen, Rintala, Pylväs & Nokelainen 2019) draws on the interpretivist paradigm to enhance learners' beliefs in their competence to independently and successfully perform assigned tasks. This assertion thus appears to support the argument that a link exists between pedagogy and learners' self-efficacy.

## 3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter sought to discuss the concept of brands and branding in the HE sector. In exploring the knowledge gap that exists in the application of branding to the management of HEIs, this chapter presented a review of the evolution of brands and the points of their introduction to the management of HEIs. This chapter traced the environmental as well as conceptual rationales for the emerging prevalence of branding in the global HE sector. Then, the chapter discussed the evolutionary symmetry between branding and social and economic evolutionary paradigms. This symmetry stretches from branding practices underpinned by the promotional and monologic representation of brands as company assets, to more recent perspectives and practices that view brands as dialogic and socially-constructed assets. The chapter highlighted the evidence that brands, as dialogic and socially-constructed assets, enjoy the cooperative ownership of the company or institution, the customer, and the community. This is supported with a synthesis of brand and pedagogic evolution revealing the conjecture that exists between the evolutionary path of brands and higher education pedagogy. This chapter draws on this evolutionary symmetry to highlight the importance of marketing and branding to HEIs. This is further supported by cases of HE branding practices that enhanced the distinctions and competitiveness of the HEIs that apply them. This insight provided further basis for the extrapolation of the CBIM to the branding of HEIs. The review of CBIM in the context of the institutional identity of HEIs, provided support for the assumed role of pedagogy as an institutional competence in anchoring the visibility and the behavioural identity of HEIs. In the effort to further support the rationale of this, this chapter uses a the review of a select number of higer education branding literature to highlight exisiting knowledge gap as a result of the absence of a dedicated higher education brand identiy matrix. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of role of pedagogy in the teaching and learning philosophy statements in a select number of HEIs.

# CHAPTER 4 : RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research methodology and design decisions in this study. The chapter outlines the plan, steps and procedures that were used for data collection and analysis. Then, the chapter draws on the research question to explain and justify the adopted research philosophy and the rationale for the blended adoption of multiple variations of interpretivist research philosophy. The underpinning impact of the research philosophy on the design of the study is consequently explained. In this effort, the chapter explores how the adopted inductive reasoning to data collection influenced the decision to adopt a case study strategy. The research strategy section, however, begins with a detailed evaluation of different qualitative research strategies while drawing on the emergent insight to justify the adoption of the case study as the strategy of this study.

The epistemological underpinnings of the interpretivist philosophy and its support for the choice of research method and data collection methods is also discussed. This is followed by discussion on how appropriateness (the case institutions' fitness-for-purpose for the study and the phenomenon under inquiry) and adequacy (in the chosen number of the case institutions) were used as criteria for the selection of study sites and case institutions. The subsequent section explains the choices of data quality control measures while offering insight on the reasons why the statistical data quality control measures used in quantitative research are substituted with credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in qualitative research. The chapter concludes with an explanation of data analysis decisions and procedures, as well as the ethical considerations supported the study.

## 4.2 Research design

Figure 4.1 illustrates the assumptions that guided the methodological desisons that were made in this study. Thus, the research design draws on the research problem, to highlight the conceptual imperatives that underpin the study's philosophical framing, the research approach and the consequent data collection methods that were used in this study.
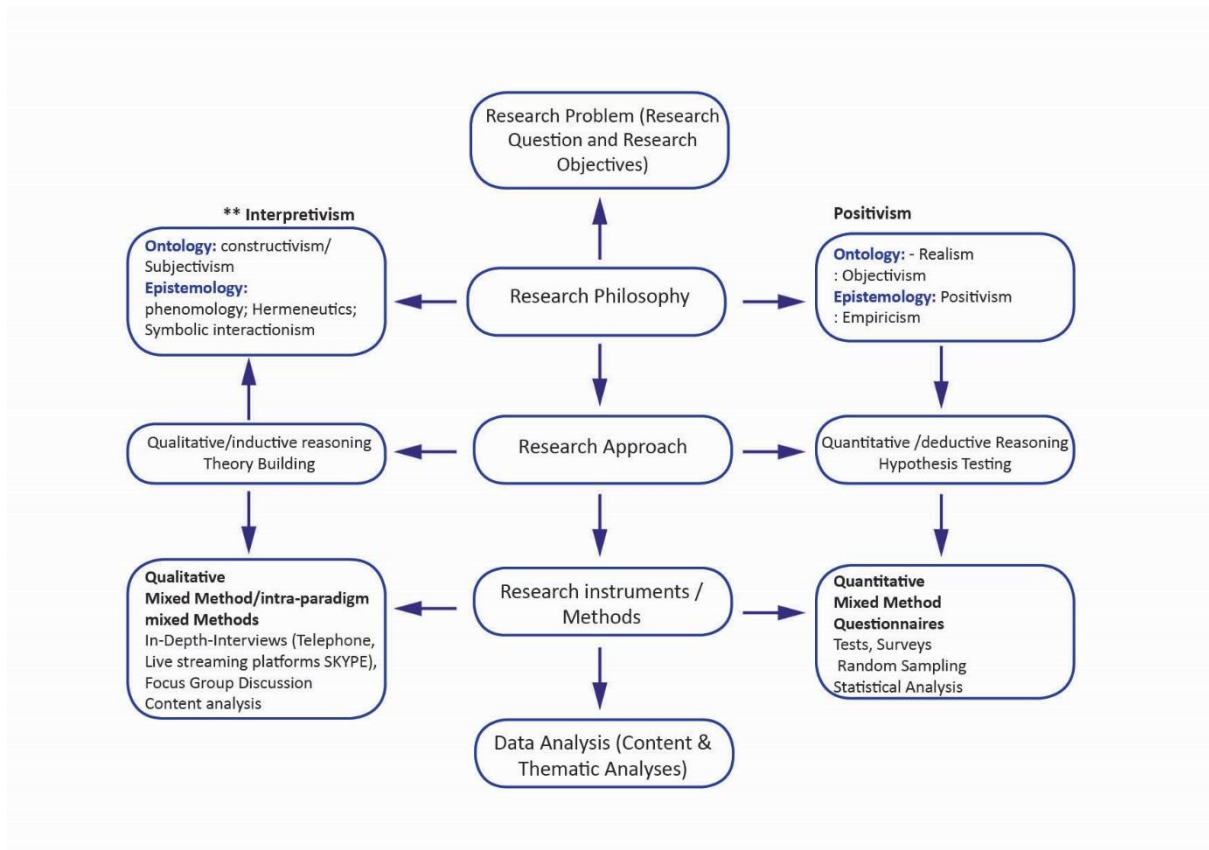
Figure 4. 1: Research Design

Source: Adapted from Tuli,(2010) and Effah (2017)

## 4.3 Research philosophy

The research problem emanates from the situation of relative newness of HE in The Gambia, where university education was first introduced only two decades ago. In concert with the relative newness of HE branding in HE scholarship, and the paucity of research in this area (Chapleo & Reader 2014), this study sought to bridge existing knowledge gaps on brand management practices of HEIs in Africa in general, and The Gambia in particular. Hence the following broad research question was proposed: What role do pedagogical practices play in the brand identity formation of selected universities in The Gambia? In order to develop in-depth holistic understanding of the phenomena that are highlighted in the research question, the following research objectives were pursued:

- RO$_1$: To understand the brand management practices of selected HEIs in The Gambia
- RO$_2$: To understand current pedagogical practices of these HEIs
- RO$_3$: To explore the institutional brand identity of these HEIs
- RO$_4$: To explore the link between institutional pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity at these HEIs

Drawing on this background, the design and methodological decisions that underscore scientific investigations in general and management and business research in particular are influenced by the researcher's philosophical position. Saunders *et al.* (2019) present research philosophies as belief systems and assumptions that guide the development of knowledge. Hence, the philosophical and methodological positions of a researcher are essential in drawing a study's paths to reasoning and reaching conclusions (Saliya 2017; Saunders *et al.* 2019). These authors maintain that researchers need to draw on the research question, the researcher's skills, access to data and ethics to make informed choices of research philosophy. Thus, a study that explores the role of pedagogical practices in the brand identity formation of HEIs will conceptually be guided by either one management research philosophy or a hybrid of research philosophies whose ontological and epistemological underpinnings rationalise the exploratory nature of the research question and research objectives.

In this effort, therefore, Saunders *et al.* (2019) and Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2018) identify the research philosophies that are highlighted in Table 4.1 while conducting a critical evaluation of their suitability using their ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions as the evaluation criteria. In this study, what constitutes acceptable knowledge that can be improved upon in the scholarly arena of HE branding is also influenced by the adopted research philosophy. Hence, Table 4.1 provides an evaluation of alternative research philosophies.

Table 4. 1: A summary of research philosophies

| Research philosophy | Ontology | Epistemology | Axiology |
|---|---|---|---|
| Positivism | Objective reality that is universal and external to the researcher. | Quantitative measures, scientific methods, causalities and rule-based generalisations on observable and measurable facts. | The observed and measured facts are independent of the researcher's values. |
| Critical realism | Social realities are functions of the social, political, historical, ethnic, economic, racial and gendered structures and causal mechanisms. | Knowledge is historically relative while facts are social constructions whose causal explanations can be traced and offered. | Researcher's values play an important role. Researcher is expected to minimise errors while pursuing objectivity. |
| Interpretivism | Multiple meanings, interpretations and realities are socially constructed through language and other cultural exchanges. Processes, experiences and practices in continuous flux. | Theories and concepts too simplistic. Focus on Reflections, views and constructions that facilitate new conceptions of the world. | Value-bound research. Researchers are part of the research subkect whose viewsand reflexivity remain key to outcomes. |
| Postmodernism | Meanings, interpretations and realities are constructed | What constitutes truth and knowledge is determined by prevailing | Researcher's values have a role to play. Researcher is reflexive |

| | through socially mediated power relations. Relationship formation and evolution are in constant flux. | ideas.identifying the unavailable, muted and marginalised views.The identification of power blocks and challenge of prevailing views as contributions. | while aiming to engage in discourses/narratives of change, reforms, and power relations. Some narratives dominate the discourse at the expense of others. |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Pragmatism** | Reality is treated as the results of ideas that emerge from rich sources of information. Processes, experiences and practices in continuous flux. | Focuses on problem-solving drawing on knowledge claims from specific contexts. Real knowledge brings practical solutions to prevalent problems. | Researcher is reflexive. Researcher's doubts and values play a role in the initiation and design of study. |

Source: Adapted from Saunders *et al.* (2019) and Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2018)

Drawing on the preceding insight, and the nature of the phenomena under investigation, this study makes the implicit assumption that the scientific understanding of the nature of HE pedagogy and its potential relationship with the evolution of institutional brand identity can be used to strengthen the competitiveness of African universities and other HEIs. Thus, this study seeks to answer the research question by adopting interpretivism as the research philosophy. This philosophical position is further justified by the evidence (Rider 2017; Hamilton *et al.* 2017) that indicates that the research problem has not been investigated in depth to inform hypotheses and related deductions that characterise positivism and other related research philosophies.

The interpretivist philosophy is conceptualised as the research philosophy that views phenomena as social constructions, while providing an alternative to the hypothetico-deductions and generalisations (Bryman & Bell 2011) that underpin the positivist research philosophy. Thus, interpretivism treats the social world as distinct from the natural sciences where meanings, experiences and social realities require rule-based generalisations (Saunders *et al.* 2019). These authors maintain that interpretivist research seeks to facilitate richer understanding and interpretations of the social world and contexts. This includes the interpretation and reconstruction of lived experiences (phenomenology), the interpretation of observed human actions from the perspectives of the main actors (hermeneutics), and the construction of meanings from the observations of the types of social interactions that are embodied in the main constructs in this study (symbolic interactionism) (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2018).

Drawing on this insight, this study sought to explore the role of pedagogical practices in the brand identity formation of selected Gambian HEIs. Institutional brand management practices are social constructions that involve a complex blend of multiple actors whose unique experiences and interpretations provide rich sources of insight in the effort to answer the research question (Walliman 2011; Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2018). These authors also agree that the multiplicity of social interactions that characterise business and management phenomena make interpretivism appropriate for business and management research.

The blend of interpretivist-inspired epistemological positions highlighted in Figure 4.1 and the preceding sections provided this researcher with the freedom and flexibility to achieve broader perspectives which relate to the research question. This combination conceptually eliminates the possibility of any conceptual gridlock that might arise from adopting a narrower interpretivist position in conducting an exploratory inquiry in the under-researched field of HE pedagogy and branding in African universities. Therefore, for the purpose of methodological clarity, the basic assumptions of the epistemological positions of each of the adopted blends of interpretivism is briefly explored in the next section.

## 4.3.1 Interpretivism - Symbolic Interactionism

In bringing the human elements of society to the centre of academic inquiry, interpretivism seeks to highlight the role of interaction and the construction of meanings among social actors (Carter and Fuller 2015). Thus, the symbolic interactionist dimension of the interpretive philosophy conceptually highlights how the website language and communication of the case institutions and the research participants influence the elucidation of subjective viewpoints, the interpretation, as well as how the repetition of meaningful interactions among the participants define social experiences and realities. Thus, the blended adoption of the symbolic interactionist elements of the interpretivist philosophy in this study is guided by the understanding that:

- Emotions and viewpoints expressed by individual participants in this study, as well as their pedagogic and institutional branding convictions, are based on the meanings these constructs hold for them.
- Pedagogic interactions and interpretations of brand management practices occur within the socio-cultural and environmental identity contexts of participants and their institutions.
- Meanings, conceptions, brand, pedagogic and epistemic identities emerge from these interactions.
- Meanings, conceptions, pedagogic, epistemic and brand identities which emerge are in a constant state of flux through the subjective interpretations that occur during interactions and social engagements.

Thus, symbolic interactionism supports this study's notion of behaviour as a function of one's commitment and salience in the identity hierarchy (Serp and Stryker 2011; Brenner et al 2014). Hence, an individual's conception of identity provides a standard for self-comparison, affiliation and engagement in socially constructed environments (Carter 2013; Stets and Carter 2011, 2012). Symbolic interactionism thus provides the epistemological basis for exploring how epistemic and pedagogic

identities of participants in this study influence their conceptions of teaching and learning in relation to teaching and learning artefacts, narratives and experiences in the selected case institutions.

### 3.3.2 Interpretivism- Hermeneutic phenomenology

Phenomenology is viewed as an interpretivist epistemology that draws on the narrations and interpretations of participants' lived experiences to describe phenomena (Neubauer, Wilkop & Varplo 2019). While not being used as the sole philosophical position in this study, the research question and the nature of the phenomenon under investigation provide the incentive for the inclusion of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) of the narratives of participants on their pedagogical and brand management and engagement experiences. In this effort to achieve conceptual clarity, a summary of phenomenological traditions and their descriptions is outlined in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4. 2:Phenomenological traditions

| Phenomenological tradition | Description |
|---|---|
| Lifeworld research | Explores how research participants negotiate their definition of spatial or temporary selfhood through narratives and recollections of social experiences. |
| Post-intentional phenomenology | Recognises that phenomena are in constant state of flux. Acknowledges the contextual, plural and perishable (simultaneously produced and experienced) nature of phenomena. |
| Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) | Conducts detailed investigation of the lived experiences of participants through the analysis of recollections and narratives on experiences and personal perceptions of objects and events. |

Source: Adapted from Neubauer *et al.* (2019)

The work of Fuster (2019) provides further incentives for the inclusion of phenomenological hermeneutics in the philosophical position of this study. This author maintains that phenomenology is not limited to offering simple alternative descriptions or explanations of phenomena but underpins the human sciences' explanation of the basic reflexive processes that underscore the recollection and narratives of participants' experiences of pedagogical and the brand management practices of their institutions. Fuster (2019) maintains that hermeneutic phenomenology narratives provide a good basis for the analysis of pedagogic practices within the context of their contributions to HE realities. In providing support to this view and the adoption of phenomenological hermeneutics as the epistemological foundations of qualitative research, Suddick.Cross, Vuoskoski, Galvin and Stew (2020) draw on the works of Heiegger and Husserl's (Nodim, 2007) phenomenological projects to instruct that language and dialogue are key components of lived experiences and narratives and thus carry the ontological frame for access to participants' lifeworlds. These authors maintain that the attentive and circular movements of thought and recollections of experiences during research interviews build the hermeneutic circle of understanding in which the theory of meaning and interpretation between the

interpreter (social actor) and their fore understanding and thus lay the foundation for the fusion of horizons between the hermeneutic circle, dialogue and the process of interpretation (Suddick *et al.* 2020). These authors posit that such fusion offers a gateway to the researcher to extend meanings from participants' direct understanding of the phenomena of inquiry.

## 4.4 Research approach

The logic of every scientific investigation is guided through theoretical assumptions as the investigation seeks to generate evidence in support of an existing theoretical position or evidence that would build the foundation for a new theoretical position. Thus, the adoption of specific and clear conceptual framework drawing on the ontological and epistemological definitions of the study, becomes an imperative that facilitates the articulation of appropriate research strategy (Easterby-Smith 2018; Bryman & Bell 2011). Saunders *et al.* (2019) maintain that there exist three research approaches that a researcher can draw on for the articulation of research strategy. These include the deductive, the inductive, and the abductive approaches to research. The adoption of the deductive approach assumes that an inquiry is seeking to verify or invalidate an existing theory. Thus, such studies assume hypothetical position that would include robust set of quantitative and highly structured data collection methods and generalisations, using concurrent deductions from empirical data (Bryman and Bell 2011). Thus, deductive reasoning pursues scientific evidence from the standpoint of a belief status-quo that logically maintains that "something must be the case". The inductive approach, on the other hand, pursues evidence from an epistemological status-quo that suggests that something must not necessarily be the case but maintains that something is indeed the case. Thus, inductive reasoning seeks to use known premises and inferences to generate untested but confirmable conclusions. Thus, the inductive approach seeks to explore phenomena by drawing on a study's built-in frameworks to identity themes and patterns whose recurrence enhances the explanation of phenomena (Walliman 2011; Bryman & Bell 2011). These authors maintain that qualitative induction mainstreams substantive and generalisable evidence from cumulative observations of cases and notes on patterns of regularities that emanate from the in-depth investigation of specific cases (Gummesson 2014; Saliya 2017). The implication therefore is that the inductive approach lends support to the interpretive philosophy ((Easterby-Smith 2018; Bryman & Bell 2011; Saunders *et al.* 2019). This is further highlighted in Table 4.3.

The abductive approach is a hybrid of the deductive and inductive approaches. This approach presumes that something might be the case while abandoning holistically deductive predictions and testing as the only means of understanding new ideas and phenomena. Thus, the abductive approach inductively identifies themes and patterns whose validity can be tested through subsequent deductions. The implication is that studies that adopt the abductive approach assume a position of philosophical

compromise between positivism and interpretivism. The emergent pragmatist stance facilitates the modification of existing theory or the generation of new ones as the theoretical outcome of a study.

Drawing on the preceding insight, the inductive approach to data collection was adopted as the research approach in this study. The justification for this decision is premised on the epistemological and ontological coalescence that exists between interpretivism as the adopted philosophy of this study and the inductive approach (Saunders *et al.* 2019; Creswell & Creswell 2019; Bryman & Bell 2011). Further to this is the understanding that inductive reasoning is most appropriate in investigating processes, behavioural patterns and motivations (Stoke 2014; Saunders *et al.* 2019) that underscore most inquires in the Business and Management discipline. Furthermore, the pedagogical and brand management practices of the case institutions are constructs that underscore institutional behavioural patterns, as well as the strategic motivations of such institutions and organisations. Hence, the adoption of the inductive approach facilitates in-depth  probing and thus the descriptive analysis of qualitative data (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2018) by permitting the continuous adjustment of the study's emphasis in accordance with evolving data clusters. This view is buttressed in Balmer (2010) and Urde (2013), where it is argued that brands are social constructions whose epistemological complexities are better explored using in-depth probing and inductions on the observed and probed behaviours - in the specific case of this study, of faculty, higher education managers and students.

## 4.5 Qualitative research strategies

Following the research objectives, the case approach was chosen as the research strategy.
There are several qualitative research strategies that have been identified in business and management research. Saliya (2017, 2014) identifies narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study as alternative research strategies that are available to qualitative researchers. These are summarised in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4 .3: A summaey of qualitative research methods

| Research strategy<br>Methodological dimension | Narrative research | Phenomenology | Grounded theory | Ethnography | Case study |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Design focus** | Explores participants' life histories using cumulative | Understanding phenomena through narratives and lived experiences of participants | Using primary data to develop theories, concepts and frameworks | Understanding social and cultural groups using embedded researcher presence | Developing understanding of phenomena using in-depth |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | profile updates and narratives | | | | analysis of a single or multiple cases |
| **Disciplinary origin** | Anthropology, Literature, History, Psychology, Sociology | Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology | Sociology | Sociology, Cultural Anthropology | Sociology, Political Science, Social Sciences |
| **Data collection** | Interviews and documentary analysis | Interviews with small sample sizes (maximum 10 participants) | Interviews with 20-30 participants | Observation, interviews, and artefacts during extended researcher presence | Multiple data sources: documents, archives, records, interviews, observations, artefacts |
| **Data analysis** | Stories, emergent realities, iterative/ historical content | Thematic description of lived experiences and meaning | The use of a select blend of coding techniques (open, axial, selective) | Description of observed patterns, thematic analysis and interpretation | Thematic description of emergent patterns and regularities. |
| **Narrative approach** | Detailed picture of an individual 's life | Description of the essence of the experience | Adoption of a theoretical model | The immersed description of environmentally stimulated behaviour of an individual or a homogeneous group of individuals | Detailed study of selected case or cases |

Source: Adapted from Saliya (2017)

## 4.5.1 Qualitative case study research

The case study research method draws on the naturalism principle (Bryman & Bell 2011) to conduct in-depth investigation of phenomena within their real-life setting, especially when there are no clear conceptual boundaries between the phenomena and its context (Yin 2014). Thus, case study research facilitates the elucidation of meanings especially in situations that includes many variables and constructs. Yin (2014) states that case studies use multiple sources of evidence from which data may be triangulated to generate single unifying results. This is an attribute of case study research that Gummesson (2014) referred to as particularisation and generalisation.

Yin (2014) and Saliya (2017) draw on the uniqueness of research issues and relevant theories to distinguish between different types of case study research. As shown in Table 4.4, these include exploratory case study, descriptive case study and explanatory case study. Yin (2014) maintains that each of these types of case studies can be conducted within a single or a multi-case study research design.

Table 4 .4:Types of case-study research

| | Exploratory | Descriptive | Explanatory |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Research goal & design commonalities** | Problem definition is preceded by prior fieldwork. Seeks to provide preliminary insight on phenomena | Seeks to pursue contextual description of phenomena | Pursues causal relationship between variables and seeks to explain cause and effect linkages |
| **Research issues** | Focus is on actual behaviours at the expense of predicted or imagined ones | Poses scoping challenges as a result of continuous emergence of multiple categorical variables | Focuses on how and why research outcomes are put into practice |
| **Nature** | Intrinsic in its assumptions | Instrumental and facilitative in its assumptions | Instrumental and facilitative in its assumptions |
| **Number of cases** | Single case | Single case | Multiple cases |
| **Units of analysis** | Holistic analysis of the chosen case | Uses both holistic analysis as well as analysis of subunits | Uses both holistic analysis as well as analysis of subunits |

Adpted from Saliya (2017)

Yin (2014) indicates that the combined features of exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case study may be built into one research study. This study sought to pursue preliminary insight on the role of pedagogical practices in the brand identity formation of HEIs in The Gambia. As shown in Tables 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6, this study shares the features of an exploratory case study as it focuses on The Gambia as a single case country while pursuing its investigation of the research question using multiple case institutions as units of analysis. These design features are further justified by the exploratory nature of the research question (Agunis & Solarino 2019). A further impetus to the choice of case study as the research strategy is the fact that the research problem has not been investigated in-depth (Ridder 2017) to inform hypothesis testing through alternative non-qualitative research strategies like experiments (Yin 2009; Bryman & Bell 2011).

Drawing on the full blend of interpretivist epistemologies (symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and hermeneutics) (Saunders *et al.* 2007; Bryman & Bell 2007), the phenomena were studied in their real-life contexts at the University of The Gambia (UTG), American International University, Gambia (AIUWA), Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI) and Management Development Institute (MDI) The Gambia. This approach provided the opportunity for comparative insights on the pedagogical and brand management practices of HEIs in The Gambia. Furthermore, the multiple institutional case approach provided methodological rigour to the investigation of the phenomena of inquiry (Creswell 2013; Yin 2014; Harrison, Birks, Franklin & Mills 2017). Gummesson (2005, 2017) argues that the case study design facilitates in-depth and holistic understanding of multiple phenomena and the inter-

relationship between different aspects. Implicitly, this provides the conceptual justification for the plurality of constructs investigated in this study.

Although the focus of this inquiry was on The Gambia, it was not specific to one single institutional case in the country. Multiple units of analysis provided the opportunity for comparisons of not just the profiles of the case institutions but also their pedagogic and institutional brand identities. While these comparisons carry the potential for the emergence of multiple categorical variables, this potential was controlled by the adopted frameworks of analysis. The evidence generated from the four institutional cases facilitated conclusions on the pedagogical practices and the institutional brand identity formation patterns of the case institutions. This rationale is further buttressed by Bryman and Bell (2011), who maintain that multi-case design and multiple units of analysis facilitate a healthy comparison of the chosen cases in the effort to identify concurrent behavioural patterns and evolution of phenomena. Unlike grounded theory, with which it shares close conceptual similarities, the case study adopts a simplistic approach to data analysis.

It is, however, pertinent to note that qualitative case study research has been criticised for being unscientific and subjective, lacking rigour and scientific generalisation (Saunders *et al.* 2019; Creswell & Creswell 2019), while posing challenges during the extrapolation of findings to fit the entire research objectives (Yin 2014; Denzin & Lincoln 2011). However, Gummesson (2014), Yin (2009) and Flyvberg (2006) disagree with these criticisms. These authors argue that case study research generates theories, models, checklists and heuristics that can be applied to similar cases and scenarios and thus provide the basis for analytical generalisation. Flyvber (2006) maintains that such criticisms are driven more by stereotypes than scientific facts. The implication therefore is that the acquisition of knowledge is a process that is driven more by contexts and uniqueness of phenomena rather than centric approaches of learning.

## 4.6 Research methods

The aim of this study was to facilitate insight into the pedagogical and brand management practices of the case institutions. Creswell and Creswell (2019) identify a blend of research methods available to researchers, their inherent philosophical assumptions and their alignment with research strategies (Tuli 2010). Table 4.5 outlines a summary of practices and procedures that underscore each research method.

Table 4 .5: Research Methods

|  | Qualitative | Quantitative | Mixed method |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Philosophical assumptions** | Based on constructivist and transformational claims on knowledge. | Post-positivist knowledge claims | Uses the combined features of deductive and inductive reasoning to make pragmatic claims on knowledge |
| **Research strategy** | Phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case-study, narratives | Surveys, experiments | Sequential, convergent, transformative |
| **Data collection** | Open-ended questions, emerging approaches, text/image data | Structured questions, predetermined approaches, numerical data | Both open-ended and structured questions, emerging and predetermined approaches, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis |
| **Researchers' practices and activities** | Analyses participants' construction of meaning, on a single concept or phenomenon. Permits a role for researcher's personal values in the study while using the analysis and interpretation of contents and settings as rich sources of confirmable data and information. This includes textual analysis. Generally, pursues agenda for change or reforms | Pursues empirical insight through hypothesis- and statistical testing and verification of theories Identifies variables to study. Pursues data quality control through standards of validity and reliability. | Develops rationale for the mixed method design while using both qualitative and quantitative data; integrates data at different levels of the inquiry. |

Source: Adapted from Creswell and Creswell (2019)

## 4.6.1 Qualitative research methods

The qualitative research method draws on the interpretive research philosophy, the constructionist ontology, inductive reasoning and the use of textual data to investigate the social world of research participants. Thus, the qualitative research method views social realities as the outcome of the interaction between individuals. The implication, therefore, is that qualitative researchers seek to interpret and, by extension, establish the meanings of social realities through in-depth probing of the subjective views, recollections, narratives and experiences of research participants (Bryman & Bell 2011; Creswell & Creswell 2019). Qualitative research methods investigate social phenomena from four alternative research traditions which are naturalism, ethnomethodology, emotionalism and post-modernism (Bryman & Bell 2011). These authors contend that naturalism as a strand of qualitative research seeks insight into the nature of social phenomena through the descriptions, narratives and interpretations by social actors within their natural settings. Ethnomethodology, on the other hand, seeks

to understand how social realities or social orders are constructed through interactions in research participants' natural settings. Emotionalism seeks to understand social phenomena by probing into the social world of research participants, especially their narrated experiences and recollections. Bryman and Bell (2011) maintains that postmodernism focuses on the interaction patterns of participants and the contributions of such interactions to the construction of social realities.

## 4. 6.2 Mixed method research

The dominant views in the literature of research methods present mixed method research as a hybrid of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Thus, this method draws on the pragmatist research philosophy to integrate qualitative and quantitative data in a single study (Cooper & Schindler 2014). The qualitative side of the hybrid aims to facilitate in-depth understanding of the phenomena of inquiry while the quantitative stream conceptually facilitates the inclusion of empirical design and numerical data in the investigation of phenomena. Thus, mixed method research provides complementary advantages to the design a study (Creswell & Creswell 2019). These authors posit that mixed method research uses several design alternatives in its combination of quantitative and qualitative data. These include the convergent mixed method, the explanatory sequential design and the exploratory sequential design (Onwuegbuzie, Leech and Collins 2012; Onwuegbuzie 2012).

The convergent mixed method design provides the researcher the opportunity to collect, analyse and interpret qualitative and quantitative data concurrently. The explanatory sequential design, on the other hand, enables the researcher to first collect, analyse and interpret quantitative data before using the findings of a subsequent qualitative data collection to provide in-depth explanation of the findings of the initial quantitative data components of the hybrid. The exploratory sequential design is the reverse of the explanatory sequential design. Thus, the researcher first collects qualitative data as a design input into the quantitative component of the mixed method (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins 2012; Onwuegbuzie 2012).

However, O'Reilly, Kiyimba and Drewett (2020), Johnson (2014), and O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015) identity a qualitative data-only variation of mixed method research that is named the intra-paradigm mixed method. Unlike the inter-paradigm mixed that uses both quantittative and qualitative, the intra-paradigm mixed method permits researchers to use a combination of only qualitative data collection methods. Drawing on this, the intra-paradigm qualitative mixed method was adopted in this study (O'Reilly, *et al*, 2020; Johnson 2014; O'Reilly & Kiyimba 2015). This decision reinforces the prior adoption of the interpretive philosophy, the inductive approach and the case study method. This choice was informed by the exploratory nature of the research question. Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2018) posit that

exploratory research questions require research methods that facilitate in-depth probing and afford the researcher the opportunity to access multiple sources of data. This opportunity was provided by the documentary sources of data and multiple case approach of this study. This design was reinforced by the adoption of the qualitative research method and thus enabled the examination of each data source in the context of the other sources. The aim of this approach was to achieve methodological rigour and credibility. Thus, the qualitative method facilitated in-depth understanding of the situations about the pedagogical and brand management practices of the selected HEIs and the relationship between these practices and the brand identity formation of these institutions.

The interpretive qualitative research method has, however, been criticised for being subjective and too 'impressionistic', relying on the researcher's views about what is significant (Saunders *et al.* 2019). This study was designed to mitigate these limitations. The insight from the multiple documentary sources of data from the websites of the case institutions, combined with those from in-depth interviews, provided multiple perspectives that enhanced the confirmation and credibility of findings.

Contrary to positivist researchers' belief that subjectivity is a major limitation of qualitative research, Johnson and Waterfield (2004) argue that subjectivity could instead be a major strength of qualitative studies, except in situations where the researcher fails to identify his/her preconceptions and biases about the researcher proposition. These authors maintain that subjectivity reinforces the credibility of research findings by highlighting the importance of exploring multiple data sources. Building on this view, this researcher conducted a prior identification of his personal views and intellectual biases on the subject of investigation. These beliefs included this researcher's bias for constructivist pedagogy as well as a purely strategic marketing approach to the management of HEIs. Some of these beliefs would later conflate with evidence of additional, and to some extent, more robust alternatives to pedagogical configuration. This enhanced the quality of findings as it enabled the researcher to establish control over subjectivity in his interpretation and presentation of findings on the pedagogical and brand management practices of the selected HEIs (Gratton & Jones 2014).

## 4.7 The study site and case selection criteria

The research question inspired the case selection decision. The exploratory nature of the research question further informed the methodological decisions. The selection of cases needs to be driven by a consideration of the appropriateness and adequacy of the selected cases (Ridder 2017). While appropriateness explains the cases' fitness-for-purpose for the study and the phenomenon under inquiry, adequacy is concerned with the chosen number, especially in a multi-case study (Kim *et al*. 2017). Thus, the selected case institutions provided a good blend of pedagogical experience, institutional uniqueness,

national commonalities, as well as structural differences and similarities. As shown in Table 4.6. below, this blend of case institutions provided the best chance for identifying patterns of differences and similarities in pedagogical orientations and any potential relationships with institutional brand equity (Yin 2014; Shakir 2017).

Table 4. 6: Overview of selected case institutions

| Appropriateness | UTG | AIUWA | GTTI | MDI |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pedagogical experience/identity | Undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the social sciences, biomedical sciences and, recently, engineering. | Undergraduate degrees in medicine and business management only. | TVET qualifications in construction, engineering, IT and management. | Vocational qualifications. Professional (non-degree) & management training, consultancy and research. |
| Statutory and pedagogical practice (institutional uniqueness) | The only public university. Uses national curricula. | Private university. Uses American curricula. | The only government-owned TVET institution. Uses national and international curricula. | Government-owned. Uses both national and British curricula. |
| Environmental commonalities | Regulated by same NAQAA* | Regulated by same NAQAA* | Regulated by same NAQAA* | Regulated by same NAQAA* |
| Structural differences | Multiple campuses in two regions. Local and international faculty. Over 5000 students. | Two campuses in urban areas. Local and international faculty. Over 1300 students | Multiple campuses in four regions. Local and international faculty. Over 2300 students | One campus. Located in the capital city. Local and international faculty. About 1000 students |
| Adequacy | The selected number of case institutions account for nearly 60% of all accredited HEIs (including two online-only universities) in The Gambia. This number is therefore deemed adequate for the investigation of the phenomena of inquiry. | | | |

*NAQAA: National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority

Source: MOHERST (2017). Ministry of Higher Education Research Science and Technology

## 4.8 Target population

The population of interest included current students, heads of institutional marketing, faculty heads, teaching staff and Deputy Vice Chancellors Academic (DVCA) or their equivalent at the four selected HEIs. The breakdown of the population across the selected institutions is shown in Table 4.7. The decision to target this population was informed by the research question, and based on the premise that brand identity is a deliberately engineered meaning, position and conception of an entity's added values which aims to generate and retain a desired recognition and points of difference across the entity's stakeholder spectrum (Balmer & Greyser 2006; Balmer 2009). Drawing on this premise, these categories of staff and students were invited from each of the case institutions to take part in the study. Hence, the inherent heterogeneity in their roles, their subjective institutional experiences, and other

complexities were explored for insight into how their interlocking values interact to shape shared meanings of pedagogy and institutional identity.

Table 4 .7: Overview of the target population

|  | UTG | AIUWA | GTTI | MDI | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Heads of Marketing | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Faculty Heads | 10 | 5 | 9 | 7 | 31 |
| Teaching Staff | 286 | 110 | 150 | 120 | 666 |
| Academic Director/Registrar/DVCA | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Current Students | 6620 | 1300 | 2500 | 1500 | 11920 |
| **Total** | **6918** | **1417** | **2661** | **1629** | **12625** |

Source: *MOHERST (2021). Ministry of Higher Education Research Science and Technology

## 4.9 Sampling technique

A sample may be described as a subset of a population (Gentles *et al.* 2015). The primary goal of sampling is to guarantee a degree of representativeness that lays the foundation for generalisations in quantitative studies (Collins *et al.* 2008). Thus, quantitative researchers tend to rely more on probability sampling techniques to generate randomisation – a specifiable chance of each unit of the population being selected (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson 2006). However, sampling is viewed slightly differently in qualitative studies. According to Gentles *et al.* (2015), sampling in qualitative research has been defined as the identification and selection of sources and entities that facilitate meaningful insight into the phenomena of inquiry through access to high quality data. The notion of sampling in qualitative research appears to vary across qualitative research traditions. The phenomenological and grounded theory research traditions view sampling as choosing informants (Cohen *et al.* 2000). This varies from the views expressed of sampling in case study research, where sampling is viewed as the selection of cases and data sources (Stake 1995). This implies that sampling takes place at two distinct levels which include selected case study entities and their composite data sources.

Drawing on the case study view of sampling, and inspiration from the research question, the purposive sampling technique is proposed. Drawing on its advantage of facilitating access to data sources (Gentles *et al.* 2015), the purposive sampling strategy supported the recruitment of the identified categories of participants from each of the case institutions.

### 4.9.1 Recruitment of participants

The academic and management staff who took part in this study were recruited through participation invitation notices placed on notice boards and social media paltforms across departments. The invitation included details of participation, enrolment criteria, sample sizes, timing and the researcher's contact details. The recruitment of student participants followed the same pattern. Permission was sought from gatekeepers to post the invitation on students' digital notice boards across disciplines and levels of study.

### 4.9.2 Sample size

There is ongoing debate (Subedi 2021) on the guidelines for determining sample size in qualitative research. Tracy (2020) argues that there is no consensus on what constitutes an appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Instead, scholars such as Padgett (2013), Tracy (2020) and Moser and Korstjen (2018) maintain that sample size in qualitative research depends on the sampling plan which draws on the research question to inform the number of interviews that are needed to ensure that the outcome of the study contributes rich insight to both academic and practitioner literature.

However, Gentiles et al. (2015), Wise (2020), Bentley (2021), Gao (2021) and Tiferny-Kinder (2020) maintain that the research design also plays a role in determing the qualitative research sample size. These authors identify case study research, phenomenological and narrative inquiries as qualitative research designs which traditionally use small sample sizes that range from 1-20 participants in a single study. On the other hand, ethonographic research and grounded theory use larger participant numbers that may be up to 100 or more. Beyond the fact that qualitative research uses no fixed rules about participant numbers, small sample sizes that are purposively chosen enable researchers to gain deeper insights into the phenomenon being studied, while making it easier to mange the large volume of data often associated with qualitative inquiries (Subedi 2021). This insight provides justification for the sample size and variation displayed in Table 4.8

Guided by this insight, the purposive sampling approach of this study, and the specified recruitment methods, 54 participants who volunteered were selected to take part in individual in-depth interviews. Twenty (20) participants were recruited from the UTG, 12 from the AIUWA 18 from the GTTI, and 10 from MDI. A breakdown of the sample, across the various categories of participants, is provided in the next section (see Table 4.8). The selected case institutions, to some extent, reflect the inherent diversity of HEIs in The Gambia. Thus, institutions were selected based on their statutory (public or private) identity, implied institutional positioning, institutional size and institutional mission. Hence, there are four case institutions from which five categories of participants were selected. While this sample provides a good complement of rich sources, their implied heterogeneity is worthy of note in

terms of the emergent variation in views and opinions on the themes of this study. On this basis, varying numbers of participants (Sim, Saunders, Waterfield, & Kingston 2018) were selected from each category. While the objective here may not be to pursue representativeness, the varying sizes of the selected institutions, the heterogeneity of the selected categories, the richness of this complement, the judged adequacy of their sizes, and their potential to facilitate the attainment of data saturation during the data collection process, informed the selection criteria (Palinkas *et al.* 2015). Infact,

## 4.9.3 Sample

The maximum variation (heterogeneity) approach to sampling was used. The selected case institutions are all domiciled in The Gambia but vary significantly in their statutes, structures and, to some extent, their HE provisions. Hence, maximum variation sampling facilitated insight in both shared and distinct patterns of pedagogical practices, the implicit institutional identity formation processes, and the emergent impact of these on institutional brand identity (Suri 2011; Palinkas *et al.* 2015). Zhang, Wang, Millar, Li and Yang (2017) demonstrate the efficacy of the maximum variation approach, especially in research designs which use small to medium sample sizes. These authors used this approach to support a sample size of 30 participants (with variation based on the differences in participants' medical specialisations) as they sought to understand the coping mechanisms of public health workers in China. Table 4.8 outlines the selected sample from each of the case institutions.

Table 4 .8: Overview of the sample

|  | UTG | AIUWA | GTTI | MDI |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Head of Marketing | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Faculty Heads | 3 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Teaching Staff | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Academic Director | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Current Students | 10 | 5 | 8 | 4 |
| **Total** | **20** | **12** | **18** | **10** |

## 4.10 Data collection methods and procedure

The data collection methods that were used in this study were content analysis (secondary/documentary qualitative data) and in-depth interviews (primary qualitative data). This dual data collection method is underpinned by the intra-paradigm, qualitative mixed methods approach (O'Reilly, Kiyimba & Drewett 2020; Johnson 2014). This research approach is grounded in the qualitative research paradigm within which the content analysis and the online and telephonic interviews were sequentially used as data collection methods. However, this approach is epistemologically different from the pragmatic and inter-paradigm mixing of quntititave and qualitative data sets in one study. The intra-paradigm mixed

method that is adopted in this study (O'Reilly & Kiyimba 2015) ensured that two different data collection methods are used to unify the epistemological foundations of the methods that are mixed while enhancing the integrity of research outcomes. The further implication of this is that the exploited congruence of mixed data collection methods was not effected at the methodology level of this study (Kiyimba, Lester & O'Reilly 2019). Instead , this occurred at the level of data collection methods while enabling separated analysis and triangulation of findings (Johnson 2014).

Drawing on this background, data collection was conducted in two phases. The conventional qualitative content analysis approach (Shahid 2014; Zhang & Wildermuth 2009; Marshall & Rossman 2011) was used to examine the selected HEIs' websites and social media platforms. While forming the preliminary stage of the data collection process, it facilitated access to the institutional web, social media and blog contents, posts and documents on the histories, mission and vision statements, teaching and learning policies, and communication materials on facilities, accreditations and affiliations of the case institutions. These documents were explored for consistency of clues on institutional teaching and learning philosophy statements, brand identity, brand positioning, institutional pedagogical practices, deliberate use of pedagogical practices in positioning strategies, and cues on stakeholder engagement in the form of live chat portals and prompts, discussion forums, or embedded, dedicated and active online communities. This facilitated preliminary insight into the first research objective, which was to understand the brand management practices of the selected HEIs.

The exploratory nature of the research question informed the adoption of the documentary content and thematic analysis in this study, against the backdrop of the evidence that this study is a novelty in this research area in The Gambia. The cases studied were drawn from a single case country but are institutions with varying historical backgrounds, stuctures and uniqueness in their respective tertiary and HE market segments.

### 4.10.1 Content analysis of secondary data

The analysis of secondary data (websites, social media platforms and documents) preceded the collection of primary data (via in-depth interviews) in this study. In compliance with the conditions stipulated in the ethical clearance approval letter (see Appendix 5) , this was implemented in May 2021, six weeks prior to the commencement of the primary data collection.

Table 4. 9: Sources of content analysis data

| HEI | Document type/sources of data | Types of data |
|---|---|---|
| **The University of The Gambia (UTG)** | Website, social media channels (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn) | Textual, pictorial, video |
| **American International University, West Africa (AIUWA)** | Website, social media channels (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn) | Textual, pictorial, video |
| **The Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI)** | Website, social media channel (Facebook), student handbook, institutional report, posters | Textual, pictorial, video |
| **Management Development Institute (MDI)** | Website, social media channel (Facebook.Instagram,Twitter), student handbook, photo archives, posters | Textual, pictorial, video |

As shown in Table 4.9, textual, pictoral, and video data were accessed from the indicated sources in each of the seleted HEIs. The subsequent analysis of data from these sources was aligned with the main objectives of this study. The relative social media presence of the selected HEIs, and the implicit differences and similarities in their messaging patterns, provided the basis for the cross-case comparison that facilitated insight into the marketing and branding behaviours of the case institutions. The pattern of variations that is implicit in the listed data sources tends to be symbolic of variations in the pedagogic experiences, institutional orientations, and business models of the case institutions.

The adoption of qualitative content analysis facilitated access to relevant historical data on the marketing and pedagogical practices of the case institutions. Hence, the inductive approach was used to examine the selected data sources as indicated in Figure 4.2 below:
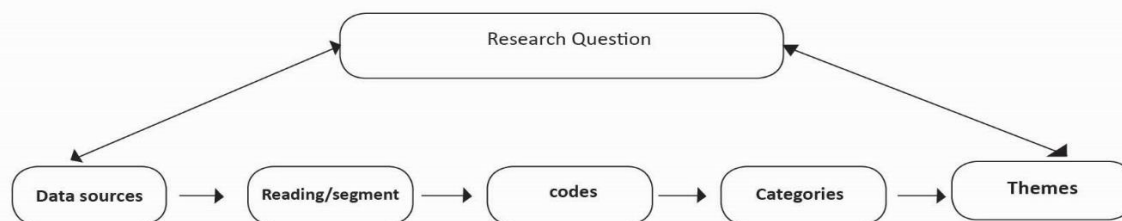


Figure 4 .2: A context-based framework for contents of documentary data sources

Source: Adapted from Vesudeva & Mogaji (2020), Kiger & Varpio (2020) , Vaisamoradi & Snelgrove (2019), Humble & Mozelius (2022).

Content analysis was used as an intial data collection method. The main purpose of this approach was to gain preliminary understanding of the brand management and pedagogical practices of the selected

HEIs. In this effort, a coding sheet was developed to enable the researcher to observe and track the messaging content and behavioural patterns that are implicit in the messaging content across the social media platforms that are indicated in Table 4.9. Drawing on the research question, a 'present and not present' code (Hettche, Clayton, & Leichtentritt 2023; Vesudeva & Mogaji 2020) was developed against each of the following messaging cues: institutional artefacts, academic programmes listing, instittuioanl logo, academic access information, student support information, integrated data sources, vision and mission statement, and university image projection. Using the coding sheet, in each of the data sources, in each of the case institutions, the consistency of these cues and their latent meanings were tracked through intensive reading, and interpreted to generate data categories relevant to the research question. The categories that emerged culminated in the themes which generated insight into the behavioural patterns of the selected HEIs prior to the implementation of the in-depth interview phase of the data collection process.

Limtations such as difficulty in sustaining analytical focus and limited imperative have been associated with qualitative content analysis (Kiger & Varpio 2020). These limitations were mitigated in this study by using the main objectives of the study to develop a coding sheet and context-based framework of analysis, which supported the consequent analysis of emergent data. This stepwise approach ensured that emergent behavioural patterns around the themes of institutional identity, pedagogy and marketing were adequately tracked, verified and confirmed (Vaisamoradi & Snelgrove 2019). This facilitated cross-case comparison of patterns and triangulation of data patterns in one instituion against other institutions.

## 4.10. 2 In-depth interviews

At the conclusion of the documentary analysis stage, the in-depth interview phase was initiated. Using the semi-structured questions indicated in Section 4.12, the research question and the main constructs in the study were explored. In-depth interviews were conducted via telephone and the Google Meet, Zoom and Microsoft Teams live-streaming video platforms. The rationale for the online and telephone interview methods was to conduct the field exercise within the provisions of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) directives on COVID-19 safety protocols. A total of 54 participants took part in this study, broken down as indicated in Table 4.10

Table 4. 10: In-depth interview participants profile

| Participant category | Number of participants | Background/profile of participants | Range of HE experience |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Students** | 25 | • Diploma in Civil Engineering<br>• Bachelor's Degree in Management<br>• Graduate Diploma in Gender Studies<br>• Professional qualifications in Accounting and Finance<br>• Masters' Degree in Humanities | Two to five years |
| **Academic staff** | 19 | • Physical and Allied Sciences,<br>• Management & Business Adminisration<br>• Teacher Education<br>• Humanities | Five to twenty years |
| **Management staff** | 10 | • Marketing Officer<br>• Vice Chancellor<br>• Deputy Vice Chancellor<br>• Registrar<br>• Deans<br>• HODs | Six to twenty-two years |

Twenty-five students (whose academic studies ranged from diploma courses to masters' degrees) volunteered to participate. This means that the HE experiences of the student participants ranged from two years to five years, in a broad range of disciplines in the selected HEIs. The academic specialisations of the student participants ranged from Engineering, Business Management, Gender Studies, International Relations, Accounting and Finance, and Humanities.

In addition, a total of nineteen academic staff from the physical and Social Sciences, Business Management and Administration, Engineering, Humanities, and Teacher Education took part in the study. The HE experiences of academic staff participants ranged from five to 20 years.

A total of 10 management staff took part in the study, including one Vice Chancellor, two Deputy Vice Chancellors (DVC) Academic, two registrars, one Dean, one marketing officer, and three Heads of Department (HODs), whose experiences in HE ranged from six to twenty-two years.

Although a fixed number of participants had been predetermined based on the research question (Zhang *et al.* 2017), the pattern of reponses across the five categories of participants shows that a further increase in the number of participants would have yielded little or no new insights on all the themes of the interview. In other words, data saturation was reached.

Thus, interview data (primary data) complemented the secondary data that had been gathered from the website and social media platforms of the selected institutions, in addressing the research objectives. The discussion guide for the interviews (see Appendix 1) was divided into three sections: A, B, and C. While Section A served as the introduction, Section B was used for the actual interview in which semi-

structured questions were used to probe for the subjective views, experiences and recollections of participants in accordance with the objectives of the study. The last section was used to summarise the discussion points and solicit participants' views on aspects which may not have arisen during discussion in the previous section. The discussion guide was designed in such a way that time was allocated to each section for effective time management. Each interview session was conducted within an average time frame of approximately 45 minutes.

## 4.11 Data quality control

Gibbs (2009) observes that the measures of reliability and validity differ slightly between quantitative and qualitative research. In this study, data quality control was guided by the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) i.e. credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility implies introducing strategies that would ensure that participants' responses and the overall results of the study are credible. Dependability means ensuring the repeatability of this study if it occurred within similar contexts or similar cohorts of participants. While confirmability requires the use of strategies that would improve the extent to which the results of this inquiry would be corroborated by other researchers, transferability implies introducing measures that would enhance the extent to which the results of this inquiry could be transferred to other inquiry contexts or settings.

Data credibility in this study was pursued through prolonged engagement and triangulation (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Loh 2013). Hence, the allotted interview duration was used optimally to encourage honest and consistent responses to the variety of questions asked. Again, the variation in the category of participants facilitated the emergence of data from multiple perspectives. Thus, the inherent methodological triangulation was explored to further enhance the credibility of findings. In addition to these, respondent validation (member checks) was also used (Loh 2013; Korstjen & Moser 2018). For those responses where this researcher saw the need for respondent validation, the transcripts were sent to the respctive particians for their review and validation (Candel 2019; Motulsky 2020).

The transferability of findings was ensured by providing detailed description of the methodology of the study. This includes the study context, sampling strategy and the sample size used in the study (Korstjen & Moser 2018). Dependability and confirmability were each ensured by securing the inter-subjectivity of emergent data. Thus, an audit trail was used by this researcher to pursue research path transparency while ensuring that data interpretation is grounded on data rather than the researcher's own wishes or preferences (Korsten & Moser 2018). Interviews were audio-recorded, to enable repeated listening, which helped ensure that bias is minimised and that findings are indeed the analysed outcomes of participants' contributions.

## 4.12 Measurements

The open-ended questions in Table 4.9 were used to address the research objectives. In the case of student participants, the structure of some of the questions was altered to reflect their position as participants from the demand-side of the selected institutions' stakeholder spectrum. Given the paucity of research in the main area of this study, there were no pre-existing templates of questions that had direct relevance to this study. This researcher drew on the the conceptual framework of the study to do a selective reading of the relevant literature through which the insight that led to the development of these questions emerged . The sources that were extensively consulted during this process include Urde (2013), Urde and Greyser (2015) and Yang, Yen & Balmer (2020). The landmark study by Yang *et al.* (2020) on the Once In a Lifetime Purchase (OILP) phenomenon in HE inspired some of the design decisions in this study.

Table 4. 11: Research instruments and interview participants' profiles

| Research Objective | Open-ended questions | Participant category |
|---|---|---|
| **RO₁: To understand the brand management practices of selected HEIs in The Gambia**<br><br>Brand Management Practices of HEIs | • How does your institution respond to competition in the sector?<br>• Does your institution have a deliberate branding strategy?<br>• What would you say are your institution's core offerings? *(Question to be clarified for easy understanding of participants)*<br>• How do you want these offerings to appeal to your student and non-student stakeholders? *(Question to be clarified for easy understanding of participants)*<br>• In your view, are there features and attributes that make your institution better than other universities in The Gambia? If yes, what are these? | *Non-student participants* |
| **RO₂: To understand current pedagogical practices of these HEIs**<br><br>Institutional Pedagogical Practices and Institutional Identity | • Would you say there is a general internal awareness of specific values that your institution would like to be identified with? *{Participant's response will be followed with further probing in the direction of the response}*<br>• Does your institution have an institution-wide or discipline-specific policies on pedagogy? *{Participant's response will be followed with further probing in the direction of the response}*<br>• Are there signature pedagogies associated with your university? *(If yes, interviewer will probe to generate response on what they are and how they work).*<br>• Are they communicated when promoting the university?<br>• Would you say such pedagogies help create a specific identity for the university? | *Non-student participants* |
| **RO₃: To explore the institutional brand** | • How long have you worked for your institution?<br>• How long have you worked in your current role? | *Non-student participants* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **identity of these HEIs**<br><br>Brand Identity of HEIs<br>*(Non-student participants)* | • Prior to joining your institution, were there specific non-visual attributes that you would easily identify your institution with?<br>• If any, have such attributes remained the same or have they changed over time?<br>• Do these attributes feature directly or indirectly in stakeholder communications?<br>• What is your institution's positioning*? (What would you say your institution stands for?)*<br>• What are the values behind what it stands for? | |
| **RO4: To explore the link between institutional pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity at these HEIs**<br><br>Relationship between Institutional Pedagogical Practices and Brand Identity | • Would you say your institution's policies on pedagogy and their enforcement strategies influence the way the institution is perceived both internally and externally?<br>• Would you say that your institution's pedagogical practices influence its identity as an HEI? | *Both student and non-student participants:* |
| RO1, 2, 3, 4 | • What is the title of your degree?<br>• At what level are you currently in your studies?<br>• What specific factor(s) made you choose this university over other universities in the country?<br>• When you think of your university, do certain methods of teaching and learning come to mind? *(Interviewer will use the direction of response to probe further).*<br>• How does this compare to other universities in The Gambia?<br>• Would you say that your lecturers' teaching method is a factor in your ability to learn effectively?<br>• Does your university have an institution-wide pedagogy policy?<br>• If no, would you like to see an institution-wide pedagogy policy?<br>• Would you say an actively enforced institution-wide pedagogy policy would have positive impact on the image and reputation of your university? | *Student participants* |

## 4.13 Data analysis

The analysis of data derived from examining the web-based content and documents on the histories, mission and vision statements, teaching and learning policies, and communication materials on facilities, accreditations and affiliations was conducted using the content analysis technique (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz 2017). Content analysis is a qualitative research approach often used in research that seeks to explore identified phenomena in an area that has limited research evidence.The dominant approach in content analysis is the use of inductive reasoning without pre-defined data categories (Hmble & Mozelius 2022). The absence of prior research in the main areas of this study provided further justification for the adoption of content analysis in this study.

Drawing on the research question, the cues that were looked for included evidence of branded web and social media pages (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter), the messaging patterns and contents including frequency and recency of posts, institutional mission and vision statements and core values, teaching and learning philosophy statements, market positioning statements, cues on inputs and influences on the positioning statements, interactivity features such as live chat on courses and services offered, student/stakeholder discussion forums, and dedicated online communities. The contents of these documents and platforms were read and coded into categories that emanated from the main constructs in the study (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz 2017). Then, their recurrence across different digital platforms of the same institution was monitored in tandem with a cross-case comparison of their recurrence across the web and social media pages of the other selected case institutions. (Please see coding schedule in Appendix 2).

 Interview data, on the other hand, was analysed using the thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves reading through interview or focus group transcripts and deriving themes by identifying patterns of meaning across an emerging data set. The four-step approach as recommemded by Maguire and Delahunt (2017) guided the analysis. The four-step approach begins s with transcription which facilitates the researcher's immersion into the data. This is followed by the generation of codes, the identification of themes, and reporting of findings (Maguire & Delahunt 2017; Kiger & Virpio 2020).

Thematic analysis potential for reflexivity and deep analysis was leveraged as this researcher sought deep understanding of current pedagogical and marketing practices in the selected HEIs. As a qualitative data analysis method, the suitability of thematic analysis in this study is based mainly on two considerations. The first is that it offers the potential to accommodate a broad range of research questions, research designs and sample sizes (Braun & Clarke 2012).This means that it provides conceptual coalescence to the overall design of this study.The second consideration is that it offers a simplified analytical process that optimises the interrogation of emergent meanings which

themselves are outcomes of the lived experiences and intercations that are symbolic of the repeated exposures of research participants. The implication of this feature of thematic analysisis that it draws on the research question to reinforce the blended interpretivist philosophy of this study (Michelle & Varpio 2020).

As shown in Section 4.12, a select list of open-ended questions was used to prompt responses from participants on their views of the pedagogical and brand management practices of their institutions. Prior to transcription, the researcher iteratively listened to the recordings several times while comparing the recorded responses to the notes and commentaries that were made on the day of the interview. This was followed by the transcription of the recordings. Thus, responses were coded into categories and themes were generated in relation to the research question and research objectives. This facilitated rich description of emergent data as the pedagogic and behavioural patterns of the case institutions were observed from the recollections and narratives of participants. Thus, recurring trends and patterns among participants' responses were observed for consistency and thus used to cross-check the data and insight that emerged from the prior exploration and analysis of documentary sources (Krueger & Casey 2000). This is particularly important because subjectivity and bias are often associated with qualitative data analysis and interpretation. This methodological triangulation and synthesis of meanings significantly enhanced the credibility of findings. These processes were guided by the series of data quality control measures discussed in Section 4.11.

## 4.14 Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in strict compliance with research ethics and principles. Gatekeeper consent was sought and obtained in writing from all of the selected HEIs. Similarly, informed consent of all participants in the study was sought and obtained. They were informed that participation would be entirely voluntary and that their responses would be treated and held in a non-personal manner (Creswell 2003). Participants were also informed that all responses and information would be collected only for the purpose of the proposed study and treated in strict confidence. This researcher followed all recommended ethical guidelines in the collection, formatting, analysis and interpretation of data. Member checks were used to ensure that participants' views were not misrepresented during data transcription and analysis. Where applicable, pseudonyms are used for individual participants, to ensure anonymity.

## 4.15 Chapter summary

This chapter sought to explain and justify the design and methodological decisions that were made in this study. The chapter outlined the steps and procedures that guided data collection, data analysis and interpretation in this study. Hence, the chapter used a research design schematic to outline and justify the selection of interpretivism and its blend of sub-philosophies and paradigms. This methodological innovation underscores the choice of this blend of interpretivism in this study as it provided support for subsequent design decisions in the study. Thus, the section on research approach took a holistic view of deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, and abductive reasoning as three alternative research approaches whose epistemological underpinnings must conceptually and theoretically align with the selected research philosophy. Consequently, the inductive approach was highlighted and justified as the research approach in this study. The section on research approach was followed by the research strategy section which identifies narrative research, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and case study as alternative qualitative research strategies, while providing justification for the choice of the exploratory case study as the research strategy in this study. An outline and justification for the adoption of the case study strategy thus provided the design incentive for the choice of research methods. While presenting an overview of the qualitative and mixed method research as research alternatives, the chapter identified and justified the adoption of the qualitative research method in this study. Thus, the chapter outlines the methodological coalescence that exists between the interpretivist philosophy, the inductive approach and the qualitative research method. The use of appropriateness and adequacy as the criteria for the selection of cases was consequently discussed. The subsequent sections discussed the adoption of the purposive sampling approach, as well as the combined use of documentary analysis and online and telephone interviews as the data collection methods. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the data analysis methods and the ethical considerations that guided this study.

# CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of this study. The section immediately after this introduction presents the key findings in this study. The presentation of findings follows the sequential pattern of data collection execution, with the findings aligned with the themes represented in the study's objectives (i.e. brand management practices, pedagogical practices, brand identity, and the link between pedagogical practices and brand identity). For each of the selected HEIs, this means that the presentation of the findings from the content analysis of the secondary data precedes the presentation of findings from the analysis of the primary data gathered via in-depth interviews. This approach is used to facilitate the continuity of logic, the triangulation of findings, and the synthesis of meanings from the findings of the precedent content analysis to the findings from in-depth interviews. In this effort, the findings from the UTG, GTTI, MDI and AIUWA are presented respectively. The presented outcomes are briefly discussed in relation to the findings of existing related studies. Hence these findings from the interviews are presented through sixty chunks of thematic analyses, that are generated from the responses of three participant categories under each of the five themes in each of the selected four HEIs. These themes, which are presented in Sections 5.2 and 5.3, generated cross-cutting insights which were triangulated and compared across the selected HEIs. To support the researcher's findings and interpretations, quotes from the secondary and primary data are provided at appropriate points throughout the chapter. These are presented in italics, for easy identification, and the affirmation of credibility and substantiation (Lingard 2019; Thorne 2020).

## 5.2. Institutional background and content analysis findings

### 5.2.1 The University of The Gambia (UTG)

The University of the Gambia is Gambia's oldest and only publicly funded university. It was formally established in 1999 as an independent institution with full degree-awarding powers. The UTG evolved from the then University Extension Programme of the Canadian Halifax University in Banjul, The Gambia. The extension programme was established as a HE partnership between the then Ministry of Education of The Gambia and Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Canada, in 1997. This programme was designed to expedite the establishment of Gambia's first indigenous university. Since its establishment, the UTG has expanded its programmes to establish constituent schools of Law, Medical and Allied Sciences, Business and Public Administration, Journalism, Arts and Science, and the Graduate School of Research and Consultancy. With a rising demand for university education in The Gambia, the UTG

has since expanded its degree varieties to masters and doctorate degrees across its schools, attracting a total student population of over 6000 (UTG 2021).

## 5.2 .1.1  Findings from content analysis of secondary data at UTG

The findings from the analysi of  contents of UTG's website and the contents and messaging pattern of its social media platforms are presented in this section. Table 5.1 has been used to present a summary of outcomes of the analysis of documentary sources at UTG.

Table 5. 1: Summary of content analysis findings at UTG

| Case institution | The University of The Gambia | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Data sources | Institutional website and social media channels | | | | |
| Reading strategy | Intensive | | | | |
| Date | May 2021 | | | | |
| Combined data sources & features | Cues and codes | Latent meanings & descriptions | Emerging category | Pattern of occurrence | Emergent Themes |
| **Historic information** | Institutional artefacts | Content as Gambia's first oldest and only government owned university conveys a sense of market advantage. Photo archives on institutional history and activities | Institutional uniqueness & marketing & branding behaviour | Single source (university website) | Marketing and branding practices |
| **Academic programmes & university services listings listing** | Academic programmes listings | Web listing of 39 undergraduate degree programmes from 9 schools and 39 postgraduate degree programmes. Institutional display of its value proposition in recognition of growing competition (local and international) for students and funding | Marketing communication | Single source listing on the website. Elaborately communicated through the website but not on other social media platforms | Marketing practices |
| **Institutional identity symbols** | Institutional logo | Symbols of institutional identification and brand identity placed across all platforms & data sources. | Institutional identification and differentiation (implicit branding behaviour) | Concurrent and consistent. Appears on all sources (website, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) | Brand identity/brand management practices |

152

| | | (Please see logo sample in Appendix 4) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **University admission information** | Academic access information | Institutional product or services information aimed at instigating needs awareness and faster enrollment decision by prospects. | Marketing communication/ stakeholder communication | Single source listing on the website. Elaborately communicated through the website but not on other social media platforms | Marketing practices |
| **Support services information** | Student support information | Display of additional value sources in recognition of growing competition (local and international) for students and funding. Official library hours, locations, useful online resources links (multi-disciplinary, Agricultural science, Biology, Educational Sciences & Medicine) | Internal/external communication/awareness creation behaviour | Single source listing on the website. Elaborately communicated through the website but not on other social media platforms | Marketing practices |
| **Integration of sources with other social media sources** | Integrated data sources | Multiple university information sources are linked. This aims to build an integrated approach to the delivering of institutional brand awareness goals with the level of access to institutional information that facilitates brand knowledge and brand recall | Other social media platforms accessible via respective icons on website | Cross-channel integration of data sources. Other sources have university website links and vice-versa | Marketing and branding practices |
| **Strategic communication pattern between sources** | Vision & mission statements | *The University of The Gambia shall be the powerhouse for the transformation of the Gambia through the creation, application, and transfer of knowledge.*<br><br>Although this appears to be the closest UTG comes to indicating what the university | Institutional purpose and identity projection | Confined to the website (vision & mission statement) and YouTube channel (general information on university activities) | Marketing practices |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | stands for, it however strengthens public awareness about the university | | | |
| **Pedagogical philosophy information** | **Mission statement extract** | *Positioning itself as a national asset committed to the promotion of life- long learning.*<br><br>Being the only statement across all the reviewed data sources that makes implicit reference to a pedagogical/ educational philosophy, this code conveys a sense of institutional meaning that appears latent and unexplored | Implicit teaching and learning goal | A few mentions of this on the website only | Pedagogical and marketing practices |
| **Other institutional visibility features** | Projection of university image | Pre-recorded University activity videos on UTG's YouTube channel. An effort at creating institutional visibility and projecting the image of an aspirational brand | Institutional visibility and image management | Website and YouTube channel | Marketing practices |

**UTG's brand management practices**

The website of the University of The Gambia was accessed and the contents of the posted information and documents and the pattern of postings and updates was analysed, in the context of the research question and research objectives. The evidence that emerged indicates that the website has a broad listing of the university's academic programmes from undergraduate to postgraduate degrees. In fact, the main themes that are captured in the contents posted on the website include the university's historical background including its inception date, and broad coverage of its decision structures and office of the Vice Chancellors succession history. The website displays the vision of the university as follows:

> *The University of The Gambia shall be the powerhouse for the transformation of the Gambia through the creation, application, and transfer of knowledge* (UTG 2021:2)

The mission statement reads:

*The University of The Gambia will seek to attain its vision and mission by*

- ➢ *Promoting equitable and sustainable socio-economic development of community through relevant high quality gender sensitive teaching, research and outreach programmes*
- ➢ *Providing HE to all persons, suitably qualified and capable of benefitting from it*
- ➢ *Positioning itself as a national asset committed to the promotion of life- long learning*
- ➢ *Developing its information and communications technologies infrastructure as a driving force for the education of more people rapidly and for the improvement of efficiency and academic quality to attain the goals of poverty attention and national development* (UTG 2021:2).

The website boasts four categories of academic programmes: undergraduate, postgraduate, access and distance learning. While each of these programme cohorts is made visible with supporting graphics, there is no supporting narrative that facilitates understanding of any distinct philosophy behind them. The distance learning programmes, which perhaps are part of the tactics that the university is using to pursue its goal of promoting lifelong learning, appear not to be defined in terms of their core philosophy (blended learning, MOOCs, online, ODL) and supporting digital infrastructure (Cleveland-Innes & Wilton 2018; OER Africa 2021).

The university's subscription to EBSCO Information Services is only made known and visible through an inconspicuous access link on the website. There is no evidence of accompanying publicity or

information on what EBSCO subscription means and its significance as a supportive pedagogic infrastructure to teaching and learning practices at the university.

While validating the views expressed in Melewar and Akrel (2005) and Balmer and Liao (2007) about the challenges HE managers face in articulating and managing the identity aspects of their institutions, this behavioural insight also contradicts the pattern of use that the UTG website had been habitually subjected to. While the website appears to be used mainly as noticeboard for announcements using mostly images, the university management has not deemed it necessary to publicise the acquisition of strategic assets like EBSCO Library/Information Services. Hence, one of the conclusions that can be drawn from this is that the strategic benefits of using multiple channels to publicise the acquisition of a digital asset like EBSCO digital library is not recognised by the UTG management.

The website lists a link for online classes which appears to have been established on Google Meet, in reaction to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a different web listing of distance learning courses, without an accompanying narrative to the inserted online courses link on the website. There is no clarity on whether or not this listing is linked to the listed distance learning courses. There is no background narrative on what it is all about and its potential link to the university mission of providing lifelong learning to all. What emerged, however, is that the online learning appears to be conceptualised as the digital alternative to the traditional transmissive approach to teaching and learning. The implication, therefore, is that online learning at the UTG is not predicated on any special philosophy. Instead, it is a tactic that is conceived as an alternative to face-to-face learning, while retaining the full features of transmissive transfer of knowledge. This further demonstrates the extent to which UTG's behavioural insights demonstrate lack of institutional currency on the benefits of institutional pedagogy (Stevenson *et al.*.2014) and its benefits in the development of institutional brand marks and strategic positioning (Mourad *et al.* 2011).


**The UTG's social media**


The UTG has an active social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn that is integrated with its website. A search on each of these platforms reveals a messaging pattern that indicates uniformity of content between the website, Facebook and, to some extent, LinkedIn. There is evidence of regular updates of current events on the university's Facebook page and YouTube channel. The messaging pattern on LinkedIn shows no consistency in terms of currency of information with the website, Facebook and YouTube. The university website indicates that the university is composed of nine schools (Agriculture and Environmental Science, Arts and Science, Business and Public Admininistration , Education, Engineering and Architecture, ICT, Journalism and Digital Media, Law,

and Medical and Health Sciences). There is no mention of the Research and Consultancy Directorate (RCD) which owns dedicated LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts. The information displayed on its LinkedIn page indicates that the RCD was established in 2020 as an extended portfolio of the university. However, more than twelve months later, the university website is yet to be updated with information on the formation of a research and consultancy directorate.

Apart from posting the same event-based information content on multiple social media platforms, there is no evidence of a strategic approach to stakeholder engagement (Mourad *et al.*2011). This conclusion is made against the backdrop of the findings that there is no clarity on what the university really stands for. There is also no evidence on how the array of events and activities that are posted on each of the social media patterns interconnects with the university's self-identity. There is no evidence of digital marketing tactics like Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), Pay Per Click (PPC), affiliate or email marketing that draw on the university's self-identity to create distinctive marketing messages that are targeted at specific consumer or geographic audiences (Balmer 2020; Keller 2013).

There are no real-time interactive links on the website, or notifications for cookies and related preferences for visitor tracking and related interests mapping. While the university's elaborate social media presence gives the university a national and international visibility, the apparent lack of evidence of a strategic marketing effort on the part of the university can be seen in the absence of its strategic planning document in the resources or archives section of the website. The same conclusion can be made about the absence of content on the university's self-identity and teaching and learning philosophy (Francis 2015; Stevenson *et al.* 2014).

## UTG pedagogical practices

The evidence indicates that the teaching and learning was mentioned only once in the university's vision and mission statements. The implication is that there is no clarity on what UTG's teaching and learning philosophy really is. While the website presents evidence of its value proposition in the form of the academic courses on offer, such presentation appears to represent a set of values that are not anchored on any known differentiable institutional philosophy. In other words, the contents of UTG's website do not convey any features of a pedagogic philosophy. This conclusion is based on the evidence that there are no indications of a teaching and learning philosophy statement (Hamilton *et al.* 2017; Godino *et al.* 2019) that should reinforce its mission to "*produce high- quality teaching, research and community outreach programmes and positioning itself as a national asset committed to the promotion of life- long learning*" (UTG 2020) .The enactment and consequent dissemination of an institutional teaching and learning philosophy statement (RRU 2019; Aalborg University 2021) would have provided this clarity on the university's pedagogical beliefs.

**UTG institutional brand identity**

The UTG's vision is to become *"the powerhouse for the transformation of the Gambia through the creation, application, and transfer of knowledge"* (UTG 2020). It appears that this vision is anchored on 'knowledge', 'truth', and 'development' as core values that should underpin its activities and behaviours. These values are boldly displayed in the university logo. While the logo and its embedded inscriptions represent the visual brand identity of the UTG, the vision statement calibrates the strategic direction of the university and, by extension, the paths to its behavioural identity. From the analysis of the website contents and pattern of postings, evidence of the university's behavioural identity is currently ambiguous. This conclusion is further supported by the complete absence of either a positioning statement or a statement of competitive philosophy. As a HEI, the creation of relevant knowledge is as central to UTG's relevance and existence as its definition of what types of knowledge it seeks to pursue and how it how it seeks to pursue such knowledge. The latter makes implicit reference to pedagogical doctrines that are supposed to be underpinned by its core values. A demonstration of this strategic fit in recognising the changing nature of knowledge (Ehlers 2020), and its implication for the continuing relevance of the UTG, could have been used as incentives to articulate a clear position of institutional self-identity (Stevenson *et al.* 2014), market positioning and subsequent competitive behaviours. In this effort, the university would have benefited from what Chen (2019) refers to as the mediating effects of brand identity on brand knowledge in the HE sector.

**5.2.2 The Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI)**

GTTI is The Gambia's only government-funded TVET institution. The institution was established in 1980 through an Act of parliament to primarily cater for the Gambian economy's middle-level human resources requirements. The institution currently hosts its main campus in the urban metropolis of the Greater Banjul Area (GBA) but also operates satellite campuses in the rural regions of the country. With a student population of about 2500, GTTI currently operates five academic departments (Engineering, Construction, Computer Science and Information Technology (CSIT), Business Studies, and Professional Development) and three satellite campuses in the West Coast, Lower River, and Upper River Regions of the country (GTTI 2021).

**GTTI's mission statement reads as follows:**

*To continue to operate as a center of excellence through the provision of quality TVET thus contributing towards meeting the middle level human resource requirements of The Gambia. (GTTI 2021)*

### 5.2.2.1 Findings from content analysis of secondary data   at GTTI

The finings from the content analysi of documetatry sources at GTTI are presented in this section. The main sources of seconday data at GTTI included the instittuion's website, its Facebook page, student'shandbook, offline institutional videos archives, institutional reports, and posters.   The evidences that emerged from theses sources were further analysed in the context of findings in relevant prior  studies.

Table 5. 2 Summary of content analysis findings at GTTI

| Case institution | GTTI | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Data sources** | **Institutional website and social media channels** | | | | |
| **Reading strategy** | **Intensive** | | | | |
| **Date** | **May 2021** | | | | |
| **Combined data sources & features** | **Cues and codes** | **Latent meanings & descriptions** | **Emerging category** | **Pattern of occurrence** | **Emergent Themes** |
| **Historic information** | Institutional artefacts | Government-owned and biggest TVET institution in the country. Established in 1980 through an Act of parliament to primarily cater for the Gambian economy's middle-level human resources requirements. Main campus in the urban metropolis of the Greater Banjul Area (GBA) but also operates satellite campuses in the rural regions of the country. Photo archives on institutional history and activities | Institutional uniqueness & marketing & branding behaviour | Two sources (university website and Facebook) | Marketing and branding practices |
| **Academic programmes & university services listings listing** | Academic programmes listings | Web listing of mainly Diploma and Certificate courses in Engineering, Construction, Computer Science & Information Technology, Professional | Marketing communication | Double source listing on the website & Facebook page | Marketing practices |

| | | Development, Business Studies in six Departments in the main campus and three satellite campuses. Listing of degree courses in Geomatics, Electrical Electronics, Civil and Mechanical Engineering | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Institutional identity symbols** | Institutional logo | Institutional logo with its red and blue stripes with the embedded GTTI inscription is placed on the home page. Serves as symbol of institutional identification and brand identity placed website and Face book pages (Please see logo in appendix 4) | Institutional identification and differentiation (implicit branding behaviour) | Appears on (website, and Facebook page) | Brand identity /brand management practices |
| **University admission information** | Academic access information | Institutional product or services information aimed at instigating needs awareness and faster enrollment decision by prospects. | Marketing communication/ stakeholder communication | Double source listing on the website & Facebook Page. | Marketing practices |
| **Support services information** | Student support information | No information available | Internal /external communication/awareness creation behaviour | No information on the website and other social media platforms | Marketing practices |
| **Integration of sources with other social media sources** | Integrated data sources | No direct web link exists between institutional website and other social media platforms. However, GTTI's Facebook page displays independently each time Google search is conducted with huge photo archives, limited courses' and admissions information. This represents a semi-integrated | Other social media platforms accessible via respective icons on website | Limited cross-channel integration of data sources. | Marketing and branding practices |

| | | approach to the delivering of institutional brand awareness | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pedagogical philosophy information** | **Mission statement extract** | Promises modular approach to programme development and to increase access and the availability of flexible learning opportunities. Emerged as an unconnected, inactive statement that has not been internalised by the whole institution. | Implicit teaching and learning goal | No mention of this on website or Facebook page, It is mentioned in a student handbook developed for degree programmes students | Pedagogical and marketing practices |
| **Other institutional visibility features** | Projection of university image | Archival information on institutional Facebook page and contradictory information in student handbook: as a student of USET you will be part of the college of Engineering …some students are considered no matriculated students … Carries implication of mixed institutional identity or confusion about what GTTI really is or stands for | Institutional visibility and image management | Single source listing (website) | Marketing practices |

## Brand management practices at GTTI

GTTI's website provided the main source of documentary information. The contents of the website were accessed, reviewed and analysed. The evidence that emerged indicates that the website serves more as a noticeboard than an interactive platform for stakeholder communication and engagement. The website lists the courses offered using mainly inconsistent characters and hyper-text multiple language (HTML) font sizes and course titles whose descriptions are hidden beneath inactive and inaccessible links.

The pattern of postings that emerged from the analysis of the web contents and documents appears to indicate that GTTI is in the process of implementing an institutional transformation programme that would see the institution transition from being a technical training institute to becoming a university with full degree-awarding powers. This is a situation that carries significant marketing and branding and institutional identity implications (Buil, Martínez & de Chernatony 2013; Greyser & Urde 2019).

However, the evidence that emerged from the analysis of posted contents on the website reveals a gap in the emerging self-concept of the institution. A weblink for the Center of Excellence lists four engineering degree programmes which seem to be unconnected to the listed courses within the Engineering Department's content on GTTI's website. This section of the website lists mainly non-degree courses in Engineering.

With exception of the Bachelors in Community Building and Design (BCBD) programme, there is no information on the website on how student prospects can apply for its courses. The BCBD is a degree programme that is jointly offered by GTTI and the University of The Gambia. While it is arguably owned by the UTG, it is delivered using GTTI's training facilities.

Several course links and listings are mixed with website software default language which makes it difficult for visitors to understand the information on display at the website. This is a practice that once again affirms the challenges that HE managers face in understanding the branding aspects of their institutions (Mourad *et al.*2011).

## GTTI's social media presence

GTTI's website is its main digital presence. Its Facebook page appears to be active but not integrated with the website. Unlike the UTG which has presence on Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook, GTTI's digital media presence is limited to its website and Facebook pages. The GTTI logo that is clearly visible on its website is the only representation of its visual identity symbol. The institution's status as the biggest TVET institution in The Gambia is not acknowledged in any section

of the website. The transition from a technical training institute to a university of science and technology marks a fundamental shift in the institutional identity of GTTI. However, the pattern of postings on the website does not indicate this shift; instead, it leaves a picture of mixed or confused identity given that no clarity exists from a strategic planning perspective on how this transition is being executed and what it means to the identity evolution of GTTI (Hamilton *et al*. 2017).

## GTTI pedagogical practices

The contents available on the website and the Facebook pages of GTTI do not give any indication of the existence of a pedagogical philosophy at the institution. There is no institutional teaching and learning philosophy statement. As a technical training institute, GTTI's portfolio of courses is focused on competency-based, TVET programmes. The information on the website indicates a messaging pattern which carries no evidence of institutional awareness of this unique feature of TVET institutions and its inherent pedagogic and andragogic implications for self-directed learning, direct application and prior experience. Thus, there is no indicated connection between the purported institutional mission (*"To continue to operate as a center of excellence through the provision of quality TVET thus contributing towards meeting the middle level human resource requirements of The Gambia"*) and the teaching and learning activities in the institution (Francis 2015; Stevenson *et al.* 2014).

## GTTI Institutional brand identity

One of the documents available on GTTI's website is a 22-page student handbook. This document bears the inscription 'GTTI student handbook 2020-2021', with GTTI's logo sandwiched between those of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and UK De Montfort university respectively. One of the lines in the handbook (page5) reads:

> *GTTI is to be transformed into a university of Science Engineering and Technology (USET) in the academic year 2020/21. As an emerging university, USET is committed to providing a strong student experience. GTTI provides the highest level of TEVT available in The Gambia….*

In the student membership section of the handbook page 8, the following statements are clearly visible:

> *as a student of USET you will be part of the college of Engineering… Some students are considered non matriculated students e.g., students ready for certain Certificates or Diplomas and certain Department for continuing Education courses.*

The handbook has been placed at the website as a public document. However, the analysis of its contents and the general information that is available in different sections of the website indicates what is

emerging as a mixed institutional identity or confusion about what GTTI really is or stands for. The messaging pattern and emergent identity confusion can be seen on the flip-flop between identifying the institution as GTTI and referring to prospective students as USET prospective students whose host college (within GTTI or USET) would be the College of Engineering. While this practice demonstrates the non-strategic approach to marketing and branding at GTTI, it reinforces the views expressed in Mourad *et al*. (2011) on the challenges of HE marketing. Further to this, it contradicts the customer engagement prescriptions made in Chernev (2014), while demonstrating GTTI's infancy in strategic marketing practice.

This information contradicts the information displayed in the 'courses' sections where courses are identified with departments rather than colleges. The course listings in the handbook exclude core GTTI portfolio components that are listed on the website, to create the impression that GTTI offers only Bachelor degrees in Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Geomatics, and Mechanical Engineering. This mixed messaging carries significant implications for the identity and image of GTTI (Park *et al.* 2013, 2010; Joo-Eon Jeon 2017).

### GTTI pedagogical practices and institutional identity

GTTI's student handbook promises the introduction of a modular approach to programme development and to increase access and the availability of flexible learning opportunities, thus enhancing its reputation as a highly responsive institution. While this promise demonstrates a link between institutional pedagogical philosophy and reputation, the available evidence indicates that this promise is being displayed as an unconnected, inactive statement that has not been internalised by the institution. The promise of flexible learning opportunities and its underlying pedagogic, access and equity implications are not mentioned in any section of its website. This is a situation that highlights the potential link between institutional teaching and learning philosophy and its identity, image and reputation (Stevenson *et al.* 2014; Francis 2015; Mourad 2011).

### 5. 2.3 The Management Development Institute (MDI)

The MDI is Gambia's only government-funded management training institute that was established to cater for managerial training of the Gambia's civil service cadre. Like other HEIs in The Gambia, MDI was established by an Act of parliament in 1982. The academic portfolio of MDI is made up courses in Banking and Financial, Diplomacy and Negotiation, Financial Management and Accountancy, Gender and Development such as ICT, Management and Policy Analysis. This is supported by what appears to be an active consultancy portfolio and a suite of short-term courses. MDI's vision and mission respectively are:

*to be the center of excellence in management training, consultancy and research .*

*to becoming a model training provider that is characterized by efficiency, industry and integrity providing broad-based knowledge, new stalls and a range of competences to clients responsive to a dynamic environment* (MDI 2020)

## 5.2.3.1 Findings from content analysis of documentary data at MDI

The outcome of the content analysis of the documetatry sources of data at GTTI are presented in the sections below . The secondary sources that were accessed at MDI included the instittuion's website, its Facebook , Twitter, and Instagram pages, student'shandbook, and its photo archives . The insight that emerged from the analysis of these sources was discussed in the context of findings in releted prior studies.

Table 5. 3 : Summary of content analysis findings at MDI

| Case institution | **MDI** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Data sources | **Institutional website and social media channels** | | | | |
| Reading strategy | **Intensive** | | | | |
| Date | **May 2021** | | | | |
| **Combined data sources & content features** | **Cues and codes** | **Latent meanings & descriptions** | **Emerging category** | **Pattern of occurrence** | **Emergent Themes** |
| **Historic information** | Institutional artefacts | These convey a sense of market niche and competitive advantage being Gambia's only government-funded management training institute that was established to cater for managerial training of the Gambia's civil service cadre. Content includes information on the history, administrative structure, portfolio of academic courses, and research and consultancy services. | Institutional uniqueness & marketing & branding behaviour | Double source (university website and Facebook page) | Marketing and branding practices |
| **Academic programmes & university services listings listing** | Academic programmes listings | Display of implicit distinctiveness. Listing of academic portfolio of courses in Banking and Financial, Diplomacy and Negotiation, Financial Management and Accountancy, Gender and Development, ICT, Management and Policy Analysis. An active consultancy portfolio & short courses. Strategic partnership agreement with Sup De Co, (Senegal) on the award of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees | Marketing communication | Double source listing on the website & Facebook page. | Marketing practices |

| Institutional identity symbols | Institutional logo | Institutional logo that is distinct, visible and inscribed with the abbreviated name of the institution (MDI) and the core principles of sufficiency, industry, and integrity. (Please see logo in Appendix 4) | Institutional identification and differentiation (implicit branding behaviour) | Appears on website and Facebook page | Brand identity /brand management practices |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Programmes admission information | Academic access information | Institutional products and portfolio extensions that include admissions information, fees, student union, codes of conduct, student experience testimonies, financial aid information | Marketing communication/ stakeholder communication | Double source listing on the website & up-to-date Facebook page announcements. | Marketing practices |
| Support services information | Student support information | No information provided | Pattern of internal/ external communication/ awareness creation behaviour | No information on the website and other social media platforms | Marketing practices |
| Integration of sources with other social media sources | Integrated data sources | Symbolic of institutional marketing behaviour .With varying levels of detail, a limited degree of consistency exists between information on the website and information on the Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages. | Pattern of internal / external communication/ awareness creation behaviour | Systematic cross-channel integration of institutional information | Marketing and branding practices |
| Strategic communication pattern between sources | Vision & mission statements | *"to  be the center of excellence in management training, consultancy and research"* to become a model training provider that is characterized by efficiency, *"industry and integrity providing broad-based knowledge, new stalls and a range of competences to clients responsive to a dynamic environment"* | Institutional purpose and identity projection | Vision & mission statements on the website. Archival information on institutional activities on website and Facebook page | Marketing  practices |
| Pedagogical philosophy information | Extract from Director General's welcome statement | *"...based on the effectiveness of our programmes there has been an exponential increase in enrolment. There has been a record enrolment in almost all our programmes more especially the ones run by the General Management and Policy Analysis Department..."* | Implicit of institutional behaviour, self-identity and concept of  teaching and learning | No explicit  mention of this as a policy statement | Pedagogical and marketing practices |
| Other institutional visibility features | Projection of university image | Active presence on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram with coordinated and partially consistent messaging pattern on institutional value offerings and activities | Institutional visibility, identity  and image management | Multiple  source listing (Website, Twitter, Insatgram & Facebook ) | Marketing practices |

**Brand management practices at MDI**

The sources of this documentary analysis include information posted on the institute's website (including archived documents like the handbook, picture gallery), and information on its social media sites. The website is decorated with an institutional logo that bears the abbreviated name of the institution (MDI) as well as its core principles of sufficiency, industry, and integrity. The website appears to be easily navigable while presenting information on the history, administrative structure, portfolio of academic courses, and research and consultancy services. One of the lines in the Director General's welcome message attempts to associate a trend of increase in student enrollment with the efficiencies and the ability of MDI to attract and retain a highly knowledgeable, skilled and motivated core of teaching staff.

> *……based on the effectiveness of our programmes there has been an exponential increase in enrollment. There has been a record enrollment in almost all our programmes more especially the ones run by the General Management and Policy Analysis Department…….*

While the notion of programme effectiveness is not explained in explicit terms, the Director General's statement appears to draw a link between increase in enrollment and programme effectiveness and the attraction and retention of highly trained and motivated staff. While there is no display of institutional teaching and learning philosophy statement on the website or any other digital platform, the Director General's welcome message appears to make implicit reference to a link between programme effectiveness and increase in student enrollment. This is against the backdrop of the understanding that enrollment is a metric in measuring the competitiveness of HEIs (Pinar *et al.* 2012).

The marketing implication of the Director General's message and the pattern of messaging that is implicit in the analysed documents and web contents, indicate consistency of goals and approaches to the delivery of its core mandate and principles. The announcement in April 2021 of a degree partnership agreement with Group Ecole Superieure de Commerce (SUpdeCO) Dakar, Senegal appears to be aimed at leveraging Senegal's country-of-origin (COO) on Gambian higher education prospects, especially those in the management degrees training sub-segment of Gambia's HE markets (Ivy 2008; Francis 2015). This is a segment that is currently demonstrating great market potential but appears to be dominated by the UTG and the American International University, West Africa (AIUWA) through its College of Management and Information Technology (CMIT).

**MDI's social media presence**

In addition to what appears to be an active and mainly informational website, MDI maintains very active Facebook and Twitter accounts. These channels are integrated with its website as a means of optimising institutional visibility. The pattern of posts on the Facebook and Twitter accounts, especially the pictorial ones, indicate an institutional awareness of the benefits of multi-channel customer engagement. The other pattern that emerged from the analysis of posts across all MDI's social media platforms is that they lack updated information. In the case of its Twitter account which was launched in 2018, the most recent posts were made in October 2018. The conclusion that can be drawn from these secondary sources of evidence is that there appears to be an institutional awareness of the competitive benefits of marketing and branding (Buil, Martínez & de Chernatony 2013; Greyser & Urde 2019).

However, the analysed practices indicate a practice pattern that is not strategic with the evidence suggesting a trend of coincidental or 'after-thought' approach to marketing. While the dominant managerial behaviour indicates marketing initiatives, there appears to be the absence of structures that can transform these initiatives into marketing and branding gains for the institution.

**Pedagogical practices at MDI**

As mentioned in the preceding sections, the analysis of documents on MDI's website and other social media sites did not give any clear indication of a teaching and learning policy or philosophy. The closest hint at a teaching and learning philosophy emerged from the Director General's welcome statement which attributed the exponential increase in student enrollment to the perceived effectiveness of MDI programmes and the ability of the institution to attract and retain high qualified and motivated teaching staff. This reference to the efficiency of MDI programmes carries implications for pedagogy especially when the effectiveness feature is judged to have generated competitive advantages for the institution.

While the management of MDI has demonstrated visible behavioural pattern in what is emerging as a capacity for a coincidental or after-thought marketing, there is no evidence of how an institutional pedagogical philosophy may be used to further define programme effectiveness. As an institution that has demonstrated a reasonable degree of competitive awareness, the ambiguous association of effectiveness to its research, training and consultancy portfolios represents a missed strategic opportunity (Hamilton *et al.* 2017). The pedagogic articulation of effectiveness should highlight a teaching and learning philosophy (Stevenson *et al.* 2014) that mainstreams trainers' capacity to perform practical tasks in their fields including those that involve high levels of routine. Being a vocational training institution, the goal of such pedagogic philosophy could be framed to include the enhancement of the situational coping, cognitive, affective and conative capabilities of students. This approach to the definition to pedagogic practice would generate high institutional awareness on its teaching and learning

philosophy while pursuing the enhancement of graduate outcomes and its relevance as a critical component of institutional brand identity (Clark *et al*. 2019; Godino *et al*. 2019; RRU 2019).

**The institutional brand identity of MDI**

The visible element of MDI's institutional identity is the institutional logo that is prominently placed on its website and social media platforms. Being only one element of the institution's visual identity, the circumstances of emerging trends of competition in Gambia's HE sector has provided the incentive to build and consolidate institutional reputation .

The construction and consolidaton of such reputation can be pursued through  a combination of visual elements like the logo and other artifacts and behavioural traits that can be constructed and aligned with institutional pedagogical philosophy, its portfolio of courses and other blends of institutional features that are unique to MDI. Having identified its vision as the aspiration to be the center of excellence in management training, consultancy and research, guided by the values of efficiency, industry and in integrity, it therefore means that MDI needs to construct behavioural identity elements that could be seen to support its core mandate in the delivery of training, consultancy and research services (Hamilton *et al.* 2017).

**5.2.4 The America International University West Africa (AIUWA)**

AIUWA is one of the few private universities  currently operating in The Gambia. Established in 2010, the evidence on its website indicates that AIUWA offers degree programmes through the Colleges of Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing, Management and Information Technology (CMIT), and Health Professionals. The university currently has an estimated student population of over 1000 across the six constituent colleges. The university pursues its vision of "*training in a spirit of collegiality and with a standard of excellence, outstanding clinicians and innovative and humane leaders in the Medical and Allied Sciences and Business"(AIUWA 2020)*. AIUWA offers dual awards in some degree specialisations. This means that the university has subsisting partnership agreements with professional qualifications-awarding bodies in Europe and North America which enables students to graduate with a combined award of academic degree and relevant professional qualification. This information is displayed in the accreditation section of the AIUWA website.

**5.2.4.1  Findings from content analysis of documentary data at AIUWA**

The section presents the findings of the documentary content analysis at AIUWA. The main sources that were accessed include the university's website, and its social media platforms on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, You Tube, and Linked.  Guided by the research question, AIUWA;s messaging on

these paltforms were analysed against the main themes of this study. The   evidences that emerged were analysed in the search for consistent pattern of their occurrence and the implications that such pattern holds for AIUWA's conception and response to the trend of competition in HE edication ssector.

Table 5. 4: Summary of content analysis findings at AIUWA

| Case institution | AIUWA | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Data sources | **Institutional website and social media channels** | | | | |
| Reading strategy | **Intensive** | | | | |
| Date | **May 2021** | | | | |
| **Combined data sources & content features** | **Cues and codes** | **Latent meanings & descriptions** | **Emerging category** | **Pattern of occurrence** | **Emergent Themes** |
| **Historic information** | Institutional artefacts | A private university. Established in 2010 and offers dual awards in some degree specialisations through subsisting partnership agreements with professional qualifications-awarding bodies in Europe and North America. Accreditation affiliations, branded physical infrastructure, | Institutional uniqueness & marketing & branding behaviour | Double source (university website and Facebook page) | Marketing and branding practices |
| **Academic programmes & university services listings listing** | Academic programmes listings | Offers undergraduate degree programmes through the Colleges of Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing, Management and Information Technology (CMIT), and Health Professionals with full curriculum information | Marketing communication | Double source listing on the website & Facebook page. | Marketing practices |
| **Institutional identity symbols** | Institutional logo | The institutional logo and name are placed on the website and social media platforms .The homepage displays information on its history, accreditation affiliations, and unique physical infrastructure.(Please see logo in Appendix 4) | Institutional identification and differentiation (implicit branding behaviour) | Appears on website & Facebook page | Brand identity/brand management practices |
| **Programmes admission information** | Academic access information | Institutional product or services information aimed at instigating needs awareness and faster enrollment decision by prospects. This includes admissions information, fees and visa information, scholarships and financial aid information, online payment information | Marketing communication/ stakeholder communication | Double source listing on the website & up-to-date Facebook page announcements. | Marketing practices |
| **Support services information** | Student support information | Student accommodation information with additional services such as internet access facilities, laundry | Pattern of internal/ external communication/ | Single source (University website). | Marketing practices |

173

| | | and catering services. These demonstrate the breadth of university portfolio | awareness creation behaviour | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Integration of sources with other social media sources** | Integrated data sources | With varying levels of detail, a limited degree of consistency exists between information on the website and information on the Facebook & LinkedIn pages. The web address is accessible through both Facebook and LinkedIn pages | Pattern of internal/ external communication/ awareness creation behaviour | Limited cross-channel integration of data sources. | Marketing and branding practices |
| **Strategic communication pattern between sources** | Vision & mission statements | *"training in a spirit of collegiality and with a standard of excellence, outstanding clinicians and innovative and humane leaders in the Medical and Allied Sciences and Business"* | Institutional purpose and identity projection | Vision & mission statements on the website. Archival information on institutional activities on website and Facebook page | Marketing practices |
| **Pedagogical philosophy information** | Extract from President's welcome statement | *"AIUWA offers curricula that are patterned after the United States programmes and are designed to meet the licensing requirements in the USA and other countries. Only a small number of students shall be admitted every trimester to ensure a small student to faculty ratio and to allow for optimum faculty interaction with students".* | Implicit of institutional behaviour, self-identity and concept of teaching and learning | No explicit mention of this as a policy statement | Pedagogical and marketing practices |
| **Other institutional visibility features** | Projection of university image (extract from mission statement ) & listing of graduate testimonies on Facebook | *"We will fulfill our mission by emphasizing rigorous fundamentals while stimulating innovations as we educate, in a dynamic learning environment, physicians, dentists, pharmacists, scientists, and other health professionals to become leaders in their fields, contribute to the advancement of the medical sciences through discovery, research, scholarship and communications and join with our partner institutions to provide the best care to our patients and communities".*<br><br>*"An intense and rigorous journey with so many barriers. Today I relive that day, that moment with so much pride because it is that day, I shattered the stereotypes! Yes, deaf people in my country can study at university too…. Thank you AIUWA CMIT for being the place that this dream was made possible and achieved".* (Graduate testimony) | Institutional visibility, identity and image management | Double source lisiting (Website & Facebook ) | Marketing practices |

## Brand management practices at AIUWA

The findings from the analysis of information on the AIUWA website indicate a pattern of messaging that is reminiscent of a competitive business model. The university's homepage boldly displays the university logo and brand name. In addition to information on its history, accreditation affiliations, physical infrastructure, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), links are included in the information on its home page. The evidence on the fee and other information links demonstrate clearly-articulated stakeholder engagement strategy that is focused on student prospects from the West African region (Chenev 2014).

Tuition fee information is quoted in United States dollars (USD) with provision made for boarding and feeding and miscellaneous expenses per academic year. This link also provides information on student visa requirements for prospective students from the fifteen ECOWAS countries and beyond. This is supported with online payment instructions using debit and credit cards as well as information on life in The Gambia. These findings indicate a pattern of strategic marketing orientation in which the university portfolio of courses is designed to deliberately differentiate it from those of the competing universities and appeal to the educational aspirations of specially identified markets (Kotler & Keller 2016).

Portfolio innovations like the dual awards and extended products and services like provision of hostel services, the display of university physical infrastructure as well as the quotation of fees in USD, represent competitive behaviour that support AIUWA's brand name. This aligns with the observation of Chernev (2014) that the competitive behaviour of university brands shows a pattern of strategic intent to deliver value through the design, development and delivery of differentiated values that use exclusive features and associations to create value beyond the basic premises of teaching and learning.

However, despite the apparent high level of market awareness by the AIUWA management, the evidence indicates that its presence in the marketplace is limited to undergraduate degrees. From the analysed documents and contents, the university (especially its CMIT) has no presence in the consultancy and research markets.

## AIUWA's social media presence

The findings indicate that AIUWA has an active Facebook account and a dormant Instagram account. There is no evidence of its presence on LinkedIn and Twitter. The university's' Facebook account has registered 107 112 followers. As part of its marketing and branding strategy, graduate profiles and achievements, especially in the international scene, are boldly announced with beneficiary testimonies to further demonstrate the university's distinctive market position. Examples of these include beneficiary testimonies of UK Chevening award graduate achievements in international and

professional medical and nursing exams and its distinct diversity and inclusion policy. AIUWA has emerged to be the first and only university in The Gambia to create an inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities. This is evident in the testimony of a differently-abled graduate, who later became a US embassy fellow. The ex-student recalls her experience studying with AIUWA in the following words:

> *An intense and rigorous journey with so many barriers. Today I relive that day, that moment with so much pride because it is that day, I shattered the stereotypes! Yes deaf people in my country can study at university too…. Thank you AIUWA CMIT for being the place that this dream was made possible and achieved (AIUWA 2020.*

This testimony attracted compliments from people from all walks of life around the globe. In fact, despite being a private university and established ten years later than the biggest university in The Gambia, the UniRank university rankings ranks AIUWA first in The Gambia ahead of the government-owned UTG, with global rankings of 7458 and 7674 respectively (UniRank 2021).

## Pedagogical practices at AIUWA

The information on AIUWA's website and Facebook page carry implicit evidence on the existence of institutional teaching and learning conviction. Further analysis of this information also indicates a messaging pattern that recognises the university's unique selling points and efforts to highlight these distinctions to different stakeholders. These preliminary conclusions draw on earlier evidence of marketing and branding information, especially the design of its degree programmes portfolio and its primary target markets. These conclusions notwithstanding, there is no hint on the existence of any formal teaching and learning policy that guilds the delivery of its academic programmes. This situation emerges in the wake of its ranking as the best university The Gambia by UniRank. In his welcome address to prospective students, the president of AIUWA notes:

> *AIUWA offers curricula that are patterned after the United States programmes and are designed to meet the licensing requirements in the USA and other countries. Only a small number of students shall be admitted every trimester to ensure a small student to faculty ratio and to allow for optimum faculty interaction with students.*

While this statement carries implications for the implicit pedagogical doctrine of AIUWA, it fails to convey the pedagogical policy details and objectives that can be integrated as elements of the AIUWA brand and consequently as integral components of its behavioural identity. The behavioural identity gap is fully identified through the views expressed in Chung (2010), Pritchard *et al*. (2016) and Hamilton *et al*. (2017). These authors maintain that emerging trends in the global HE sector have made the articulation of clear institutional identity an issue of strategic imperative for HEIs.

## AIUWA's institutional identity

The findings indicate that AIUWA views itself as an international university with a mission to promote medical knowledge and human health in The Gambia through discovery, research scholarship and communication. This is stated in this extract from its mission statement:

> *We will fulfill our mission by emphasizing rigorous fundamentals while stimulating innovations as we educate, in a dynamic learning environment, physicians, dentists, pharmacists, scientists, and other health professionals to become leaders in their fields, contribute to the advancement of the medical sciences through discovery, research, scholarship and communications and join with our partner institutions to provide the best care to our patients and communities.*

The university's vision of training outstanding clinical, innovative and humane leaders in the field of medicine and allied sciences is guided by the principles of excellence, integrity, collaboration, compassion, leadership, creativity, diversity and lifelong learning.

Drawing on the main objectives of this study, AIUWA's institutional brand identity statements and implications can be analysed from two perspectives. The first is from the consistency of its institutional self-identity which includes its behavioural self - including all constituent colleges and degree courses and goals. The second is an analysis of the extent to which its behavioural identity incorporates pedagogical connections.

The resulting analytical evidence indicates that AIUWA's vision to *"train in a spirit of collegiality and with a standard of excellence, outstanding clinicians and innovative and humane leaders in medicine and science" (AIUWA 2020)* portrays it as purely a medical university.

This contradicts the information on its website and Facebook page, which indicates that the university is composed of six colleges and one of these is the College of Management and Infrastructure Technology (CMIT). While the inception vision of the university appears to be what is represented on the vision and mission statements, the identity evolution that has occurred since the establishment of CMT has not been acknowledged and incorporated into the university's self-identity statements. This type of identity contradiction and confusion appears to be common in the arena of HE marketing and branding in The Gambia..

The second analytical perspective is on the extent to which AIUWA's institutional self-identity carries pedagogic connotations. While there is no explicit statement on its pedagogic beliefs, the university identifies lifelong learning as one of its core values and principles. The findings also indicate that no mention of this attribute and its pedagogical implications is made in the university's communication to stakeholders.

## 5.3. In-depth interviews findings

The findings from in-depth interviews are presented in this section. Thus, the responses of the management staff, the academic staff and the student participant categories were isolated and analysed under the following micro-units of analysis: brand management practices of HEIs, the institutional pedagogical practices of selected HEIs, institutional brand identity, brand identity and institutional pedagogical practices, and the factors that influence the reputational equity of HEIs. Table 5.5 presents a cross-case comparison that provided the basis for the triangulation of participant responses on the main themes of the study.

### 5.3.1  In-depth interviews findings at UTG

### 5.3.1.1 Brand management practices at UTG: The views of management staff

All the participants in the management staff category acknowledged the emerging competitive trend in the sector. The pattern of responses, however, indicates that participants held mixed views on how the university is handling the emerging competition in the sector. While some did not believe that other universities in the country have the capacity to pose sustained competitive threat to UTG, others argued that the university has become dangerously complacent because of a 'false notion' of its competitive advantages that potentially derive from the university's status as Gambia's only government funded university. These views emerged from the premise that UTG is Gambia's oldest and largest university with superior human and financial resource levels. In buttressing this view, some of the participants gave the following responses:

> *We are the only public university in the Gambia …. we are the university of first choice. (Participant #UTGM 2)*

> *We don't think we are really competing in the sense that we are better established. Potential competitors rely on UTG academic staff to deliver their courses. (Participant #UTGM 2)*

> *The UTG isn't doing much when it comes to marketing and competition…. The UTG is the only public university. While this can be an advantage, the university isn't taking advantage of its first mover advantage. (Participant #UTGM 1)*

> *UTG is not consciously responding to competition in the sector. (Participant #UTGM 1)*

> *UTG is the preferred destination for students' prospects. This is just a product of goodwill. There is no deliberate effort to challenge the competition. (Participant #UTGM 3)*

*There is no deliberate branding strategy. There is no such policy at the moment. (Participant #UTG M 2)*

*The UTG has built on its profile as the only public university into forming strong partnership with prominent private sector, non-government and multi- lateral organisations. (Participant #UTG M 2)*

On the branding strategy theme, the pattern of responses indicates that while the university engages in a series of promotional activities, there is no blueprint for an institutional differentiation or positioning. Some of the views that emerged to support this conclusion include:

*The UTG are not really marketing or they are marketing by accident. (Participant #UTG 3).*

*Apart from advertising for new courses in the newspapers, there really isn't any evidence that the university is doing marketing or deliberate branding. (Participant #UTG M 1)*

*There is no visibility for the university and this is as a result of lack of marketing and branding... it is just recently that management have begun using strategies like strategic partnership to enhance the profile of the university. (Participant #UTG M 1).*

All the participants identified the collection of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, research and consultancy services as UTG's main value offerings. The pattern of responses indicates that participants view each of the university's constituent schools and faculties as the main areas of its competitive activity.

Against the background of the insight that the UTG has not been engaging in strategic marketing, the majority of the participants expressed the view that university needs to take a more strategic approach to differentiating its offerings and thus building sources of competitive advantages for the university. One of the participants put it this way:

*Positioning of any sort does not exist at all. Lecturers are just here to teach in any way they think is the best way to teach.... There is lack of marketing knowledge, there is strong evidence of lack of understanding of how to market the university. (Participant #UTH M 1)*

All participants in the management staff category believe that the main distinguishing attributes of the UTG include the fact that it is a national university, its portfolio of academic programmes, research and consultancy services and some of the newly-acquired learning support assets like its subscription to EBSCO. In buttressing these views, some participants gave the following responses:

*The establishment of the research and consultancy portfolio is aimed at making the university more appealing to industry. (Participant #UTG M 2)*

*The university has now subscribed to a journal database for students unlimited access to peer-renewed journals in all disciplines. (Participant # UTG M 2).*

### 5.3.1.2 Brand management practices at UTG: The views of academic Staff

The responses of academic staff on the university's attitude towards the emerging competitive trend in the sector appeared to support those expressed by the management staff. The majority of academic staff believvds that the university's response to competition has been weak and uncoordinated. Some of the responses from UTG's academic staff include:

*The UTG is the first and only public university in the Gambia. They haven't done enough despite the opportunity they have both locally and internationally especially in the sub region…. Efforts had been made at building UTG's brand name through international partnerships. However subsequent administrations have not been able to consolidate on prior gains. (Participant #UTGA 1)*

*The competition is there but it is not very strong. UTG has better name recognition than any other university in the country. (Participant #UTGA 3)*

*As the only public university in the country, the UTG is aware of emerging competition in the sector. However, the university's broad portfolio of courses anticipates competition as it aims to maintain its of leadership position. (Participant #UTGA 2).*

The branding theme drew mixed responses from academic staff. The pattern of responses on this theme tends to show participants' acknowledgement of the existence of managerial practices that lend credence to marketing. The findings indicate that these practices were, however, perceived to be carried out more as reactive tactical maneuvers than well-articulated components of a marketing and branding strategy. Some of the responses on this sub theme include:

*I am not aware of any policy that refers to university branding, but there were activities along the lines of international and local partnership new programmes which tend to increase the visibility of the university. (Participant #UTGA 2)..*

*I believe so. They are doing this may not be very calculated but all effort to increase the number of courses ahead of other universities are geared towards promoting the brand image of the university. (Participant #UTGA 4).*

The academic staff participants' responses on the core offerings of the UTG sappear to support the views expressed by the management staff. All the participants in the academic staff category identified

the university's portfolio of courses and research and consultancy services as UTG's core offerings. Among the responses that highlight this conclusion include:

*UTG is the only university with a school of education in The Gambia. (Participant #UTGA 3).*

The majority of academic staff believe that the university can do more to make its courses and services more appealing through a more strategic approach to marketing and branding. This may include articulating a role for the teaching and learning policy that would support the consolidation of the quality and image gains that have so far been achieved. In support of this view, one of the participants put it this way:

*…..deliberate positioning of the university is a competitive imperative. In fact, in some countries, universities have now begun to introduce marketing departments that are headed by Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs). This is the emerging trend in university marketing. (Participant #UTGA 1)*

*It would be too naïve to rely on the UTG'S name recognition as the only public university in the Gambia…. we need to attract international students, international faculty, international grants and hopefully improve the brand image of the university (Participant #UTGA 1)*

### 5.3.1.3 Brand management practices at UTG: The views of students

The brand management practices of the selected universities were explored against the backdrop of the impact of such practices on institutional image and identity. Thus, the factors that motivated students' choice of the UTG as their HE destination were explored. From the responses received from the student participants, the statements that recurred include:

*It is the only public university in the Gambia, it offers government scholarships, it has better name recognition than other universities, it offers better collection of courses than other universities, it has national accreditation and international recognition. (Participant # UTGS 1).*

The responses indicate that student participants in this study heard about the UTG mostly through friends or family members, newspaper advertisement and the university website, while acknowledging that what makes the university different includes its cultural diversity, its superior portfolio of courses, availability of online courses, online library resources and better name recognition. The majority of the participants gave the following sorts of responses:

*It is the only public university in the country. It has got superior portfolio of courses. They have more affordable tuition fees. There are higher scholarship opportunities and flexible tuition payment terms. (Participant #)UTGS 2)*

*The UTG is still what it used to be or even worse. No access to library resources, access to internet is so expensive when you have to do all assignments online. There is still classroom congestion after so many years now. (Participant #UTGS 6)*

## 5.3.1.4 Pedagogical practices at UTG: The views of management staff

The pursuit of insight on the pedagogical practices of HE in the Gambia formed the focus of the second objective of this study. Thus, participants' views and opinions on UTG's pedagogic values were sought. This included participants' opinions on the availability of a pedagogy policy, and the extent to which these pedagogic architectures are integrated in the university's marketing strategy. The pattern of responses by the majority of participants in the management category appears to indicate that there is no known institutional pedagogical doctrine at UTG. The responses indicated that teaching staff predominantly use the lecturing transmissive approach to learner engagement. Some of the responses received include:

*There is currently none. However, this is something that is very important. In countries like Tanzania, there is a policy-led emphasis on work-based learning. This is key towards enhancing the quality of graduates and their employment outcomes. (Participant #UTGM 3)*

Another participant put it this way:

*What dominates currently is the lecturing transmissive approach to teaching and learning… work-based, practice-based, and guided inquiry approach should be used to encourage leaners' independence and problem solving. There should be the harmonisation of teaching methods at the university. (Participant #UTGM 1)*

The majority of the participants believed that a pedagogy policy does not currently exist at the UTG. It also emerged that there is no effort by management to encourage the use of signature pedagogies in specific disciplines. In responding to the question on the university's pedagogy policy, one of the participants observed that:

*There is no uniform teaching approach. My experience is different lecturers use different approaches. It is multiple approach. However, we encourage the use of pedagogical approaches that would present teaching and learning as being relevant to the needs of the local economy. This is the more reason why the university has now introduced the Entrepreneurship*

*and Innovation courses which is expected to increase the elasticity of graduate competences through innovative pedagogy. (Participant # UTGM 2)*

These responses indicate a status quo of lack of pedagogical philosophy, as expressed in the following response:

*Yes.It may not be what applies university wide, but at the School of Education.The teacher does not bait you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to enter the threshold of your mind because the wisdom of one man does not lend its wings to another man. This philosophy forms the pedagogical doctrine of staff at the school of education. Although, not all staff may adhere to these principles but we try.There are also lecturers who have no background in education whatsoever. So this makes it difficult for them to adopt contemporary teaching methods (Participant # UTGM 4)*

### 5.3.1.5 Pedagogical practices at UTG: The views of academic staff

In this category, the pattern of responses on the pedagogical practices at the UTG from the academic staff appears to support those that emerged from the responses given by the management staff. The majority of the academic staff believed that there is no institutional pedagogic philosophy or policy. The implication of this, as stated by some of the participants, is that teachers, tutors and lecturers use their discretion to fill the void on pedagogical philosophy and policy. Participants also drew a parallel between shared institutional quality and outcomes. To buttress this view, the participants observed that:

*Effective pedagogical approaches have since been a problem at the UTG. Although individuals make effort, however, there is a difference between knowing and teaching. Most lecturers have not undergone pedagogical training. There should be an institutional pedagogical training regime for all faculty. (Participant #UTGA 1)*

*Responsive pedagogy, smart ways of teaching and learning .... are some of the ways of building the image and identity of the university. (Participant #UTGA 4)*

*UTG curricula were built in consultation with stakeholders. However, this practice was not sustained. These is no uniformity of teaching philosophy just like there is no central pedagogy policy. (Participant #UTGA 2)*

*………..the way to overcome some of our teaching quality challenges is to enact university-wide pedagogy policy. (Participant #UTGA 5)*

*There is no policy, there is no guidance, there is none. There is no pedagogic awareness, there is no training. UTG staff teach using whatever methods and beliefs they have and know best. (Participant #, UTGA 2).*

## 5.3.1.6 Pedagogical practices at UTG: The views of students

The pedagogical practices of the UTG from the student's perspective were explored by guiding participants to recall the dominant teaching and learning approaches they experienced since beginning their studies at the UTG. Participants recalled a variety teaching and learning methods being used by the teaching staff. The teaching and learning approaches that recurred in participants' responses include: the transmissive approach (lecturing), guided inquiry, participatory research, critical theory and analysis, field trips, case studies and online learning. While these emerged as the variety of approaches that are used by UTG faculty, all student participants in this study identified knowledge transmission (lecturing) as the dominant teaching method at the UGT. This insight emerged from such participant responses:

*Several pedagogies are used. However, they use the lecture method a lot. It is the most dominant approach. (Participant #UTGS 1)*

*Most of my teachers make it a point of duty to relate their teaching to the actual events in the Gambia. They do not relate much to international events. (Participant #UTGS 11)*

*Some teachers talk at us while others try to relate lessons to real life experience. (Participant #UTGS 10)*

*Lecturers do not use advanced teaching and learning methods. In some cases, they come reading the slides which doesn't help at all. (Participant #UTGS 12)*

*There are various teaching methods that come to mind. It appears the university has no pedagogy policy. My experience is that the dominant teaching method is the teacher-centered lecturing method. (Participant #UTGS 5 )*

Participants indicated that the teaching methods used by faculty have an impact in the way students learn. One of the participants commented:

*In theoretical transmission approach students forget easily. But in teaching and learning environment students learn by doing and this helps retention of knowledge. (Participant #UTGS 10)*

All the participants observed that the status quo that permits varying teaching and learning philosophies can be interpreted to mean that the UTG has no pedagogy policy. This conclusion is implicitly expressed in the following responses:

> *As far as I know, lecturers approach lesson based on variation in their experiences. (Participant #UTGS 7)*

> *I do not think so. It looks like lecturers teach as they deem fit. (Participant #UTGS10)*

> *Do not see any element of consistency in their combined teaching methods. (Participant #UTGS 11)*

However, all student participants, like their management and academic staff counterparts, agreed that a university-wide pedagogy policy would improve the quality of teaching and learning and consequently improve the reputation of the university. This is buttressed in the following response on the potential benefits of a university-wide pedagogy policy:

> *I believe it would help the university, it would help lecturers and it would help students as well. It would ensure that lecturers, while using varying approaches would maintain consistency and this will improve teaching and learning quality which will be good for the identity and image of the university. (Participant #UTGS 6)*

### 5.3.1.7 The institutional brand identity of UTG: The views of management staff

The institutional brand identity of the UTG was explored as part of the third research objective. Participants were asked to express their opinions on their perception of the university prior to joining the employee ranks of the university. Thus, the study sought understanding of the actual brand image of the UTG, and the extent to which the emergent attributes have evolved with institutional brand positioning and identity.

The participants expressed their views on perception of the visual identity of UTG prior to joining the institution as employees. The responses that emerged ranged from viewing the university as a high value national asset, a symbol of national pride to scale up socio-economic development.

The responses that emerged from participants perception of UTG's behavioural and visual attributes were mixed. While some participants believed that the behavioural attributes have remained the same, the majority of participants believed the university has really evolved, especially in the areas of physical infrastructure, the number of constituent schools, the courses on offer, quality of staff recruited, name recognition for the UTG, and strategic partnerships within and outside the country.

On what the positioning of the UTG is, the responses that emerged appear to validate the responses given on the competitive behaviour theme. Some of the responses include:

*There is no clarity on what the market positioning of the university really is. This is coming against the backdrop of the fact there is no deliberate marketing and branding strategy. The opportunity to build a distinctive image for the university is being missed. (Participant #UTGM 1)*

Another participant viewed UTG to be positioning itself as a center of excellence in the sub-region:

*Proper academic culture to be inculcated into our academic staff. We are aiming to build the image of a distinguished institution that would be seen as a world-class university – strategic partnership, investment in research, improvements in infrastructure, and sustained capacity building for staff. (Participant #UTGM 2 )*

These responses emerged more as managerial intentions than image, identity or reputational outcomes of a subsisting university positioning strategy.

## 5.3.1.8 The institutional brand identity of UTG: The views of academic staff

The pattern of responses that emerged when the UTG's academic staff were prompted to give their views on the behavioural attributes that they would associate the university with, prior to joining its academic ranks, indicates that staff joined UTG with different motivations and expectations. This variation in expectations and motivations also appears to influence the impressions these staff have of the brand reputation of UTG. Some of the responses include:

*These were lots of negative sentiments about the university being a new university. (Participant #UTGA 1)*

*The impression I had was that instructional standard and quality were very negative. The institution suffered from liability of newness. It had what were described as mobile campuses and lacked international accreditation. (Participant #UTGA 1)*

However, all the participants in this category acknowledged that the university has rapidly evolved since they joined as teaching staff.

On the positioning strategies of the UTG, the majority of the academic staff reinforced the view that the positioning of the UTG is not known as there is no strategic marketing practice at the university. Some of the responses given on the positioning of the UTG include:

*There appears to be no known positioning for the university as we speak. However, I would like to see UTG positioned as the market leader with regular engagement with stakeholders. (Participant #UTGA 4)*

*There is currently no positioning. UTG does not do any strategic marketing or branding. They feel they dominate the market and therefore do not bother about marketing. (Participant #UTGA 3)*

*The only public university this emerged as a non-strategic approach to positioning. The other attributes are the breadth of courses and programmes. The only university that offers masters and PHDs in the Gambia.. (Participant #UTGA 1)*

*The website and social media platforms are not effectively utilised institutional features like the digital library should all form part of the brand communication strategy. (Participant #UTGA 2)*

### 5.3.1.9 The institutional brand identity of UTG: The views of students

The views and opinions of students were sought on UTG's institutional pedagogical practices and identity. This was done by guiding participants to reflect on how an actively enforced institution-wide pedagogy policy could impact on the university. All participants believed that the enactment of an institutional pedagogical policy would have a positive impact on the brand identity of the university. The pattern of responses on this theme indicates participants' belief that pedagogical policy objectives would include a clear definition and communication of institutional pedagogical philosophy. This, by implication, would define the pedagogical practice guidelines. The responses indicate that participants believed that the result of this would be improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and graduate outcomes.

Below are some of the views expressed by participants on this theme:

*Absolutely yes. It would generate positive word- of-mouth and enhance the quality of graduates. (Participant #UTGS6)*

*Certainly. A pedagogy policy to some extent would improve the teaching and learning quality and standards by guiding staff start to adopt similar teaching and learning philosophy and this will consequently improve the quality of graduates. (Participant #UTGS 11)*

*Yes, there are lots of critics currently about course design and non-uniformity of teaching approaches and the negative impact this has on UTG. (Participant #UTGS 7)*

*... lecturers give us learning support materials without discussing what is expected of the reading or learning outcomes or assessment criteria. (Participant #UTGS 5)*

## 5.3.1.10 Features required for improving the reputational equity of universities: The views of participants from UTG

This theme sought to explore participants' views on those elements that should be considered critical to the brand management practices of HEs. The following factors and approaches emerged from the three participant categories in the study from the UTG:

- Physical infrastructure (ultra-modern)
- Digital infrastructure (online presence includes digital library)
- Technology infrastructure
- Innovation in teaching and learning approaches
- Pedagogy policy
- Technical infrastructure
- Highly-trained and experienced faculty
- Investment in the research profile of the university
- Enhance the research capacity of the university
- Marketing and branding
- The combination of courses and quality of teaching and learning

## 5.3.2  In-depth interview findings at GTTI

Drawing on the insight that emerged from the preceding analysis of documentary sources at GTTI, the reponses of  GTTI  participants (students , management and academic staff)  in the indepth interviews are presented under each of the main themes of the study. These responses are then used a complementary information in the effort to form complete meanings on the  institutional behaviour of GTTI around the main themes of this study.

## 5.3.2.1 Brand management practices at GTTI: The views of management staff

The pattern of responses given by GTTI's management staff indicates institutional awareness of the emerging trend of competition in Gambia's HE sector. The response pattern also carries evidence of lack of active marketing strategy to respond to the trend of emerging competition. The majority of GTTI management staff who took part in the interviews believed that the most visible response the institution is currently demonstrating against the competition is its seemingly superior TVET course portfolio

design. Being the largest and the only government-funded TVET institution in the Gambia, participants believed that GTTI holds a strong competitive edge through its name recognition, organisational resources, and the depth and structure of its portfolio of courses. As one participant put it:

> *GTTI holds a strong competitive edge through its curriculum unlike other institutions that use six months curricula all of GTTI courses are offered based on nine months curricula (Participant #GTTIM 1)*

On whether the institution has a deliberate branding strategy, the pattern of responses indicates varying views between participants who believed the institution has a deliberate branding strategy and those who believed there is no effective marketing/branding practice at GTTI. The participants who believed that GTTI has a deliberate branding strategy appeared to anchor their conviction on the fact that GTTI has a marketing unit, a website, social media presence and national name recognition. The participants who held the opposite view appeared to do so on the basis of the fact that there are no visible market-driven activities beyond periodic newspaper announcement of institutional events or occasional calls for application for new courses. In reinforcing this view, one of the participants noted:

> *I would say that it does although it is not very 'pronounced'. The management of GTTI however have the awareness of the benefits of differentiation. GTTI has private bilateral partnerships with international organizations. Yes, we use newspapers a lot and we have a Facebook account, too. (Participant #GTTIM 2)*

Participants identified GTTI's portfolio of TVET courses, including short and bespoke programmes and TVET consultancy, as GTTI's core offering. However, there was consensus among participants that GTTI needs to make significant improvements in the structure and marketing of its core TVET programmes, short training courses, and its consultancy in order to remain competitive in these markets. One of the responses that was given by participants in support of this view was:

> *There should be greater improvement in the courses and curriculum offered and, in the way the GTTI courses are marketed. This is more so when other TVET institutions are being licensed to operate. (Participant #GTTIM 1)*

In building support for views of those participants who believed that GTTI has a market leadership position, one of the participants offered the following response on GTTI's distinctive features as a HEI in The Gambia:

> *The material resources, although not very sophisticated, but GTTI is well ahead of other TVET institutions in the country. GTTI has name recognition nationally and internationally. (Participant #GTTIM 1)*

### 5.3.2.2 Brand management practices at GTTI: The views of academic staff

The views of GTTI's management staff on the institution's brand management practices appear to some extent to support those expressed by the management staff. Like the responses of management staff, academic staff responses were mixed. While some participants believed that GTTI has a deliberate marketing and branding strategy, others believed that the institution has no active marketing and branding function. Some of the responses that emerged include:

> *The institution does not do marketing. They assume that the ability of graduates should market the institution. However, this approach seems not to be working as enrollment is declining steadily. It is evident that competition is beginning to affect the institution. (Participant #GTTIA 3)*

> *I do not think so. An institution that is not actively marketing would not understand what branding is. However, the institution could be seen as a silent brand that rely on government-backed name- recognition and longevity(Participant #GTTIA 1)*

> *In addition to TVET courses GTTI should design its portfolio to be active controls… GTTI can repackage its courses and consultancy to enhance its position in the market(Participant #GTTIA 3)*

> *There isn't much competition against GTTI. The reason is that it is the only government-owned TVET institution in the country. Although there are other private institutions, they do not have the same delivery capacity as GTTI. (Participant #GTTIA 4)*

> *I don't think GTTI has a competitor and there are small institutions. This is why GTTI rarely advertises its courses. (Participant #GTTIA 2)*

> *GTTI has a competitive advantage in TVET particularly in Engineering and construction. If I were to give GTTI marketing effort a score, I would give it forty percent. This is mainly because I'm aware that GTTI students are leaving the institution to other private competitor TVET institutions. (Participant #GTTIA 5)*

The insight from this blend of views on GTTI's response to the emerging trend of competition appears to be that its marketing practice is weak and non-strategic. The establishment of a marketing unit demonstrates institutional awareness of emerging competitive trends and the potential role of marketing in creating market advantages for the institution. This, however, differs from a demonstration of institutional capacity to strategically design and deliver marketing programmes to the timely benefit of the institution. The latter appears to be the case in GTTI. This view is supported by the partial consensus

that emerged from participants' responses on the branding practices at GTTI. The following statements were made by participants on the issue of branding at GTTI:

> *The image advantage that GTTI may be enjoying was not built out of deliberate marketing or branding but from the goodwill that arises from the perceived excellence of its earlier graduates. (Participant #GTTIA 3)*

> *I do not think so. There is a marketing unit that is merged with the career guidance unit. However, I have not seen any active evidence of activities in this area . (Participant #GTTIA 1)*

> *I don't think so. The belief is that there is no credible competitor. GTTI has the best collection of lecturers even through it is still struggling. (Participant #GTTIA 2)*

> *Yes and no! Yes, for the fact that the institution has been using a deliberately low-cost strategy through pricing recognising the low economic background of the majority of TVET students in the country. (Participant #GTTIA 4)*

The institutional core offerings that emerged from the responses of GTTI management staff were corroborated by the academic staff. The institute's portfolio of TVET courses, consultancies and a portfolio of short-term trainings recurred in participants responses to the question on GTTI's core offerings. The views of participants were further explored on the need to make GTTI more competitive through improving and repositioning its portfolio of courses. The following are some of the responses received:

> *GTTI can differentiate itself from other institutions. They could do so strengthening their portfolio. This could further enhance the brand image. (Participant #GTTIA 5)*

> *The institution needs to make its offerings more visible. Even in the area that GTTI has distinctive capabilities, stakeholders do not know about it. They should market seriously (Participant #GTTIA 3)*

> *There should be improvements in the way courses are offered to create that modern feeling. Knowing that the needs of the market are changing, courses that reflect current market trends, supported with the latest technology and the use of marketing to showcase these… modernise the curriculum. (Participant #GTTIA 1)*

These views further validate an earlier conclusion on marketing/branding practices at GTTI. These views portray a non-marketing status quo at GTTI. The features that emerged from the views of

academic staff as the distinctive features of GTTI include: institution with the best name recognition; the biggest and only public TVET institution in The Gambia; great alumni; institution with the largest selection of TVET courses

While participants made these positive associations with GTTI's institutional brand, the findings indicate that there also exist negative attributes that can be improved upon in order to strengthen the institutional brand. As one participant puts it:

> *GTTI is the biggest TVET institution in The Gambia. It has the largest selection of courses. However, the top-bottom approach used by management makes it difficult to build the type of institutional knowledge base that is required to maintain excellence. (Participant #GTTIA 1)*

### 5.3.2.3 Brand management practices at GTTI: The views of students

The responses of GTTI students on the brand management practices at GTTI indicate those reasons and associations that influenced students' choice of GTTI. The reasons and factors that emerged include its portfolio of courses, its name recognition both locally and internationally, tuition cost and information received through the personal selling activities of its marketing team.

On the issue of students' and prospective students' main sources of GTTI courses information, the response pattern indicates that references from friends and family formed the main source of GTTI's product and service information. Students also identified personal selling through school visitations as a source of GTTI's course and programme information. As one student put it:

> *I came to know about GTTI when their marketing team visited my high school. The information I received from that visit changed my initial plan which had been to go overseas to study construction. (Participant #GTTIS 1)*

The factors, associations and attributes that emerged as the distinctive features of GTTI include:

- Its broad portfolio of courses. Students believe that GTTI's course portfolio breadth and depth is not comparable to any other TVET institution in the country.
- Its national and international name recognition as the main TVET institution in The Gambia.
- Its tuition cost. It is believed to charge the cheapest tuition fees despite being the best recognised in the country.
- Its curricular structures and assessment methods that include industry exposure.
- Its teaching methods. These are believed to be more work-based than any other TVET institution in The Gambia.

One of the student participants used the following statement to highlight these distinctions:

> *GTTI's teaching methods is what makes it different, especially in the Construction courses. I did a course with another TVET institution and this gave me the opportunity to compare teaching methods, [GTTI] lecturers have more industry connections and provide more opportunity for work placements. GTTI also has better equipment for practical work. (Participant #GTTIS 1)*

## 5.3.2. 4 The institutional pedagogical practices at GTTI: The views of management staff

The pattern of responses that emerged indicate that teaching staff use a blend of teaching methods to deliver courses in various departments. While it emerged that the disciplinary epistemic requirements influence the teaching approaches that teachers use, the findings indicate that the lecturing or the transmissive approach dominates teaching methods at GTTI. As some of the management-level participants observed:

> *This is an area of challenge. There is no one approach. My observation is that teachers teach using an assortment of approaches that support their disciplines. I cannot say whether there is specific pedagogy policy but teachers try to use a blend of approaches. (Participant #GTTIM 1)*

> *Not really. The lecture method dominates teaching and learning here at GTTI. My observation is that teachers are predisposed to use the teacher-centre method. This is not to the advantage of the institution. This is affecting quality of teaching and the image of the institution. (Participant #GTTIM 2)*

While acknowledging that GTTI has no pedagogy policy, participants highlighted the reputational benefits that such policy could bring to the institution. Some of the participants put it this way:

> *A pedagogy policy would be very useful to the students and for the teachers' career development and to the image of the institution. (Participant #GTTIM  2)*

> *No such policy currently exists. Such policy would be of immense benefit to the learners and the image of GTTI. (Participant #GTTIM 1)*

## 5.3.2.5 The institutional pedagogical practices at GTTI: The views of academic staff

The pattern of responses that emerged on the issue of institutional awareness on pedagogical philosophy at GTTI, indicate that no such philosophy or awareness exists. The findings indicate that teachers, at their own discretion, use a variety of teaching methods. While the majority of GTTI's academic staff

193

who took part in this study identified lecturing as the dominant teaching method at the institution, it also emerged that there is no system of teacher mentorship programme for new teachers. In the effort to buttress this view, the following responses emerged:

> *There is no teaching and learning philosophy that is communicated to lecturers when they are recruited. It does not exist. Lecturers just go to class and spoon-feed the students. This is a situation that is not helpful to the image of the institution. In fact, there have been instances where GTTI students are hired to do a job but were unable to deliver. All these are caused by weak pedagogy. (Participant #GTTIA 1)*

> *Teacher-centered approaches is what dominates teaching and learning here. Even the way we arrange our classrooms sabotages the objectives of quality teaching. Here we arrange our classrooms to promote individual learning. (Participant #GTTIA 3)*

> *No there is none. Teachers are recruited and just left on their own. There is no policy directive, there is no induction. I was just left on my own. There was no information on what the teaching and learning principles are… (Participant #GTTIA 5)*

While all the candidates acknowledged that GTTI has no pedagogy policy, like the management level participants, the findings indicate that academic staff support the enactment of a pedagogy policy that would not only enhance the quality of teaching and learning, but also improve the brand image of the institution. This is highlighted in the following responses:

> *Having such a policy would be very helpful. Currently teachers use different teaching approaches and sometimes this can confuse. (Participant #GTTIA 3)*

> *The lack of pedagogy policy looks to me like it is the policy of the institution. GTTI has been using outdated curricula that have not been reviewed for years. (Participant #GTTIA 1)*

These findings corroborate the evidence that emerged from the prior responses of management-level staff on GTTI's pedagogical practices.

### 5.3.2.6 The institutional pedagogical practices at GTTI: The views of students

The majority of student participants identified the lecturing method as the dominant teaching method at GTTI. This reinforces the views expressed by both the management-level and academic staff. The students also acknowledged that the inconsistency that is observed (in the way different teachers who teach the same course adopt different content and materials) indicates that GTTI has no policy and standards on pedagogy. These conclusions are captured in the following participant responses:

*Some teachers come without any reference materials and start to teach. Others come in, write on the blackboard with chalk, and start to teach… the dominant teaching method is lecturing. (Participant #GTTIS 2)*

*While some courses require lots of practical work, the practical sessions still turn out to be teacher-led with lots of copying and explaining using the backboard. (Participant #GTTIS 4)*

*It's mostly teacher-centered throughout year 1. But this begins to change from the second year. I believe this is because the lecturers want to build the foundation for fresh students. (Participant #GTTIS 1)*

When the role of a pedagogy policy was explored, all student participants expressed belief in the benefits that the enactment of such policy would bring to the institution. Some of the benefits that were highlighted included its impact in defining teaching standards and performance guidelines for teachers, its impact on graduate quality and outcomes, as well as its impact on the image and reputation of GTTI. All participants also agreed that teaching methods have implications for the learning experience of graduates.

*This will be very helpful. This is so because, currently even after graduation after 3 years some of us are not even job market ready. Such policy would set out teaching guidelines…and help improve the quality of graduates. (Participant #GTTIS 1)*

### 5.3.2.7 GTTI's institutional brand identity: The views of management staff

The pattern of responses that emerged on the non-visual components of GTTI's brand identity varied from those participants who view GTTI as the only TVET institution with the capacity to engineer real solutions to real problems, to those participants who view GTTI as a highly recognisable and highly recommended HEI. These views emerged on the range of factors that formed the core of the impressions that staff had prior to joining GTTI. These impressions formed the prior expectations of staff. When the post-recruitment impressions of staff were explored, the pattern of responses that emerged indicates a split between those who believe that their prior expectations of the institution have been met and those who believe that gaps of varying forms and origins still exist. These views were expressed in the following response examples:

*I saw GTTI as a high-level institution… with the potential to solve real problems…. Some of my expectations have been met while I've been disappointed in other areas. Within the six years that I've been here, a lot have improved but there is still room for improvement. (Participant #GTTIM 2)*

195

*When I arrived newly, I regretted not joining earlier. Not much have improved over this period of ten years that I've been here, especially in the area of teaching quality. In fact, the teaching quality I met here when I joined newly has declined significant. (Participant #GTTIM 1)*

GTTI's institutional brand identity was further explored by gauging management staff's perception of the institution's market positioning. The response pattern further highlights the contradictions that surround GTTI brand management practices. This insight is emerging against the backdrop of overwhelming evidence of the institution's name recognition, and non-strategic approach to its response to the trend of emerging competition in Gambia's HE sector. Drawing on this background, what emerged is lack of clarity on what GTTI's positioning really is. This conclusion is captured in the following responses:

*Here in The Gambia, once the mention of TVET is made, the name that comes to mind is GTTI. I would not say this has resulted from active marketing and branding. It looks like this is resulting from longevity  (Participant #GTTIM 2)*

*I do not know what the positioning of an institution which does not do marketing is. (Participant #GTTIM 1)*

## 5.3.2.8 GTTI's institutional brand identity: The views of academic staff

The pattern of responses by GTTI academic staff on the brand identity of the institution indicates that staff had varied impressions of GTTI prior to joining the academic ranks of the institution.

While some staff were motivated by GTTI's great alumni legacy, others were motivated by their perception of the institution as a well-organised and respected TVET institution with immense knowledge and career opportunities. The evidence that emerged indicates that majority of participants believed that, while some improvements have been made in the general identity elements of the institution, there are still gaps in institutional development models especially in the areas of building linkages at a time when HEIs around the globe are facing immense pressure to remain relevant. This conclusion is captured in the following responses:

*Some of the attributes and qualities of the GTTI have remained unchanged or unimproved. An example is the area of teaching methods. These have remained unchanged since I joined ten years ago. (Participant #GTTIA 5)*

*I know of colleagues who left because they could not cope. They are very few clear career development opportunities at GTTI at the moment. (Participant #GTTIA 3)*

On the issue of GTTI's market positioning, the response pattern depicts participants' consensus on the lack of clarity about what GTTI stands for. The responses that support this conclusion include:

> *GTTI has a good institutional image in the market not because it is doing any deliberate marketing. Instead, it is based on the fact it has produced lots of successful graduates in the distant past. (Participant #GTTIA 3)*

> *GTTI has no externally focused positioning. There may be internal positioning or identity awareness. They used to do open days but that has stopped. GTTI used to build and fabricate components. But today none of these things and programmes is happening. It appears the institution lost its capacity. (Participant #GTTIA 2)*

> *I will simply tell you that there is no positioning at GTTI. All what happens here is that they advertise for newly developed courses in the newspapers and that will be all and this may happen only once in one year. (Participant #GTTIA 5)*

These views corroborate the responses that were given by management staff. The emerging evidence is indicative of identity and image gaps that tend to result in building an institutional brand image that is not supported by internally active behavioural identities. This conclusion is given further support by the evidence of lack of clarity on what GTTI's institutional positioning is and its potential in creating multiple impressions and expectations.

The emerging insight therefore suggests that GTTI lacks consistency in its construction of the types of psychological representation and associations that it would make of itself. While it has benefited from longevity and government-backed image of the leading TVET institution in the Gambia, it has not constructed any reputational equity, and it remains vulnerable to high intensity competitive attacks in the emerging environment of globalisation, liberalisation and marketisation of HE.

The additional dimension that emerged from the pattern of responses given by academic staff is that the seeming absence of an institutional identity philosophy may be having impact on its lack of pedagogical philosophy and policy, thus maintaining a status quo of either a confused brand identity or a multiple institutional brand identities. This is a situation that constitutes a weakened competitive position for GTTI.

### 5.3.2.9 GTTI's institutional brand identity: The views of students

The pattern of responses from students indicates consensus on the impact of an actively enforced institution-made pedagogy policy on the image and reputation of GTTI. As one of the participants put it:

*Yes, it would have positive impact on the image of the institute. The quality of graduates which is the result of pedagogy policy will give positive image for the institution. (Participant #GTTIS 1)*

## 5.3.2.10 Features required for improving the reputational equity of universities: The views of participants from GTTI

On how universities and other HEIs can improve their institutional brand image and reputational equity, the following factors recurred in the responses of all categories of participants at GTTI:

- Recruiting high-quality teaching staff
- Procuring high-quality training materials and equipment
- Teaching and assessment methods should support labour market needs
- Classroom and general physical infrastructure should be updated
- Teacher qualification, training and teaching methods
- Digital infrastructure should be procured and used to support teaching and learning activities
- Improve curriculum and teaching methods
- Introduce pedagogy policy
- Regular capacity development of staff, especially on pedagogy
  Teaching methods that are underscored by teacher training and pedagogy policy.
- Use marketing and branding to make the university different
- Strategic marketing of the university.

The importance of some of the factors listed above is captured in the following participant responses:

*Strategic marketing has become very important to universities and HEIs in general in this age of competition. GTTI has a website but I do not know the last time it was updated. Improve the motivation of teaching staff and use it as an element of competitive advantage. (Participant #GTTIA 3)*

*We have that problem right now.... We have pending complaints about poor lecturer performance. (Participant #GTTIS 1)*

## 5.3.3 In-depth interview findings at MDI

The outcome of the documentary content analysis provided preliminary insight into the competitive behaviour of MDI. While drawing impetus from the findings of the content analysis , the sections below are used to present the responses of the indepth interview participants .These responses were

further analysed to build a trangulative understanding of MDI's institutional behaviour on each of the main themes of the study.

### 5.3.3.1 Brand management practices at MDI: The views of management staff

The pattern of responses given by the management staff of MDI indicates a good level of institutional awareness of the emerging trend of competition in Gambia's HE sector. The responses highlighted MDI's perceived leadership position in the management training and consultancy market, especially in the public sector sub-segment. The evidence that emerged appears to indicate a high level of sensitivity, especially in the area of the threatening presence and activities of universities in disciplines and portfolios where MDI had historically held competitive prerogative. The findings indicate that MDI had taken strategic steps that include portfolio expansion through academic partnerships. On buttressing these findings, one of the participants gave the following response:

> *As we monitored the increasing trend of competition in the sector, we sought to improve our offerings to university-level awards. The goal here is to challenge the activities of our university competitors especially in the management training and consultancy market using the country-of-origin advantage of Senegal. This is the strategy behind our partnership with a Dakar-based university to deliver degree level programmes in Management and related disciplines. (Participant #MDIM 1)*

Management staff responses on the branding strategy of MDI indicates an awareness of the necessity for an organised competitive response to emerging trend of competition in the sector. However, there is no clarity on whether these activities are called branding.

> *Yes, MDI has taken series of measures. We upgraded our website; we are active on social media and now we are offering degree courses through partnership with SUPdeCO in Dakar, Senegal. I believe all these show that the institution is aware of trends that are emerging in the market. (Participant #MDIM 2)*

There was consensus among the participants on the core offerings of the institute. All the participants identified the institutional portfolio of management and professional courses, research, management training and consultancy services as its core offerings. While acknowledging the need to continuously make improvements on the structures and qualities of its current portfolio, participants identified MDI's leadership position in public sector management training, its status as a publicly-owned institution, and its relationship with international awarding bodies like the Institute for Commercial Management (ICM), the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants (ACCA) and the Chartered Institute of

Procurement and Supply (CIPS) as the attributes that differentiate and offer competitive advantages to MDI.

> *MDI is probably the only institution with this number of international affiliations in The Gambia. (Participant #MDIM_1)*

### 5.3.3.2: Brand management practices at MDI: The views of academic staff

While the majority of academic staff corroborated some of the competitive activities that were mentioned by the management staff, they view MDI's competitive response pattern as reactive rather than proactive. Some of the comments that emerged include:

> *Yes, we are aware of the emerging competition but I wouldn't say that MDI is dealing with it well. There is no marketing unit. We only advertise courses and events sometimes through the website. Most of these activities are in reaction to what the universities are doing. (Participant #MDIA_1)*

The view highlights the opinions of the majority of academic staff participants who believe that MDI's response does not amount to strategic marketing and branding.

> *To use branding as a strategy to check the activities of the competitor institutions needs to be proactive(Participant #MDIA_2)*

The academic staff corroborated management staff's views on the core offering of MDI. While they acknowledged the relative strength of MDI in the corporate trainings market, the findings indicate that academic staff believe the university competitors and private sector consulting firms pose serious threat to MDI.

The UTG has been making gains in this area of corporate training and research, especially with the establishment of the Centre for Policy Research and Strategic Studies (CEPRASS). The features that emerged as attributes that distinguish MDI include its status as the designated institution for the management training of public sector workers, and its long-standing relations with international awarding bodies and universities.

### 5.3.3.3 Brand management practices at MDI: The views of students

In exploring the impressions that students hold of MDI and the extent to which such impressions influenced their choice of MDI as tertiary education destination, students were asked to state their opinions on the reasons why they chose to study at MDI. The findings indicate that the student participants chose MDI for a variety of reasons which include: MDI's 'inclusive' portfolio of courses,

its name recognition, its learning environment, its affiliation with international awarding bodies like ACCA, ICM, CIPS, and its strong reputation in the management and professional and vocational education in the country. This conclusion is supported by the following responses:

> *Yes, I chose MDI for a lot of reasons, first, it is the most recommended institution when it comes to management vocational training. It has affiliations with international awarding bodies. It has good learning environment. (Participant #MDIS 1)*

> *I chose MDI because I could not have access to the university. I decided on a course that is related to my passion. And when I inquired, I realized that only MDI offers my chosen course at the non-degree level in my country. (Participant #MDIS 2)*

The findings indicate that the main source of information for MDI's course is recommendations from friends and family.

The pattern of responses that emerged on the features that differentiate MDI from other HEIs indicates that a range factors is considered by student prospects. These include a portfolio of courses that are designed to be inclusive, good physical infrastructure and learning conditions, reputation for quality teaching, especially in the management vocational courses, and a good name recognition locally and internationally.

> *MDI is a very inclusive institution. They give access opportunity to every one through concurrent remedial programmes. (Participant #MDIS 1)*

> *…but the institution commands better name recognition. My assessment so far is that the lecturers are very competent. So, lecturer capacity is relatively outstanding. (Participant #MDIS 3)*

> *Sometimes the impressions that you had may not match your experience when your finally join. The teachers at MDI do not support students with advice especially those of us studying for international professional qualifications. (Participant #MDIS 3)*

### 5.3.3.4 Pedagogical practices at MDI: The views of management staff

The majority of MDI's management staff who took part in the study indicated that there is no institution-wide awareness of its teaching and learning philosophy. The findings indicate that teaching staff use teaching methods at their discretion. The response pattern of management staff participants indicates that there is no institutional teaching and learning philosophy. The teachers use a blend of methods that they deem appropriate in the delivery of vocational courses and bespoke training programme.

*There is currently no institution-wide teaching and learning belief that teaching staff can be oriented to. Teachers are recruited based on our assessment of their academic competence and they are released to begin to teach their allocated classes. (Participant #MDIM 1)*

The implication of this finding is that a variety of approaches that are defined by the teachers are used.

*Teachers use a combination of teaching methods - lectures, presentations online etc. the problems are that there is no institutional guidance as per the type of impact that these approaches are expected to have on students. (Participant #MDIM 1)*

Thus, the findings indicate that lack of institutional pedagogical philosophy has thrived under a status quo of lack of pedagogy policy. There was consensus among participants that the formulation of a pedagogy policy will have positive impact on the quality of learning as well as the reputation of the institution. As one senior staff member observed:

*Pedagogy policy will help define the knowledge beliefs of the institution and also define what the outcomes of studying with MDI should be in relation to the skills needs of the Gambian economy. (Participant #MDIM 2)*

### 5.3.3.5 Pedagogical practices at MDI: The views of academic staff

The views expressed by academic staff on the pedagogical practice at MDI corroborate those expressed by the management staff. The pattern of responses indicates that the teaching approaches used by the academic staff are discretionary and not guided by any known institutional pedagogic belief. The responses indicate that the range of teaching approaches that are used by lecturers, to some extent, reflect the disciplines of their specialisation. This insight is buttressed in the following participant response:

*The staff who teach on the internationally accredited vocational programmes use the pedagogy recommendations on their curriculum. Part of this includes to diligently follow the activities that are prescribed in the teaching manuals they are supplied. This approach will be different from those teaching in other programmes. (Participant #MDIA 1)*

### 5.3.3.6 Pedagogical practices at MDI: The views of students

The pattern of responses from MDI students on the pedagogical practices at the institution reveal a mix of views that may be further associated with how disciplinary requirements influence pedagogy. Participants whose fields of study are in the professional qualification areas in which internationally accredited curricular are used, indicate the dominant pedagogy include case-based facilitative teaching and learning approaches.

The findings indicate that these views differ from the views of students who are enrolled in the more academic-oriented disciplines which draw their teaching content from nationally-accredited curricula. These latter students indicate that the dominant pedagogy appears to be the lecturing/ teacher-centered approach.

Other evidence that emerged from the responses of student participants at MDI relates to the comparable level of satisfaction in MDI's pedagogic divide. This can be seen in the following responses from a student enrolled in the gender studies programme and one enrolled in the internationally-accredited accounting programme respectively:

> *Lecturing is the method that dominate teaching here. This is an area that can be improved upon. Alternative approaches could be better. The way teachers present their lessons affects the way students learn. An example is coming from a lecturing- dominated approach to writing projects like dissertation in gender studies. You can imagine how hard that can be. (Participant #MDIS 1)*

> *The interactive teaching and learning approaches dominated teaching in my department and this is based on the recommended textbooks and instructions given in the teacher mammal. If you were to compare this to the approaches used in other programmes here at MDI, then you would say that it is an excellent approach. (Participant #MDIS 3)*

While some participants indicated that MDI has no pedagogy policy, others indicated that the pedagogy policy that governs their (professional) courses are those of their international awarding bodies. The insight that emerged from this is two-fold. First is that MDI has no pedagogy policy. The second is that the enactment of pedagogy policy is a teaching quality assurance measure that is used by all competitive universities and HEI. Hence, all student participants from MDI view the enactment of pedagogy policy as a university management process that should define MDI's pedagogical beliefs and thus provide guidance for the pedagogic performance of teaching staff as well as enhance the reputation of MDI. This insight is buttressed in the following responses:

> *Yes, there should pedagogy policy. I believe that would be very helpful because some teachers do not have teaching experience and this affects student's performance. The policy will address this and ensure that teaching methods used by teachers will be in line with the policy. (Participant #MDIS 1)*

> *I'm not very sure. It looks like it is a norm. I would not say it (lecturing method) is drawn by policy. The implication is that there is no pedagogy policy. (Participant #MDIS 3)*

*Yes, it would be great for MDI. The institution is established…. The only challenge is in the area of good teaching and learning practice. It would make the students more marketable. (Participant #MDIS 2)*

### 5.3.3.7 The institutional brand identity of MDI - The views of management staff

The pattern of responses given by MDI's management staff, on their perception of MDI prior to joining its employment ranks, varied from having the pre-employment perception of MDI as a highly-recognised institution in the area of professional management education to viewing it as Gambia government's agency for the professionalisation of the civil service cadre.

*My impression was that MDI is a respected institution in the area of management training and professional management education in The Gambia. Its attachment with the government as the institution that conducts professional development training for government workers, was another thing that attracted me. It had the image of an organisation is that highly recognised. (Participant #MDIM 1)*

*MDI is known for being the main institution that offers management education in The Gambia. In the Gambia you have MDI for vocational training in the management areas, then you have GTTI for technical education. Before the establishment of the UTG, MDI ran a lot of local and international programmes. So, this is how it built its reputation. (Participant #MDIM 2)*

While participants believed that the institution has evolved over the years, findings indicate that there is still an abundance of gaps, especially in the areas of academic programme development and delivery, staff incentives, the marketing and positioning of courses and the entire governance structure of the institution.

*Yes, MDI has come a long way. It is still work in progress. The prior impressions I had wasn't exactly what I found when I joined. There are areas that require real improvement. Example is the current collection of course that we deliver. When the competition heating up especially from the universities, we need to be more proactive with our courses and the way we deliver them. It should no longer be business as usual. We should be scientific in the way we roll out and deliver courses. (Participant #MDIM 1)*

### 5.3.3.8 The institutional brand identity of MDI: The views of academic staff

The views of academic staff participants corroborated those expressed by management. The responses for the academic staff indicate that prior to joining the academic ranks of MDI, staff had varying impressions of the institution. These were mainly on MDI's name recognition, its association with

government, expectations of career development opportunities, the caliber of its alumni, and its affiliation with international awarding bodies like ACCA, CIMA, CIPS.

> *I had the impression that MDI is a good place to start a career in management training. I had studied here myself. So, I knew how it worked. Since it was then government's only management development institute, I felt it would provide me the opportunity to pursue my passion in teaching and also provided me opportunities for career development. (Participant #MDIA 3)*

> *Yes, it gave me the opportunity to develop as a teacher as well as a management trainer. The problem is that times are changing. As you can see there are universities now. MDI management are still stuck with the mindset they had when MDI was the only institution that provided management training in the country. There are no plans to improve career opportunities of staff to equip them to compete. What dominates in this area seems to be individual staff initiatives in trying to develop their capacities further. (Participant #MDIA 2)*

> *Yes, the teaching practices of tertiary and higher education institutions are part of the things they are remembered for. This is why I was lamenting on lack of teacher development programmes. If management invests in developing the teaching skills of academic staff, they will achieve two things. First, is that they will keep those staff motivated and highly capable. Second, these staff will deliver in way that makes the institution stand out. Yes, pedagogical practices have impact on the image of the institution. (Participant #MDIA 3)*

The insight that emerged from these responses appears to reinforce the lessons learned from the content analysis of MDI's websites and documents. The evidence indicates somewhat of a gap between what appear to be brand promises and the actual experiences of staff. There is evidence of activities that portray marketing behaviour, especially the promotional posting of events on the website. However, there is no evidence of a deliberate effort to strategically articulate and implement what the institution should be known for. This implied lack of positioning, to some extent contributes to the variations in expectations and experiences that emerged in the highlighted management and academic staff responses.

### 5.3.3.9 The institutional brand identity of MDI: The views of students

This section of the interview was used to explore the impressions that students hold about MDI while seeking validation for responses that were given in the preceding themes. Thus, the students were asked to give their opinions on the impact that the pedagogical services of MDI might have on its institutional brand image. The pattern of responses indicate that students believe that the enactment of institutional pedagogical policy that would define the institution's pedagogical doctrine, would have a positive impact on institutional image.

*Yes, it would. Such policy would improve the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of graduates. It would ultimately improve the image of the institution. (Participant #MDIS 1)*

*Yes. I believe that pedagogy policy will set standards and improve the teaching quality in the institute. This is how MDI can make itself different. (Participant #MDIS 3)*

### 5.3.3.10 Features required for improving the reputational equity of universities: The views of participants from MDI

On the theme of higher and tertiary education institutions' reputational equity, the participants from MDI identified the following factors as being key in the construction and preservation of strong reputation of HEIs:

- Competent and professional lecturers
- Conducive learning environment
- Enrolment and assessment policy
- Marketing
- Innovative teaching methods
- Quality of physical infrastructure

*There needs to be more marketing. If this is done, more students will come in because it will create awareness on the courses available. They should also motivate students through the way lecturers teach. (Participant #MDIS 1)*

### 5.3.4 In-depth interview findings at AIUWA

The results of indepth interviews at AIUWA are presented in this section . The preliminary insight that emerged from the analysis of AIUWA's pattern of web and social media postings were used as complements to the search for primary evidence on the institutional identity , brand management, and pedagogical practices at AIUWA. The analysis of participants responses in relation to the findings of prior but relevant research was iterated as the section concludes with the presentation of participants' views on features that are critical to the construction of strong reputation for HEIs.

### 5.3.4.1 Brand management practices at AIUWA: The views of management staff

The majority of participants in the management category acknowledge the emerging trend of competition in the Gambian HE sector. The majority of candidates, however, believe that the design of AIUWA's portfolio of courses offers a superior value proposition to prospective students. This belief appears to be based on what seems to be a striking distinction between its degree structures and those

of other universities. The evidence that emerged indicates that AIUWA makes dual awards, as most of its academic degrees are awarded together with internationally-accredited professional qualifications. Some of the responses given by participants include:

*Yes, we have some competitive advantage because we combine both academic and professional degrees through dual award in many disciplines (Participant #AIUWAM 1)*

*Yes, there is competition ... but I don't think we are very conscious of it because we are still getting students people are not conscious of it. (Participant #AIUWAM 2)*

The pattern of responses on the branding strategy of AIUWA indicates that the university practices branding as a competitive strategy. While this might contradict the views of participants who believe that AIUWA is not consciously responding to competition in the sector, all the participants identified the choice of university name and its unique portfolio of course as essential elements of AIUWA brand. This conclusion is supported by the following responses:

*Yes, the AIUWA's name over the years has emerged as a key visual element of the brand. The idea of AIUWA is meant to convey distinctive advantages on the university and ensure that enrollment and other things are improve and consolidated ((Participant #AIUWAM 3)*

*The branding strategy informed the dual award of academic and professional qualifications ... at AIUWA upon graduation students, require little or no further training because they are prepared to be job-ready in a way that supports the name of the university. ((Participant #AIUWAM 1)*

These responses indicate that AIUWA's distinctions are clearly thought-out in the effort to create differential advantages for the AIUWA brand. When asked what the core offerings of AIUWA are, all the participants made reference to the university's portfolio of academic and internationally-accredited professional qualifications, and what is emerging as an active research and consultancy services portfolio. The evidence indicates that the consultancy services portfolio is hosted at the College of Management and Information Technology (CMIT) where the Center for Collaborative Research and Consultancy (CRAC) is located. Some of the responses on the theme of AIUWA's core offerings include:

*Absolutely the academic programmes affected through the component schools and the CRAC. One of the mandates is to facilitate linkages with other universities. (Participant #AIUWAM 2)*

*We have been in talks with Lincoln University in Malaysia and other universities so that we can leverage our collective strengths to run post graduate degrees. (Participant #AIUWAM 1)*

On the need and benefits of marketing and branding to the competitive position of the university, the pattern of responses indicates high level awareness of the potential benefits of market-led transformation of the university's core offerings on the image, identity and reputation of AIUWA. Some of the responses on this theme include:

> *One cannot be doing the same thing all the time. The university should think global rather than local. The university can draw on the unique quality of the Gambia as a competitive tourist destination to position its core offerings in the international education market. ((Participant #AIUWAM 2)*

> *I will advocate for the repositioning of our portfolio of courses. I know competition isn't intense yet but I know it is coming… The courses can be repackaged to offer double honours in all disciplines. To… like ICT combined with Information Security, Cybernetics, or Artificial Intelligence. This would give the university an advantage as it would reinforce the institutional brand identity. (Participant #AIUWAM 1).*

The points that emerged from management staff on how AIUWA differs from other universities in the country include: there is lower risk of industrial action, well trained faculty, and the availability of dual awards.

## 5.3.4.2 Brand management practices at AIUWA: The views of academic staff

The pattern of responses from this category of participants appears to support the views expressed by management staff on the same theme. Among the variety of views that emerged from academic staff of AIUWA, includes the perceived uniqueness of AIUWA's teaching and learning philosophy and its overall competitive strategy. This conclusion draws on the evidence of dual awards that emerged from the document analysis and the responses given by management staff. The teaching staff viewed this as one of the university's distinctive capabilities. Some of the responses received include:

> *It is our way of approach in handling students. At AIUWA we prepare students for academics and practice. We prepare graduates to be practitioners. This is deliberately done to distinguish AIUWA from the competition. (Participant #AIUWAA 1)*

> *It is in our product offering the quality of teaching staff. This is the approach the university uses to differentiate itself. (Participant #AIUWAA 3)*

On the branding practice at AIUWA, the findings indicate that AIUWA academic staff believed that the university's branding practice is underscored by what is viewed as a well-thought-out portfolio of courses and degree structures which provides both academic and professional education in nearly all disciplines  offered at the university. From the responses of the participants, the dual award (which

blends academic and professional curricula) does not just carry symbolism for degree structures, but also carries implications for innovative linkages in the areas of research and curriculum development. This is buttressed in the following statements from participants:

> *Yes. AIUWA courses are attached to internationally-recognised professional bodies in Medicine and Dentistry, pharmacy, Human Resources Management, Accountancy, etc. (Participant #AIUWAM 1).*

> *Yes. We engage international faculty. This is in addition to the unique portfolio of courses which we view as AIUWA's unique selling points. (Participant #AIUWAA 3).*

To further explore AUIWA's institutional brand elements and its active competitive domains, participants were asked to identify the university's core offerings. All the responses corroborated those that were given by the management staff. These include the academic and professional courses which form the core of the university's academic programme, and the consultancy and research portfolio that is coordinated by the Collaborative Research and Consultancy center (CRAC).

On the necessity for the transformation and potential positioning or repositioning of AIUWA's portfolio of courses, participants gave a variety of views which include the need to draw on market evidence to review curricula and review some courses, to extend the current portfolio by actively positioning the university in the research and consultancy market, and to use country-of-origin (COO) appeals as an element in the university's positioning strategy. As one participant puts it,

> *Extending the brand to include active research and consultancy portfolios would carry lots of reputational advantages for the institution (Participant #AIUWAA 1).*

The features that emerged as AUIWA's unique attributes include: the university's dual award degree structures, its practice-based pedagogy, and its staff quality. As stated by one of the participants:

> *… what makes us different is that we bring in academic and professional practice skills to our teaching. We deliver value for money in our teaching and learning practices. (Participant #AIUWAA 2).*

### 5.3.4.3 Brand management practices at AIUWA: The views of students

In exploring those institutional brand elements which influence AIUWA students' choice of university, findings indicate that a range of factors contributed to students' choice of AIUWA. The factors that emerged include: AIUWA's admission policy (especially the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit exemptions), AIUWA's image as an international university, the course information on the

website, the perceived quality of its physical infrastructure including class rooms, and the perceived quality of its professors. These conclusions are supported by the following responses:

*The first factor for me is the physical classroom environment, the quality of teaching and learning that goes on here and, the quality of lecturers. (Participant #AIUWAS 3).*

*It was easier to get admission information via from AIUWA. My sponsors who live overseas received instant reply to their inquiries. The same email inquiries were sent to other universities here but they never replied. (Participant #AIUWAS 4).*

*Through my research I had the impression that AIUWA had better quality and resources. They also recognise prior learning. This is something that other universities do not offer.. (Participant #AIUWAA 1).*

On the sources of AIUWA's institutional brand information, family members or friends, academic programme information on the university website, and teachers' recommendations, emerged as the main sources of brand information. The pattern that emerged is that all the participants received their first information about AIUWA through word-of-mouth. The responses indicate that AIUWA students were able to access the university website to confirm the word-of-mouth recommendations received. The views that emerged among students on features and attributes which make AIUWA different or better than other universities in The Gambia are captured in the following responses:

*It is a private university. (Participant #AIUWAMS 3).*

*They offer academic degrees together with professional qualifications (Participant #AIUWAS 2 ).*

*They have very good classroom facilities (Participant #AIUWAS 1).*

*They use more technology in their teaching. (Participant #AIUWAM 4).*

*They have better teaching and learning infrastructure. (Participant #AIUWAS 6).*

*The university has met my expectations. I have colleagues with whom I compare notes from other universities and I found that AIUWA is a lot better. This includes the grading system. The C grade in AIUWA is equal to the A grade in other universities here. (Participant #AIUWAS 3).*

**5.3.4.4 Pedagogical practices at AIUWA: The views of management staff**

The findings indicate that there is no policy-driven awareness for a pedagogic philosophy at the AIUWA. The majority of participants do not think any such awareness or policy exists. The implication is that staff conduct their lessons based on their personal pedagogic convictions. Participants believed that teaching staff at AIUWA use a mix of teaching and learning approaches. Some of the teaching approaches that emerged include: practice-based pedagogy, project-based pedagogy, case-based pedagogy, and traditional pedagogy. This appears to support the claims of innovative pedagogy made by AIUWA's academic staff in the preceding sections However, the pattern of responses appears to indicate a consensus that there is no pedagogy policy at AIUWA. As one participant put it:

> *From my experience and observation, I do not think that there is any pedagogy policy at AIUWA. Teaching staff use a pool of teaching methods. (Participant #AIUWAM 1).*

All the participants, however, believe that enacting an institution-wide pedagogy policy would create awareness of the university's pedagogical standards, improve teaching and learning and contribute to the behavioural identity formation of the university. Some of the participants put it this way:

> *A pedagogy policy would be a good thing for the university because it will complement the achievement of learning outcomes. However, flexibility is also very good. What is important is for learners to understand and assimilate concepts. (Participant #AIUWAM 2).*

> *Yes. There should be pedagogy policy, this will help define the pedagogical belief of the university. In fact, our final year students' final assessment is based on a real problem-based project some of them are into helping real business to automate their systems. (Participant #AIUWAM 1).*

**5.3.4.5 Pedagogical practices at AIUWA: The views of academic staff**

The majority of the academic staff's responses supported those opinions expressed by the management staff on the pedagogical practices at AIUWA. The pattern of responses indicates that teaching staff were sensitive to the university's unique brand portfolio. Thus, the existence of a brand portfolio (degree programmes and CRAC) that strikes a distinction in its combination of academic degree programmes and professional qualifications as dual awards, appears to have provided the impetus for academic staff to use a blend of teaching approaches that underscore theoretical knowledge but also emphasise application. In buttressing this view, one of the participants indicated:

> *For us, the way teaching and learning is to prepare students to become practitioners. (Participant #AIUWAA 1).*

*I know that the university has made provisions for computer-aided instruction and I know that lecturers are taking advantage of it. I cannot link this (the provision technology tools) to any pedagogy related policy. (Participant #AIUWAA 3).*

### 5.3.4.6 Pedagogical practices at AIUWA: The views of students

The majority of student participants believe that the pedagogical practices at the AIUWA are based on active learning methods. Some of the teaching and learning methods that emerged from the responses of students include guided inquiry, project-based method, and blended learning. This is reflected in the following statement:

*The approach here, I would say is mixed. They do use research-based approach and they also use the participation approach. What I heard about other universities teaching culture is different. (Participant #AIUWAS 1).*

The pattern of responses on the relationship between teaching methods and the extent to which students learn indicates that the teaching and assessment methods used by lecturers significantly influences learning. As one student put it,

*Lectures do not just come to define concepts instead they use cases to support class discussion. One of my lecturers facilitated our registration with the X-culture academy, a project-based online collaborative website where students are placed in virtual international teams to solve real business problems of real companies. I received a Certificate for my efforts. It was a very wonderful learning experience. (Participant #AIUWAS 3).*

When asked to give their views on whether lecturers' pedagogic approaches are influenced by an institutional pedagogy policy at AIUWA, the pattern of responses indicate that students believe that lecturers' teaching methods are guided by individual preferences. This appears to corroborate the responses given by the majority of the management and academic staff participants on this theme.

In giving their opinions on the need for a university-wide pedagogy policy, all the participants acknowledged that a university pedagogy policy would serve as a source of competitive advantage for the university. This conclusion emerged from such responses as

*Yes, I would like to see a policy that will improve teaching methods and quality. (Participant #AIUWAS 4).*

*Yes, it provides teachers with the guidance to enhance the quality of learning. (Participant #AIUWAS 5).*

*A policy-based approach to teaching and learning will be a source of competitive advantage to the university. (Participant #AIUWAS 2).*

The insight that emerged from this pattern of responses is that participants would like to see their universities and institutions enact institution-wide pedagogy policies. The evidence from the responses of participants indicates that the expectation for a pedagogy policy is based on the convictions that such benefits as improvements in teaching and learning quality, definition of uniform teaching and learning philosophy, and prescriptions for a minimum standard of teaching and learning performance by lecturers, will accrue.

### 5.3.4.7 AIUWA's institutional brand identity: The views of management staff

The insight that emerged from the pattern of responses given by AIUWA management staff on the institutional brand identity theme indicates that different staff were motivated by different attributes of the university prior to joining the employment ranks of the university. Some of the features that appear to have motivated the management staff include the vision of the university, the promises that seem implicit in the brand name, and the perceived quality of the university's academic and professional programmes.

On the main sources of university information prior to joining the employment ranks of the university, participants identified word-of-mouth, vacancy announcements in the newspapers, internet search, and information on AIUWA website.

On the issue of whether their experiences since joining the university match their expectations, what emerged is a mixed response pattern. While some participants believed that their experiences have, to a large extent, matched their expectations, others believed that their expectations have not been met. This latter category, however, believed that while there are gaps that need to be bridged, many things about the university have improved since they joined.

*There are lots of improvements that have been made. It is still work in progress. There have been lots of resistance to change especially from the students. (Participant #AIUWAM 1).*

*I know that physical structure is really secondary to what learners' expectations are. So, when I came, I saw the structures, the medical school. There is reservation but it is work in progress (Participant #AIUWAM 2). .*

The responses on what the institutional positioning of AIUWA is were diverse. While some participants viewed the institutional positioning of AUIWA as being driven by the university brand name, others viewed the university's graduate employment outcomes as the main anchor for its market positioning.

The insight that emerged from this pattern of responses is that there is no clarity on what the positioning of the university is. This conclusion is supported by the following response:

> *The only thing I know is that AIUWA has its own core values based on my observation. I know that there are core values. However, what exactly they are, I do not know. (Participant #AIUWAM 2).*

This insight on the notion of AIUWA's positioning at the level of management demonstrates AIUWA's approach to marketing and branding and the gap between website information, social-media messaging and the university's brand identity. Others view the positioning to be implicit in he brand name.

> *The idea and the name of the university. the idea behind the name is to provide American education to Africans. However, meeting the brand promise is key if not over time the reality will be known and this will impact negatively on the reputational equity of the university. (Participant #AIUWAM 1).*

On the relationship between the pedagogical practices of AIUWA and its institutional brand image, all participants believe that teaching and learning methods make significant contributions to brand identity formation of a university. This insight reinforces the view that institutional pedagogical policy would enhance the quality of teaching and consequently enhance the reputational equity of the university.

## 5.3.4.8 AIUWA's institutional brand identity: The views of academic staff

The views of the academic staff at AIUWA on the university's brand identity appear to corroborate the views expressed by management staff on this theme. The findings indicate staff were variously motivated to join the academic ranks of the university. These motivations also appear to be the result of the quality of information that university generated and disseminated through different channels. The pre-employment impressions that emerged include viewing AIUWA as a new but different university based on its brand name and the marketing information on its website. However, participants could not be very sure of what the university really represents from a strategic standpoint. The responses indicated that the impression of ambiguity that surrounds AIUWA's market positioning may have arisen as a result of the emerging evidence of lack of strategic marketing practice in the university. Like the management staff, academic staff identified clear marketing mix distinctions between AIUWA and other universities in the Gambia.

However, these distinctions are yet to be harnessed and integrated to construct a deliberate and distinctive and reinforceable image for the university. This situation is expressed in the following responses:

*One of the marketing approaches that was used in the past was school visits where the value proposition of AIUWA was pitched to students graduating from the high school. The uniqueness of AIUWA teaching and assessment methods were communicated unfortunately this no longer happens because there is new management who tend to see university management differently. (Participant #AIUWAA 1).*

### 5.3.4.9 AIUWA's institutional brand identity: The views of students

The views of students on the institutional brand identity of AIUWA was sought by exploring their views on how an actively enforced institutional pedagogy policy would impact on the image and reputation of the university. The pattern of student responses indicates a consensus on the perceived reputational benefits that the enactment and implementation of a pedagogy policy would confer on the university. Some of the responses that were given by students include:

*Yes, most definitely yes. The image of universities around the quality of their graduates who are shaped by the teaching approaches that are used by lecturers. (Participant #AIUWAS 2).*

*Yes. It would positively impact on the image of the university especially practice-based pedagogy. (Participant #AIUWAA 4).*

*Yes, it would significantly improve the brand image of the university. (Participant #AIUWAA 3).*

*Yes, it would help improve the image of the university. It would compel teaching staff to use teaching methods that would expose students to real-life problems. (Participant #AIUWAA 1).*

### 5.3.4.10 Features required for improving the reputational equity of universities: The views of participants from AIUWA

Ihe views of participants on the link between institutional pedagogical practices and brand identity were explored. Once again, the pattern of responses from all categories of participants at AIUWA indicates a consensus on the view that the teaching methods that are practised in a university contribute to its institutional brand reputation. This evidence emerged more clearly when participants (in all categories) were asked to identify at least three factors, features or requirements that they believe should be at the core of any university's effort to improve its institutional brand image and positioning. The factors that emerged in no particular order include:

- *National and international accreditation,*
- *the teaching and learning methods used,*

- *curriculum and its quality thrust, inclusion of soft and employability skills in curricular design,*
- *an evaluation of the teaching and learning roles of staff to ensure that these align with institutional vision*
- *Teaching and learning policy*
- *Lecturers' quality*
- *The quality of the university's physical infrastructure and learning environment.*

For the purpose of analysis and interpretation of findings, participants' responses from each of the selected HEIs have been presented in Table 5.5 across the main themes in this study. This cross-case comparison of responses facilitates insight into the recurring response patterns as well as the significance these recurrences convey to the overall findings of the study. The triangulation of participants' responses, as indicated in the table, was guided by the following common themes: Institutional response to emerging trend of competition, Marketing and branding strategy, Pedagogy policy, Pedagogical practices and philosophy, Institution's market positioning, and Factors that influence the reputation of HEIs. A preliminary attempt to discuss the findings as indicated in Table 5.5 shows that the pattern of responses from all categories of participants on the institutional response to competition and the marketing and branding themes indicates lethargy in the ability and willingness of the selected HEIs to organise a strategic response to the emerging trend of competition in the sector. The pattern of responses from the management staff category, in particular, appears to indicate that strategic marketing and branding practice in the selected HEIs tend to be substituted with advantages that are perceived to accrue from spontaneous creation of course portfolios, occasional advertising of such courses using mostly above-the-line (ATL) channels, ownership status of institutions (public versus private) and the name recognition the emerges from this in context. These responses tend to instigate the conclusion that the seleted HEIs unwittingly operate a hybrid of quasi-marketing and product-based business models, with the later model dominating the hybrid. While a pattern of consensus emerged from all categories of participants on the potential impact of a teaching and learning policy on the institutional brand identity of HEIs, evidence from the triangulated responses indicate that none of the selected HEIs has a pedagogy policy that guides the teaching and learning practices of academic staff. A full discussion on these findings is done in Chapter Six.

Table 5. 5: A cross-case comparison of in-depth interview responses

| Themes | Sub-themes | Sample quotes from participants | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | UTG | GTTI | AIUWA | MDI |
| **Branding & marketing practices** | Institutional response to emerging trend of competition | *'We don't think we are really competing in the sense that we are better established. Potential competitors rely on UTG academic staff to deliver their courses'.* *'The UTG isn't doing much when it comes to marketing and competition…. The UTG is the only public university. While this can be an advantage, the university isn't taking advantage of its first mover advantage'* *'As the only public university in the country, the UTG is aware of emerging competition in the sector. However, the university's broad portfolio of courses anticipates competition as it aims to maintain its of leadership position'.* | *'The material resources, although not very sophisticated, but GTTI is well ahead of other TVET institutions in the country. GTTI has name recognition nationally and internationally'.* *'I do not think so. An institution that is not actively marketing would not understand what branding is. However, the institution could be seen as a silent brand that rely on government-backed name-recognition and longevity'.* *'I would say that it does although it is not very 'pronounced'. The management of GTTI however have the awareness of the benefits of differentiation. GTTI has private bilateral partnerships with international organizations. Yes, we use newspapers a lot and we have a Facebook account, too'.* | *'Yes, there is competition … but I don't think we are very conscious of it because we are still getting students people are not conscious of it.'* *'Yes, the AIUWA's name over the years has emerged as a key visual element of the brand. The idea of AIUWA is meant to convey distinctive advantages on the university and ensure that enrolment and other things are improve and consolidated'.* *'The branding strategy informed the dual award of academic and professional qualifications … at AIUWA upon graduation students, require little or no further training because they are prepared to be job-ready in a way that supports the name of the university'.* | *'Yes, we are aware of the emerging competition but I wouldn't say that MDI is dealing with it well. There is no marketing unit. We only advertise courses and events sometimes through the website. Most of these activities are in reaction to what the universities are doing'* *'.Sometimes the impressions that you had may not match your experience when your finally join. The teachers at MDI do not support students with advice especially those of us studying for international professional qualifications'.* *'MDI is a very inclusive institution. They give access opportunity to every one through concurrent remedial programmes'.* |

| | Marketing & branding strategy | *'Positioning of any sort does not exist at all. Lecturers are just here to teach in any way they think is the best way to teach…. There is lack of marketing knowledge; there is strong evidence of lack of understanding of how to market the university'. 'Apart from advertising for new courses in the newspapers, there really isn't any evidence that the university is doing marketing or deliberate branding.' 'It would be too naïve to rely on the UTG'S name recognition as the only public university in the Gambia…. we need to attract international students, international faculty, and international grants and hopefully improve the brand image of the university'.* | *'I do not think so. An institution that is not actively marketing would not understand what branding is. However, the institution could be seen as a silent brand that rely on government-backed name-recognition and longevity'. 'I do not think so. A marketing unit is merged with the career guidance unit. However, I have not seen any active evidence of activities in this area'. 'I came to know about GTTI when their marketing team visited my high school. The information I received from that visit changed my initial plan which had been to go overseas to study construction'.* | *'Absolutely the academic programmes offered through the component schools and the CRAC. One of the mandates is to facilitate linkages with other universities'. 'It is in our product offering and the quality of teaching staff. This is the approach the university uses to differentiate itself'. '… what makes us different is that we bring in academic and professional practice skills to our teaching. We deliver value for money in our teaching and learning practices' 'Through my research I had the impression that AIUWA had better quality and resources. They also recognise prior learning. This is something that other universities do not offer.'* | 'Yes, MDI has taken series of measures. We upgraded our website; we are active on social media and now we are offering degree courses through partnership with SUPdeCO in Dakar, Senegal. I believe all these show that the institution is aware of trends that are emerging in the market'. *'To use branding as a strategy to check the activities of the competitor institutions needs to be proactive'. 'Yes, I chose MDI for a lot of reasons; first, it is the most recommended institution when it comes to management vocational training. It has affiliations with international awarding bodies. It has good learning environment'.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pedagogical Practices** | Pedagogy policy | *'There are various teaching methods that come to mind. It appears the university has* | *'No such policy currently exists. Such policy would be of immense benefit to the learners and the image of GTTI'* | *'I know that the university has made provisions for computer-aided instruction and I know that lecturers are taking advantage* | *'Yes, there should pedagogy policy. I believe that would be very helpful because some teachers do not have teaching* |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *no pedagogy policy'.*<br>*'My experience is that the dominant teaching method is the teacher-centred lecturing method'.*<br>*'Do not see any element of consistency in their combined teaching methods'.* | *'A pedagogy policy would be very useful to the students and for the teachers' career development and to the image of the institution'.* | *of it. I cannot link this (the provision technology tools) to any pedagogy related policy'.*<br>*'*<br>*A policy-based approach to teaching and learning will be a source of competitive advantage to the university'.*<br><br>*'Yes, I would like to see a policy that will improve teaching methods and quality'.* | *experience and this affects student's performance. The policy will address this and ensure that teaching methods used by teachers will be in line with the policy'.*<br>*'Yes, it would be great for MDI. The institution is established…. The only challenge is in the area of good teaching and learning practice. It would make the students more marketable'.*<br><br>*'Pedagogy policy will help define the knowledge beliefs of the institution and also define what the outcomes of studying with MDI should be in relation to the skills needs of the Gambian economy'.* |
| | Pedagogical practices & philosophy | *'There is no policy; there is no guidance, there is none. There is no pedagogic awareness, there is no training. UTG staff teach using whatever methods and beliefs they have and know best'.*<br><br>*'UTG curricula were built in consultation* | *'Not really. The lecture method dominates teaching and learning here at GTTI. My observation is that teachers are predisposed to use the teacher-centre method. This is not to the advantage of the institution. This is affecting quality of teaching and the image of the institution.'*<br>*'* | *'The approach here, I would say is mixed. They do use research-based approach and they use the participation approach. What I heard about other universities teaching culture is different'.*<br><br>*'For us, the way teaching and learning is to prepare students to become practitioners'.* | *'Lecturing is the method that dominate teaching here. This area can be improved upon. Alternative approaches could be better. The way teachers present their lessons affects the way students learn. An example is coming from a lecturing-dominated approach to* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *with stakeholders. However, this practice was not sustained. These is no uniformity of teaching philosophy just like there is no central pedagogy policy'.* <br><br> *'Several pedagogies are used. However, they use the lecture method a lot. It is the most dominant approach'.* <br><br> *'Lecturers do not use advanced teaching and learning methods. In some cases, they come reading the slides which doesn't help at all'.* | *'Lecturers just go to class and spoon-feed the students. This situation is not helpful to the image of the institution. In fact, there have been instances where GTTI students are hired to do a job but were unable to deliver. All these are caused by weak pedagogy'.* <br><br> *'The lack of pedagogy policy looks to me like it is the policy of the institution. GTTI has been using outdated curricula that have not been reviewed for years'.* <br><br> *'Some teachers come without any reference materials and start to teach. Others come in, write on the blackboard with chalk, and start to teach… the dominant teaching method is lecturing.'* <br><br> *'We have that problem right now…. We have pending complaints about poor lecturer performance'.* | *'Lectures do not just come to define concepts instead they use cases to support class discussion. One of my lecturers facilitated our registration with the X-culture academy, a project-based online collaborative website where students are placed in virtual international teams to solve real business problems of real companies. I received a Certificate for my efforts. It was a very wonderful learning experience'.* | *writing projects like dissertation in gender studies. You can imagine how hard that can be. (Participant'.* <br><br> *'The interactive teaching and learning approaches dominated teaching in my department and this is based on the recommended textbooks and instructions given in the teacher mammal. If you were to compare this to the approaches used in other programmes here at MDI, then you would say that it is an excellent approach'.* <br><br> *'Teachers use a combination of teaching methods - lectures, presentations online etc. the problems are that there is no institutional guidance as per the type of impact that these approaches are expected to have on students'.* |

| Institutional Brand Identity | Institution's market positioning | *'There is no clarity on what the market positioning of the university really is. This is coming against the backdrop of the fact there is no deliberate marketing and branding strategy. The opportunity to build a distinctive image for the university is being missed'. 'There is currently no positioning. UTG does not do any strategic marketing or branding. They feel they dominate the market and therefore do not bother about marketing. (Participant'.* | *'I will simply tell you that there is no positioning at GTTI. All what happens here is that they advertise for newly developed courses in the newspapers and that will be all and this may happen only once in one year'.* *'GTTI has a good institutional image in the market not because it is doing any deliberate marketing. Instead, it is based on the fact it has produced lots of successful graduates in the distant past'.* | *'The only thing I know is that AIUWA has its own core values based on my observation. I know that there are core values. However, what exactly they are, I do not know'.* *'The idea and the name of the university. the idea behind the name is to provide American education to Africans. However, meeting the brand promise is key if not over time the reality will be known and this will impact negatively on the reputational equity of the university'.* *'* | *'MDI is known for being the main institution that offers management education in The Gambia. In the Gambia you have MDI for vocational training in the management areas, then you have GTTI for technical education. Before the establishment of the UTG, MDI ran a lot of local and international programmes. So, this is how it built its reputation'* *' . Yes, it gave me the opportunity to develop as a teacher as well as a management trainer. The problem is that times are changing. As you can see there are universities now. MDI management are still stuck with the mindset they had when MDI was the only institution that provided management training in the country. There are no plans to improve career opportunities of staff to equip them to compete. What dominates in this area seems to be individual staff initiatives in trying to develop* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | *their capacities further..* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pedagogical practices & institutional brand identity** | Pedagogy policy & institutional image | *'Certainly. A pedagogy policy to some extent would improve the teaching and learning quality and standards by guiding staff start to adopt similar teaching and learning philosophy and this will consequently improve the quality of graduates'* *'Absolutely yes. It would generate positive word-of-mouth and enhance the quality of graduates'.* | *'Here in The Gambia, once the mention of TVET is made, the name that comes to mind is GTTI. I would not say this has resulted from active marketing and branding. It looks like this is resulting from longevity'.* *'When I arrived newly, I regretted not joining earlier. Not much have improved over this period of ten years that I've been here, especially in the area of teaching quality. In fact, the teaching quality I met here when I joined newly has declined significant'.* *'Yes, it would have positive impact on the image of the institute. The quality of graduates which is the result of pedagogy policy will give positive* | *'Yes, it would help improve the image of the university. It would compel teaching staff to use teaching methods that would expose students to real-life problems'.* *'Yes. It would positively impact on the image of the university especially practice-based pedagogy'.* | *'Yes. I believe that pedagogy policy will set standards and improve the teaching quality in the institute. This is how MDI can make itself different.* *'Yes, it would. Such policy would improve the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of graduates. It would ultimately improve the image of the institution'* |

| | | | *image for the institution'.* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reputational equity features of HEIs** | Factors that build strong reputation for HEIs | 'pedagogy policy, marketing & branding, highly trained and experienced staff, improved research capacity of the university, technical infrastructure' | 'Digital infrastructure, improved curriculum and teaching methods, introduce pedagogy policy, use marketing and branding to make the university look different' | 'National and international accreditation, institutional teaching and learning methods, curriculum and its quality thrust, inclusion of soft and employability skills , teaching and learning policy, • The quality of the university's physical infrastructure and learning environment'. | 'Conducive learning environment, marketing, innovative teaching methods, competent and professional lecturers' <br><br> *'There needs to be more marketing. If this is done, more students will come in because it will create awareness on the courses available. They should also motivate students through the way lecturers teach'* |

## 5.4 Chapter summary

Drawing on the design of the study, the documentary content analysis approach was to used seek preliminary understanding of the competitive behaviour of the selected HEIs. Thus, evidence of the market behaviour of each of the selected HEIs was sought through a methodical analysis of their mission and vision statements, and other documentary contents through which these institutions seek the fulfilment of their institutional goals. These evidences were accessed through multiple visits to each institution's website and  social media pages, as well as analysis of other institutional documents and artefacts (such as student handbooks, institutional reports, pictorial and video messaging platforms) that are available in the public domain. As shown in the latter part of this chapter, the findings of the documentary analysis were triangulated with the findings of in-depth interviews. The evidence that emerged indicates that stakeholders in the selected HEIs demonstrate sufficient awareness of emerging competitive trends in the Gambian HE sector. However, this insight is not accompanied by any evidence of institutional strategic marketing measures like strategic articulation of institutional brand identity elements and/or market-led development of highly-differentiated and well-positioned academic programme portfolios. This initial insight emerged against the backdrop of the emergence of subsequent evidence which indicates that the dominant approach to teaching and learning within the selected HEIs is the lecturing instructional method. As this chapter highlighted, marketing and branding, and institutional pedagogic doctrines or policy, featured prominently among the factors that different categories of participants who took part in this study across the four selected cases, identified as being critical in creating strong HE brands. In a situation where the case institutions emerged to be inept in these two areas, the resulting impact would  be a sector with a reputation for low-level competitiveness, especially when viewed in concert with HEIs from other countries. This assumption provides further context for discussion in the next chapter .

# CHAPTER 6 : DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

## 6.1 Introduction

The aim of the data collection phase of this study was to draw on the research objectives to explore the broad question of what role pedagogical practices play in the brand identity formation of HEIs. The objectives relate to the brand management practices of the selected HEIs, their pedagogical practices, their brand identity concept, and the link between their pedagogical practices and brand identity. The findings presented in the previous chapter indicate that institutional pedagogical policies and doctrines can be used as critical elements of the brand identity of HEIs. A further insight is that any institutional effort aimed at identifying and propagating specific pedagogic doctrines, would have positive implications for institutional reputation and competitiveness. Therefore, this chapter draws on the findings of existing studies to present a critical evaluation of the evidence which indicates that the teaching and learning practices of the selected HEIs, play a critical role in the identity formation and the reputational equity of such institutions.

The chapter begins with an evaluation of the brand management practices of the selected HEIs. In the effort to draw a parallel between the marketing and branding practices of the selected HEIs and the global trend of marketisation and its implications for HE marketing, the evidence of marketing and branding gaps in the selected HEIs is critically examined. This is followed by an analysis and evaluation of the dominant pedagogical practices in the selected HEIs. This evaluation focuses on the findings which indicate that the lecturing approach emerged as dominant among the variety of pedagogical approaches used by academic staff in the selected HEIs. The contradictory pattern of this outcome to the findings reported in previous studies provided the basis for the critical examination of the role of pedagogy policies in the formation of the pedagogic doctrines of HEIs as a prelude to the critical analysis of its impact of the brand identity formation of HEIs. Drawing on the conceptual linkages between the study's third and fourth objectives, the evidence of the relationship between institutional pedagogy and institutional brand evolution is critically discussed. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the findings on the reputational equity dimensions of HEIs and the implicit ranking of pedagogy policy among the band of factors that emerged to have impact on how stakeholders construct their impressions of HEIs.

## 6.2 Brand management practices of the selected HeIs

The theme of the brand management practices of the selected HEIs was explored using open-ended questions that sought to stimulate participants' responses and opinions on how the selected HEIs respond to the emerging trend of competition in The Gambia's HE sector. This included exploring

participants' views on the branding and marketing activities of their institutions, the core offerings that serve as their main competitive domains, and their views on how the core offerings' appeal to customers and stakeholders could be enhanced. Participants' perceptions of features and attributes which distinguish their HEIs from the competition were also explored. In this effort, the brand management practices theme sought to explore the extent to which the marketing mindset is embedded in the business models of the selected HEIs.

This approach was taken for two reasons. The first reason was to further understand the extent to which HEIs in The Gambia are tuned to the global trends of marketing and marketisation of HE. Against the background of the traditional conception of HE as a non-business sector, Hall (2017) describes marketisation as the adoption of the theory of market and the adaptation of the business models of tertiary and HE institutions to reflect emerging trends such as globalisation, new policy conceptions, and the shifting emphasis from abstract knowledge to future skills.

The second reason was to futher understand the selected HEIs' conceptions of competiton, and their adopted institutional behaviours in response to the emerging trend of competition in the the HE sector. This includes seeking evidence of institutional understanding of marketing and branding as strategic consequences of marketisation of HE (Clark *et al.* 2020; Bhattacharya & Faisal 2020).

This sought to explore the selected HEIs' marketing and branding dexterities as recommended by Nyangua (2014) and Stevenson *et al.* (2014). These authors view twenty-first century HE as a market-led enterprise that develops products and services only with a fit-for- purpose business philosophy. In the effort to highlight the emerging trend of marketing and branding in the global HE sector, Clark *et al*. (2020) and Bhattacharyya and Faisal (2020) reported that there is evidence of a growing trend of universities relying on market positioning to negotiate market visibility in strategically differentiated target markets.

The findings of this study indicate that the selected HEIs have high levels of awareness of the emerging trend of competition in The Gambia's HE sector. This reinforces the findings in Grewal *et al. (*2022), where it was reported that marketing has become the main driver of the competitiveness of HEIs since the inception of the neo-liberal era, accounting for as high as 26% of institutional budgets.

All non-student participants in this study demonstrated knowledge of the competitive implications of government's recent liberalisation policy in the HE sector. While this outcome supports the findings in Stevenson *et al. (*2014), subsequent evidence indicates that the demonstrated awareness of the emerging trend of competition in the HE sector is not supported by any coordinated strategic marketing response to the trend. This conclusion is supported by the findings that indicate that the majority of the selected HELs are yet to adopt strategic marketing and branding strategies in their response to the emerging

competitive trends. This is an outcome that contradicts the global trend of HE marketing reported in Grewal *et al*. (2022).

The pattern of responses from the management and the academic staff participant categories indicates that the selected HEIs do not fully understand what marketing and branding at a strategic level fully entails, or the benefits that can be accrued from maintaining distinctive but visible positions in both the national and international HE markets.

This outcome reinforces the findings in Melewar and Akrel (2005) and Balmer and Liao (2007), which suggest that HE managers face challenges in managing the identity components of their institutions. While an investigation into how and why HE managers in The Gambia tend to face challenges understanding the use of branding as a competitive strategy go beyond the remit of this study, it is pertinent to mention that university education in The Gambia is relatively new. The UTG, The Gambia's first and oldest university, was established a little over two decades ago. Tertiary education (defined in The Gambia as all non-degree post-secondary levels of education) has operated for over seven decades. However, there is no evidence that the current marketing and branding status-quo in the sector is longevity-related. Instead, the pattern of responses that emerged suggests that the current situation in the sector draws more from a conception of HE as a non-business sector whereas the development of a portfolio of courses should be underscored by the product and production philosophy of business.

This conclusion draws on the evidence that majority of the selected HEIs' portfolios of academic programmes are supply-driven. In the case of AIUWA the evidence gathered from both the documentary content analysis and the thematic analysis of interview data indicates more of a differentiated portfolio structure with dual-award structures. However, the university demonstrated no evidence of a demand-driven and market-led approach to its academic course and programme development. This contradicts the theoretical foundation of marketing and branding and the changing nature of HE, as espoused in Kotler and Keller (2012), Roskosa and Stukalina (2019), Stukalina (2019), OECD (2019) and Ehlers (2020).

In reinforcing the findings in Stevenson *et al.* (2014), further evidence in this study shows that the selected HEIs are variously perceived not just by the external stakeholder cohorts, but that there are also varying perceptions of institutional self-identity by students and staff. This may be connected to the evidence of the confused self-identity of most of the selected HEIs and the non-positioning of their academic programmes and consultancy portfolios.

These findings on the status of the brand management practices of the selected HEIs implicitly reinforce the work of Heding *et al*. (2009) on one hand, but contradict the findings in the works of Edelman (2010), Adlmaier-Herbst and Musiolik (2015), Rowe (2014, 2017) and Grewal *et al.* (2022) on the other.

The non-strategic approach to marketing and branding, which emerged as the dominant practice in the selected HEIs, is supported by what Heding *et al. (*2009) describe as the positivist mindset to the conception of the brand. This mindset is reminiscent of the principles of the rational economic man through which the design and development of institutional value propositions are guided mainly by institutionally-centered transactional calculations of short-term economic gains (Bronnenberg, Dube & Moorthy 2019; Forbes Insight n.d).

It is also important to mention that the report by Heding *et al. (*2009) views brand management as a process that evolved through the later stages of the industrial society during which the positivist, production-based conceptions of value underscored product promotions. These authors report that brand management has transitioned from this era to the later period of the information and knowledge society during which brand management practices and the resulting brand equity are viewed as social constructions and by-products of the active engagement and participation of the customer. Further practical contradiction to the brand management practices of the selected HEIs can be seen in Edelman (2010), Adlmaier-Herbst and  Musiolik (2015) and Rowe (2014, 2017), who report that brands have evolved as community assets that are sensitive to societal trends and value co-creation. These attributes are associated with brand management processes in the knowledge era, but stand contradictory to the evidence that emerged of the brand management practices of the selected HEIs.

These views apply to the findings of this study from two epistemic dimensions that seem to contradict each other. The first is that marketing and branding practices have been found to be evolutionary. The implication is that current practices, as highlighted in the findings of this study, can be incentivised to evolve to the standards that are witnessed in other national jurisdictions around the globe. The second insight, which seems to contradict the first, is that The Gambia, as a bona-fide member of  global society, ought to be subject to the impact of all globalised social and economic policy transitions. These shifts and their implications for national competitiveness and development strategies have culminated in the subsisting information and knowledge society era. In this era, brands and brand equity are viewed as social constructions and by-products of the active engagement and participation of the customer. However, while operating in this globalised world, the findings indicate that HEIs in The Gambia are yet to align with the global HE marketing and branding trends that are reported in Grewal *et al*. (2022). There is no evidence yet on the factors that are perpetuating this situation as any investigation into such go beyond the remit of this study.

Against the backdrop of the relative newness of HE in The Gambia, these findings provide implicit support to what emerged as the evolution of brand management practices based on socio-economic triggers such as globalisation, and politico-social phenomena such as the Keynesian economic consensus and neoliberalism. Heding *et al.* (2009) report that brands evolved from the positivist conception that assumes that brands are institutional assets whose development and management is

based on the transactional engagement of consumers. This view appears to support the evidence that emerged in this study and the conclusion that that the selected HEIs adopt a product and production business philosophy. The same report observes that brand management practices appear to be evolving in a positivist-constructivist-connectivist continuum. These practices start from the purely positivist, economic approach, through the identity approach, the consumer-based approach, the personality approach (Urde 2016; Joo-Eon Jeon 2017) to the more connectivist, relational and community-based approaches.

Beyond the economic approach, later approaches view brands as corporate assets that are socially constructed and managed through direct consultation between the institution, customers and the community. The supply-led approach to academic programme portfolio development and confused institutional self-identity, ultimately contradicts the findings in Heding (2009) and Srivastava (2017). While the attributes that emerged as the selected HEIs' points-of-difference include portfolio breadth, institutional ownership status (private or public institution), portfolio structure and faculty quality, the absence of constructed and managed market positioning practices among the selected HEIs minimises the potential for the construction of differential advantages in the medium and long term. This is an outcome that further contradicts the findings, in Himann and Kahappen (2014) and Gheysari, Rasli, Roghanian and Norhalim (2013), that the management of brands should begin with the mobilisation of cross-functional resources to create a unified and recognised visual and behavioural identity.

### 6.2.1 Students' view on brand management practices of the selected HEIs

This study was partly inspired by changing policy conceptions and the emergence of the neoliberal rationality (Tan 2014). These phenomena appear to have introduced market-style competition for students and funding within a performative and enterprise culture (Christe 2016; Cloete 2016; Cymereli & Burke 2017). Thus, branding emerged as the cornerstone of the marketing strategy of HEIs (Grewal *et al.* 2022). Drawing on this, the views of the student participants on this study were distilled and analysed. As key stakeholders, student enrollment is identified (Ivy 2008; Pinar *et al.* 2011, 2012) as a key metric for assessing the competitiveness of HEIs. Thus, the identification, assessment and evaluation of the brand management practices of the selected HEIs, from the perspective of students, were explored from three dimensions. The first was to understand those reputational elements that informed students' university choices. The second was to identify and explore the main media for the HEIs' course information. The third was to identify how the selected HEIs are perceived by students and the market, and the marketing behaviour of those institutions that culminated in such image and reputation.

On the factors that influence students' university choices in The Gambia, the quality of teaching and learning, availability of scholarship packages, name recognition, portfolio of courses, and physical and

digital infrastructure emerged as the main influences. These outcomes reinforce the findings in Pinar *et al.* (2014) and Ivy (2008) that academic programmes, perceived quality of faculty, HEI reputation, emotional environment, brand awareness and brand loyalty are core dimensions of the reputational equity of HEIs. The state of the physical environment, library services and career guidance and counseling services emerged as supporting dimensions of HE brands.

The findings indicate that the dominant source of university or academic programme information is references from friends and family. While word-of-mouth is known to be an effective marketing communication element, references in this case appear to have emerged as reflexive and unprogrammed means of filtering information on the provisions of the selected HEIs. In this context, the emergence of word-of-mouth as the main source of the HEIs' programme information becomes, among other outcomes, an unintended consequence of the prevailing lack of strategic marketing behaviour by the selected HEIs.

The same factors that influence students' choices of HEIs emerged as factors through which the reputation of HEIs is built. The evidence that emerged alongside this indicates that the perceived quality of HEIs, and their institutional brand reputation in general, are functions of the extent to which such factors are actively integrated, positioned and reinforced as the distinctive features of such institutions.

The evidence that emerged from this study indicates that word-of-mouth takes precedence in the dissemination of institutional information in The Gambia's HE market. This highlights the absence of the types of institutional marketing behaviour articulated in Balagi (2016), Dean *et al.* (2016) and Clark *et al.* (2020). In comparing the trend of marketing and branding behaviour of HEIs, these authors report that HEIs are quickly adopting the marketing attitude of mind which recognises the inherent complexities of the emerging HE market. The managers of these institutions use such recognition as incentives in building and communicating a positioning for differentiated value offers within an environment of growing competition. Further evidence that emerged in this study indicates that the selected HEIs compete mainly through portfolios of academic programmes that are hardly differentiated or actively positioned. This further contradicts the global HE marketing and branding trends reported in Francis (2015), Popovic *et al.* (2015), Malewar and Nguyen (2014) and Grewal *et al.* (2022). These authors reported that marketing and branding activities of HEIs converge under the activities that focus on the formation and projection of an institutional brand core, a differentiated set of values, stakeholder engagement, and the positioning strategies domain.

Thus, effective brand management behaviour of the selected HEIs ought to have demonstrated evidence of the routinised articulation of institutional brand core that would embody a blend of values and sub-identities which integrate to project the main essence of the institution. The articulated institutional essence would thus highlight the offer of educational experiences that are relevant and authentic through

the differentiated and market-led development of academic programmes, student engagement and pedagogical enactments (Stevenson *et al.* 2014; Hamilton *et al*. 2017). These prescriptions further converge with the findings in Moural *et al*. (2017), which indicate that the construction of institutional identity is the critical first step towards creating brand knowledge, brand awareness and ultimately brand equity.

### 6.2.2. Student engagement

The findings in this study carry no evidence of institutional behaviour that remotely illustrates efforts at the strategic engagement of stakeholders. With the exception of the promotional posting of institutional events on the websites and social media platforms, there is no evidence of the active engagement and participation of stakeholders (such as students and employers) in the design and development of academic programme curricula, as reported in Muhanna and Murana (2016). Instead, the findings indicate a pattern of disparate promotional and monologic posting of institutional events and images, with the implicit assumption that stakeholders are passive recipients of promotional information. This may explain why the dominant source of HEI information in The Gambia is word - of-mouth references. Another insight that is implicit in this outcome is the emergence of the stakeholder engagement incapacities of the selected HEIs as being symbolic of missed opportunities for brand visibility and positioning.

This conclusion is based on  reports on the impact of student engagement strategies in the competitive strength of HE brands. Miller (2015), Cross (2018) and Trowler (2010) report that student engagement can be used to improve the brand strength of HEIs from the behavioural, emotional and cognitive dimensions which overlap to enhance the learning experiences of students. These authors report that student and stakeholder engagement can improve the reputational equity of HEIs by enhancing the students' understanding of the institutions' epistemic literacy levels and thus objectify their ways of knowing and doing. In doing so, HEIs use student engagement as a brand management tool that seeks to promote pedagogic efficiency, improve the learning experiences of students while optimising institutional positioning and the reputational benefits that are  accruable from such practices. The emergence of traditional pedagogy, and academic programmes and consultancy portfolios, as the core offerings of the selected HEIs, depicts a situation of missed competitive opportunities for student engagement and brand-building. The absence of learner-engagement structures like library and career guidance services, and constructivist and connectivist-informed pedagogic structures, thus implies that the opportunity for the exploitation of the critical dimensions of behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement of students, and their legitimation and branding benefits, is missed by the selected HEIs. The normative initiation and support that students receive through multiple channels of behavioural engagement ensures their easy passage and integration into the membership and behavioural norms of

the institution. At the threshold of their HE enterprise, the behavioural engagement structures lay the foundation for subsequent emotional and cognitive engagement objectives. Thus, students are entrusted with a sense of co-ownership which predetermines the attainment of a delightful learning experience.

The evidence that these structures are absent or inactive in the selected HEIs, on one hand, supports the findings of previous studies (Brendon, Duran & Faro 2017; Wawrzynski, Heck & Remley 2012; Strydom, Kuh & Mentz 2010; Schreiber & Yu 2016) on student engagement in SSA by reinforcing the status quo of a lack of institutional branding strategies which demonstrate awareness of the connection between student engagement and the reputation of HEIs. On the other hand, the findings contradict the application of pedagogy-based engagement structures, especially those that have been driven by recent environmental trends and aim to address the challenges of inclusivity and the cognitive needs of students.

As reported by several scholars (Glantz, Gamrat, Lenze & Bardzell 2021; Healey, Flint & Harrington 2014; Mohamed, Gheith & Papaluca 2021; Headland 2021), work-integrated learning and integrated and collaborative participation of students in teaching and learning activities provide a sense of legitimation and support by HEIs . These approaches have emerged as student engagement benchmarks which enhance the brand reputation of HEIs. The role of the behavioural, emotional and cognitive dimensions of student engagement strategies of HEIs as effective branding tools for HEIs can also be found in OECD (2019), where it is reported that the cross-disciplinary phenomenon of future skills is characterised by rapid transformation of the knowledge society into a disintermediated, globalised, digital space to which HEIs must respond with an assortment of measures that includes pedagogic apparatus that are inclusive and responsive. As shown in Table 2.1, the future skills trend introduces new frontiers in which all dimensions of student engagement need to be used in the effort to support emergent pedagogical developments and institutional brand enhancement for HEIs (Kukulska-Hulme *et al*. 2020). While these evidences do not only provide insight into the currency of the student engagement behaviour the selected HEIs, they also enhance our understanding on the activities and behaviours which emerge as contemporary specimens for the assortment of behaviours and activities that agglomerate as the brand management practices of HEIs. Furthermore, they highlight the gap that exists in the branding behaviour of the selected Gambian HEIs.

### 6.2.3 Institutional value proposition

The findings indicate that the selected HEIs identified their portfolio of courses as their core offerings and institutional value preposition. The evidence that emerged also indicates that the majority of these academic programmes are not differentiated enough to command any level of competitive visibility and

differential advantages. Once again, this outcome contradicts the findings reported in Valitov (2014) and Chenev (2014). These authors report that the marketing and branding strategies of HEls draw on two sequential activities. The first is the definition and identification of primary, secondary and tertiary markets. The second is the use of all actionable insights from the identified market to develop active value offerings that would be in strict convergence with the needs and aspirations of stakeholders in the identified markets. This appears to be a conceptual reinforcement to the views expressed in Heding (2009) on brand management practices. Chenev (2014) and Kotler and Keller (2016) report that this market-led approach to the development of value proposition by HEIs highlights intent to deliver value through differentiated offerings using exclusive features and attributes that go beyond the basic premises of teaching and learning. The implication of these findings, therefore, is that the value propositions of HEls should not be restricted to the development of academic programme portfolios alone, especially when such programmes are not consultatively developed. Instead, the value propositions of HEls should be presented as intricate brand elements that include academic programmes, academic faculty, learning environment, and instructional methods that are differentiated and positioned within specific philosophical convictions.

Popovic *et al.* (2015) and Francis (2015) report that the pattern that is emerging of the positioning strategies of HEls includes the use of institutional learning environments, institutional reputation, locations of origin (country-of-origin effect), graduate achievement, cultural integration opportunities and pedagogical differentiation to enforce a distinctive image of HEIs. Drawing on the findings of earlier research and the evidence that the selected HEIs do not have deliberate branding strategies, it would be easy to draw the conclusion that the institutional behavioral insights that have emerged from this study may carry implications for the competitiveness of The Gambia's HE sector as a whole. These findings contrast with those of Pinar *et al.* (2011, 2014). In reinforcing the findings of Ivy (2008), these authors report that the academic programmes in their content-based formats only occupy the actual product ring of the concentric cycles of the core actual, and augmented products. This insight is further highlighted in the Brand Ecosystem Framework (Pinar *et al.* 2011, 2014), where the perceived quality of teaching and learning and institutional reputation emerged as the most important dimensions of HE brands. Hence, the evidence from existing studies, and the findings that the design and development of academic programmes at the selected HEIs in this study are not market driven, indicate that the selected HEIs may struggle to construct the types of market advantages that would generate distinctive institutional identity, differentiation and affirmation in the long term. Hence, Pinar *et al*. (2011, 2014) report that HE brand building should begin with the development of specific philosophical convictions which stand as the brand core and thus serve as the substrate for the development and integration of academic programmes and related augmentations in a symmetry that projects institutional essence and institutional brand authenticity.

As highlighted in the preceding sections, such symmetry needs to include supporting pedagogical doctrines, faculty profiles, student engagement strategies, digital and physical infrastructures, career development and library services. The evidence indicates that the strategic articulation of these features, in addition to the institutional portfolio of academic programmes, forms the symmetry that defines brand identity and positioning of HEIs.

This evidence that the brand management services of the selected HEIs excludes the design and the positioned construction of the symmetry identified above, may implicitly explain why there exists widespread ambiguity on the institutional brand identity and positioning of the selected HEIs, as outlined in the previous chapter.

## 6.3 The pedagogical practices of selected HEls

The theme on the pedagogical practices of the selected HEIs was explored through questions that sought participants' views on the existing and dominant institutional pedagogical practices, the impact of such practices on students' learning experiences, the existence of institutional pedagogical policy, and the potential impact of such policy on the image and reputation of the selected HEls. The findings indicate that staff and students in the selected HEIs have no awareness of the existence of any unified preference for institutional pedagogical values. As shown in Table 6.1, the implication is that academic staff use a combination of pedagogical approaches including lecturing, case-studies, project- and problem-based pedagogies, among others. However, the lecturing form of transmissive pedagogy emerged as dominant in the selected HEls. This reinforces the findings in Larsen-Freeman (2013) and Miligan and Wood (2010), where it was reported that teacher-centered lecture sessions represent the most common form of transmissive teaching. These authors report that the transmissive approach to teaching and learning relies on traditional teaching methods to transmit pre-existing knowledge, but hardly supports the level of deep learning that is required to promote learner agency.

This lends support to the caution expressed in Biggs (2011) and Beetham and Sharpe (2007) that the direct instructional approach to teaching and learning minimises the opportunity for learners' development of problem-solving skills, arguing that the absence of learner stimulation is an outstanding feature of the transmissive approach to teaching and learning. The implication is that the fact-based knowledge that is usually transmitted remains inert and superficially absorbed by learners, irretrievable in problem-solving scenarios, and often forgotten within a very short time period. This led to the conclusion that transmissive approaches to teaching and learning are ineffective in enhancing learners' acquisition of the skills that support the emergent knowledge and digital society models. This is supported by the lecture-based knowledge retention curve in Section 2 of the literature review chapter. As reported by Larsen-Freeman (2013) and Milligan and Wood (2010), more than fifty percent of the

theory-based information transmitted via traditional pedagogy is forgotten within the first two weeks of learning. In a situation where the dominant teaching method is the transmissive pedagogy, this highlights its implications not just on the epistemic identities of learners and their readiness for the skills requirements of the emergent knowledge and digital societies, but also on the general and comparative quality profile of The Gambia's tertiary and HE system.

**Table 6. 1: A summary of selected HEIs pedagogical approaches**

| Pedagogical approach | Description | Prevalence of use | Policy status |
|---|---|---|---|
| Direct instruction (transmissive pedagogy) | Teacher-dominated lecture sessions which rely on traditional pedagogical methods to transmit pre-existing knowledge | Dominant in all the selected HELs | No policy. Used through individual lecturer initiatives |
| Problem-based learning | Learning design is collaborative. It focuses on learner-centric and goal-oriented learning (Simone 2014; Harman, Moberg & Lambert 2013) using learners' exposure to complex and authentic real-world problems | Very limited use. This is used at the discretion of a few teaching staff | No policy. Used through individual lecturer initiatives |
| Case-based learning | Learning context based on real-world problems that are complex, ill-structured, and open-ended | Very limited use. This is used at the discretion of a few teaching staff | No policy. Used through individual lecturer initiatives |
| Project-based learning | Tends to engage learners with complex and authentic real-world problems. Uses guided inquiry to pursue learner engagement goals | Very limited use. This is used at the discretion of a few teaching staff, especially in the technical disciplines | No policy. Used through individual lecturer initiatives |
| Technology-Enabled Learning /Blended Learning.Open & Distance Learning (TEL/BL/ODL) | Uses purposeful deployment of 2.0 and 3.0 technologies to facilitate learning. | Very limited use. This approach appears to be variously conceived by the selected HEIs. However, its use is done at the discretion of teaching staff | No policy. Used through individual lecturer initiatives |

Another insight worthy of note is that while the teacher-centered lecturing approach dominated teaching and learning, especially in the government-owned institutions, teaching staff who teach in the internationally-accredited professional programmes use more facilitative case-based pedagogical methods. The evidence that supports this conclusion indicates that the inherited curricula of those programmes make pedagogical prescriptions using pre-determined case studies and learning support

materials. When student views on the comparative impact of the transmissive lectures on their learning experience were explored, the evidence that emerged indicated that students had better learning experiences with the problem-based facilitative pedagogical practices, when compared to the teacher-centered direct instructional method. This reinforces the conclusions reached in the preceding paragraphs on the limitations of the theory-based transmission of knowledge in the facilitation of deep learning.

The implied emergence of the case-based pedagogy and other facilitative and constructivist approaches as being more effective teaching methods in this study can be discussed from both the configurative and institutional policy dimensions. The analysis of their configurative dimensions is approached from the design, development and delivery concepts and their epistemic impact considerations. The analysis of their policy dimension, on the other hand, is approached based on considerations of the guided imperatives of the institutional environment. From a configurative perspective, the use of case-based learning methods gives priority to the contextual situation of teaching and learning on the practical realities that are depicted in the case. In doing so, learners are guided to undertake critical thinking, learning dialogues, discoveries and reflection as they seek to stay stimulated and motivated while seeking solutions to appropriately-identified problems.

TEL is another approach whose limited use emerged as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The evidence indicates that the selected HEIs deployed technology platforms that provided the digital versions of the traditional pedagogy. The findings indicate that these technology platforms are live-streaming platforms that provide opportunities for real-time, teacher-led discussions and presentations within connected digital networks. Further evidence indicates that the deployment of these technology platforms emerged as reactions to the disruptions that were imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The insight that is implicit in this appears to be that the epistemic and pedagogic objectives of TEL vis-à-vis their implications for the suitability of students, contexts and the technological, pedagogical and epistemic literacies of teachers and learners might not have been considered.

This further explains why a significant number of participants in this study recommended that the selected HEIs need to integrate more relevant technologies into their effort to enhance students' learning experiences and demonstrate currency with global educational technology (edutech) trends. A further implication of this is that the unique conception of TEL as the digital version of traditional pedagogy, and consequent deployment of live-streaming platforms as TEL enablers by the selected HEIs, negates the fundamental principles of TEL as reported in COL (2017), Garrison (2016), Cleveland-Innes and Wilton (2018) and Wang *et al.* (2015).

The reactionary deployment of live-streaming platforms which provide the digital versions of transmissive pedagogy imply that the critical roles of input technologies like learner management

systems (LMS) in the pedagogic instrumentation of HEIs appears not to be understood. This is a situation that tends to entrench the epistemic and pedagogic assumptions of objectivism in a knowledge and digital society era, whereas institutional pedagogies need to instead reinforce the emergent and mostly connectivist-led new skills phenomenon. The findings on the ineffectiveness of the live-streaming platforms, in terms of their appropriateness and the digital literacy levels of the selected HEIs, provide justification for the views expressed in Carrol (2018). This author reported that the conceptual advantages of TEL are not limited to its potential impact on the digital skills of students but also to create techno-structures that mediate learning and facilitate the formation of the types of social networks, affiliations and learner agency that are characteristic of the knowledge and digital societies.

The findings also indicate a trend of very limited use of inquiry- and project-based teaching and learning methods in the selected HEIs. The evidence indicates that the skills-based epistemologies of technical and vocational educational require the use of projects and other forms of problem-based approaches as signature pedagogies that facilitate learners' acquisition of the abilities, knowledge, skills and attitudes that meet the competence frameworks of varying trade areas. Drawing on this background, a limited use of inquiry- and project-based pedagogies emerged more as supplementary pedagogical approaches among the selected HEIs that are providers of TVET. The main highlight of this outcome is the epistemic contradiction that the widespread use of traditional pedagogy introduces on those occasions that learners are expected to make a switch from the dominant regurgitation-oriented task briefs to the task briefs that are problem-based and introduce complex and authentic challenges that accompany the types of real-world problems that inquiry- and project-based learning seek to explore (Albion 2015; Mergendollar 2012). This implied contradiction may, however, be the result of many influences - one of which may be a configuration gap that results from the use of traditional pedagogy within a framework of a mono-pedagogic culture and/or the absence of shared institutional pedagogical doctrines. This conclusion lends further support to the findings reported in Miller (2010), Godino *et al.* (2019), Blaschke and Marin (2020) and Hase and Kenyon (2013). These sources report on the existence of specific disciplinary and lesson configurative doctrines that require the use of the transmissive approach to build learning thresholds. This is the configuration framework that is reinforced in Godino *et al.* (2019), which prescribes a pedagogic configuration that combines teaching and learning activities (TLAs) that are located within the constructivist-connectivist epistemological continuum. The main goal would be to create the pedagogic configuration that accommodates role exchanges between learners and teachers, while facilitating learner agency and independence.

### 6.3.1 Pedagogical practices and policy

The findings also indicate that the variety of pedagogical approaches used by academic staff emerged as a result of a trend of an institutional pedagogical policy void in the selected HEIs. In addition to its immediate and direct implications for the quality of teaching and learning in the selected HEIs, the situation of a complete absence of a culture of using pedagogy policy to direct pedagogical practice may directly or indirectly contribute to the situation of the confused institutional identity and the prevailing infancy in the configuration of the brand management practices of the selected HEIs. This conclusion draws imperative from the recognition of graduate achievement by Francis (2015), learning experiences by Clerk *et al.* (2019), institutional expertise by Stakalina (2019), institutional pedagogy by Stevenson *et al.* (2014), quality of teaching and research by Pinar *et al.* (2011, 2014) and institutional culture and identity by Chapleo (2016) as important elements of the brand equity of HEIs.

Drawing on the evidence that the aforementioned elements all have pedagogical connotations, these authors report evidence of a relationship between the pedagogical practices of universities and the evolution of institutional brand identity. Hence, the teaching and learning methods that dominate the educational practices of universities, over time, emerge as sub-identities that facilitate the differentiation of such institutions. In the effort to highlight the importance of pedagogy in university identity formation, Hamilton *et al.* (2017) describe the notion of institutional pedagogy as being dependent on a complex milieu of factors that facilitate learner-teacher interaction, including policies and strategies that are formulated to enhance the teaching and learning experience.
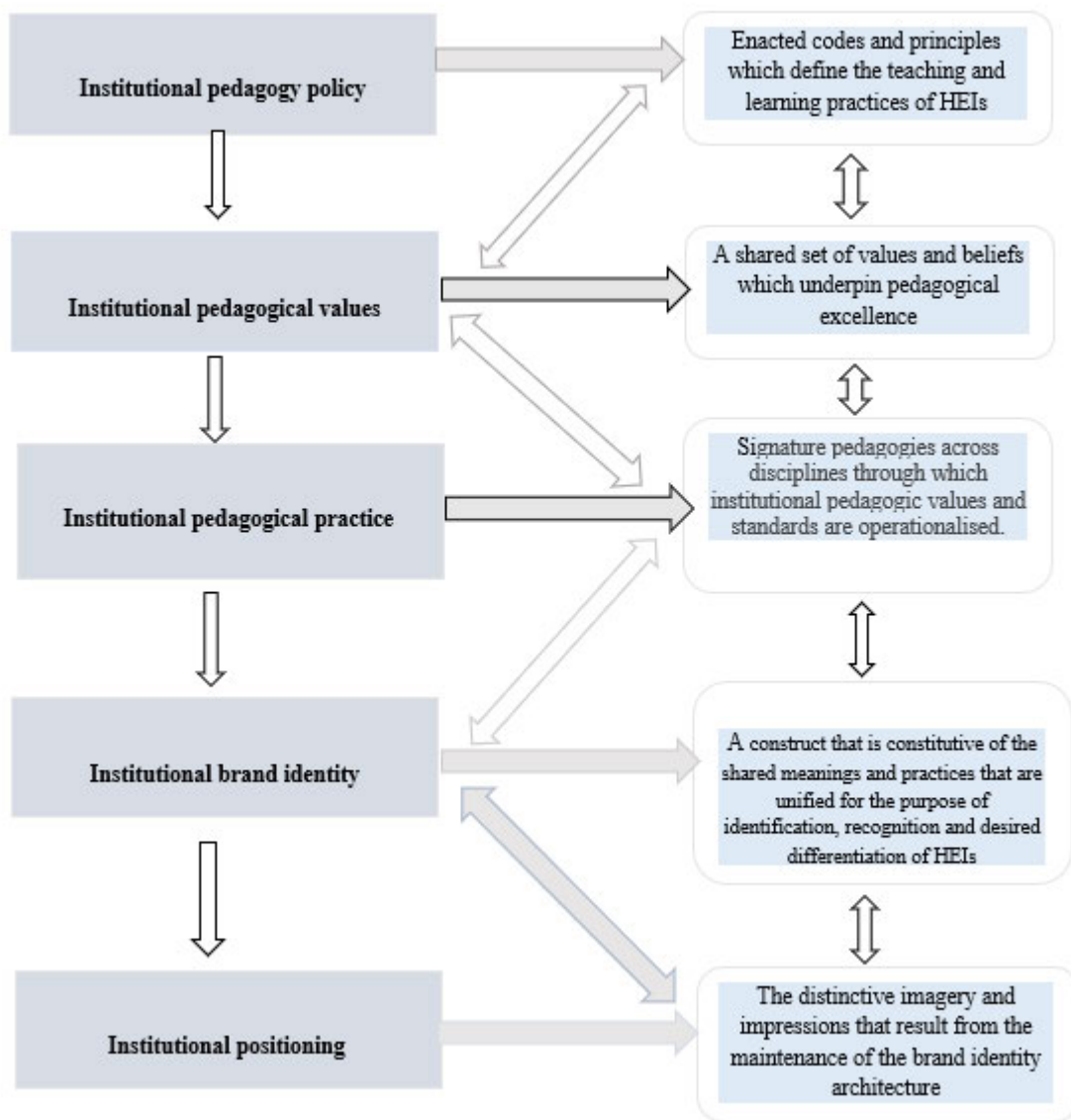
Figure 6. 1: A framework for the integration institutional pedagogy into branding

Figure 6.1 illustrates the role of institutional pedagogy policy in providing incentives for institutional branding and positioning. Following the uniqueness of The Gambia's HE sector, the insight that the lecturing mode of knowledge transmission dominates the academic practices of the selected HEIs highlights the strategic and reputational challenges that a pedagogy policy void can pose to HEIs. This inference is made against the backdrop of this study's findings, which indicate that students find teaching and learning approaches that draw on the constructivist (Mohammed & Kinyo 2020; Fina & Tallaue 2021; Wilhan 2019) and connectivist (Carrol 2018; Bell 2010; Anderson & Dron 2011) epistemologies of learning to be richer, more engaging and more effective methods of teaching and learning. These dialogic, guided but self-paced approaches to teaching and learning emerged in previous studies (Miller 2010; Svensson *et al.* 2017; Blaschke & Mann 2020; Godino *et al.* 2019) as pedagogic

approaches that can be used alongside direct instructional methods to form an institution's pedagogy policy. Unlike the findings in this study, which carry evidence of how direct instruction organically substitutes for lack of pedagogy policy, previous studies recommend the use of institutional pedagogy policy to support a mixed instructional strategy in which guidelines on the tacit combination of aspects of direct instruction and aspect of problem- and inquiry-based instructional methods in the effort to deliver pedagogical best practices in appropriately-diagnosed contexts.

## 6.4 Institutional brand identity of selected HEIs

The pursuit of insight into the institutional brand identity of the selected HELs was the third objective of this study. Following the initially-reported findings (see previous chapter) on the lack of strategic marketing and branding practices in the selected HEIs, the outcome of this study (in relation to this research objective) carries no evidence of strategic approaches to the articulation of the institutional identity as the foundation for the formation of institutional brand identity.

Evidence from the documentary content analysis shows that the selected HEIs all have logos that are made visible on their websites and social media pages. Some of the logos are embedded with representations of institutional core values and are placed prominently against the institution name on the website. These visual elements emerged as the only identity symbols of the selected HEIs. The findings also indicate that the institutions are variously perceived by staff, prior to joining the management and academic ranks of their various institutions.

The pattern of variations that emerged in the pre-employment perceptions of staff is supported by the evidence suggesting that none of the selected HEIs articulate market positioning for their institutional 'brand' or academic portfolio as sub-brand within the institutional brand (Urde 2013; Urde & Greyser 2015). This situation therefore represents a status quo of inertia in the identity evolution of the selected HEIs. The implication is that there is no resonance between the inscribed institutional names, logos, and the adopted mission and values.

Despite the fact that institutional mission and vision, as represented in the mission and vision statements, emerged as the only non-visual identity elements across the selected HEIs, no further evidence emerged of any deliberate link between these and the behavioural attributes of the selected HEIs. This is an inconsistency that further supports that state of the identity inertia of the selected HEIs.

These findings lend support to those that emerged in the brand management practices theme. The implied state of inertia in the construction of institutional identity, beyond superficial mission statements and name tags and logos, contradicts the findings of existing studies (Vignoles 2017; Vignoles *et al.* 2011; Hamilton *et al.* 2017) that present identity and institutional identity as the projection of an entity's self-concept of constructed schemas, affiliations, and distinctions. The reports

in existing studies indicate that these schemas may embody a system of principles, preferences and structures which provide the basis for identification. The emerging insight therefore indicates that institutional brand identity represents a constructed bundle of emotional appeals which may be positioned to generate pre-determined outcomes.

The evidence of a pattern of lack of strategic articulation of institutional brand identity by the selected HEIs, and the competitive benefits that accrue from this, is supported not only by lack of market positioning efforts but also by the absence of the deliberate integration of institutional competences within the identity schemes of these institutions (Urde 2013). This evidence is also supported by the findings in the pedagogical practices theme, which suggest that the dominant use of the lecturing method by teaching staff is the result of a pedagogy policy void in the selected HEIs.

Institutional pedagogic practices, as prescribed by institutional pedagogy policy, manifest as institutional competences that should be integrated with institutional mission to produce a distinct set of well positioned value proposition and a differentiated brand core (Urde 2013). Thus, institutional competences, including pedagogical beliefs and practices, become encapsulated in the institutional environment and contribute to the institutional brand identity architecture. This brand architecture then emerges as a distillate of sub-identities or associations that may be positioned to converge with the expectations of students, prospective students, employers, and other stakeholders (Roper & Fill 2012; Kapferer 2012; Francis 2015).

The key insight that is emerging from this analysis is that the brand identity of HEIs is an embodiment of sub-identities that are integrated to create identification and differentiation. The affirmed sub-identities include pedagogic practices and identity, academic programmes, the awareness and imagery that result from brand positioning and communication, and the reputational equity that results from the satisfaction levels of students and other stakeholders. These conclusions are supported by the findings which indicate that the enactment of an institutional pedagogy policy in the selected HEIs would have positive impact on the image and reputation of the institutions.

However, the findings in previous studies (Hamilton *et al.* 2017) caution that such enactment on its own would have little or no impact if it is not supported by an institutional identity infrastructure that ensures that it is strategically positioned and aligned with institutional mission and values (Chapleo & Reading 2014). The emergent core of institutional pedagogy within the brand identity architecture of HEIs is illustrated in Figure 6.2 below:
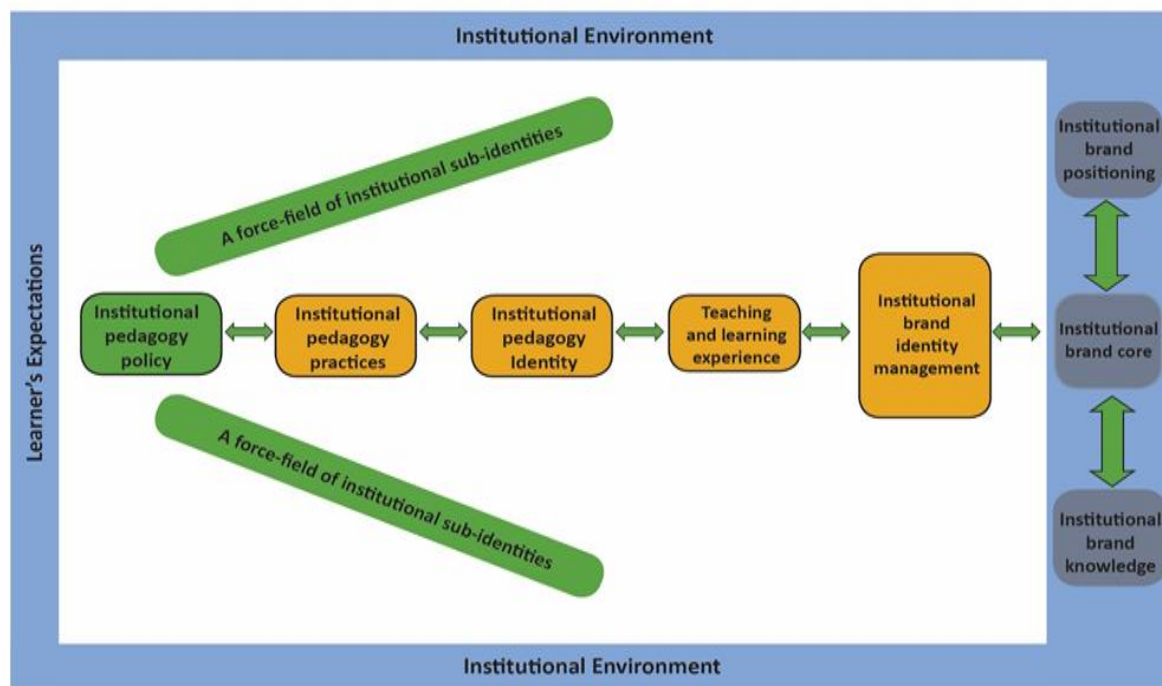
Figure 6 .2: Link between pedagogical practices and brand identity

The evidence from all data sources in this study indicates that HEIs are composed of sub-identities which have direct implications for institutional brand formation and management. The findings indicate that staff participants had varying perceptions of their institutions before joining the management or academic ranks of the university. Each of the institutions, especially the universities, was uniquely identified to be different from other institutions based on its ownership status as either public or private institutions. The component schools of the selected institutions carry unique epistemic features that embody varying interest and loyalties within the same institutions. Thus, the constituent schools emerged as strategic business units (SBUs), with the structural capacity to function as semi-autonomous entities (Pinar *et al.* 2011, 2014; Ivy 2008) within the same institution. These sub-identities highlight the complexity of factors and features that blend to project a recognisable and differentiated institutional brand.

As illustrated in the model in Figure 6.2, institutional brand identity emerges as a construct that HEIs use to engineer a response to emerging competition. Hence, institutional brand identity formation seeks to build institutional differential advantages through processes that are sensitive to learner needs and institutional environmental trends, including institutional mission and core values. Although the brand management practices of the selected HEIs emerged to be non-strategic, evidence indicates high awareness levels of the potential competitive benefits that might accrue from institutional brand identity

building within the selected HEIs. As highlighted in Heding *et al.* (2009) and Abimbola (2009), the findings in this study also indicate that institutional pedagogy policy formation can be used to direct the types of distinctive pedagogical practices that would directly address learners and employer expectations, while emerging as essential elements of institutional behavioural identity. This insight lends support to the findings in Downing and Otubanjo (2011) and Heding *et al.* (2009). These authors reported that institutional identity emerges as a blend of institutional structures, distinctive competences and resources that are weaved together to engender identification and recognition. However, a further caveat to this is that strong brands maintain a continuous discontinuity in the effort to respond to observed trends in the institutional environment.

While highlighting the saliency potential of a pedagogy policy within the spectrum of other institutional sub-identities in creating durable distinctions and recognition for HEIs, the emergent insight appears to highlight further dimensions to the role of pedagogy policy in the institutional brand identity formation of HEIs. These additional highlights appear to draw on our understanding of the role HEIs in the human and economic development of societies. Drawing on this, the brand identity formation of HEIs and their market positioning activities, as the findings in this study indicate, tend to mirror the 'purpose and means' philosophy implied in the existentialist, instrumentalist and dialogic views of identity. These views, as reported in Francis (2015), can be reinterpreted as the purpose and means philosophy of HE. Within this context, Nureev *et al.* (2020) report that the purpose of HEIs is in continuous flux. These authors reported that the shift from the production of knowledge graduates to the production of competent graduates needs to be supported with pedagogical means and approaches that draw on learners' concrete experiences, reflective observations and active experimentation to build lifelong learning and employability skills (OECD 2019; Cheng 2020; Ehlers 2020).

The student participants in this study acknowledged the superior impact of constructivist and connectivist (**Cromier 2011**; Anderson & Dron 2011; Muhammed & Kinyo 2020; William 2019) teaching and learning approaches on students' learning experience. Thus, findings in this study indicate consensus among all categories of participants on the impact of teaching methods on students' learning experiences.

The additional highlights of the role of pedagogy policy in the institutional brand formation of HEIs also reflect the dialogic view of identity, in the sense that pedagogy policies need to draw on the students' and employers' expectations of educational outcomes to instruct pedagogic approaches that would ultimately generate affirmation and differentiation for the institution. Within this context, the dialogic view of institutional brand identity emerges from an input and market-led approach to pedagogy policy prescriptions and guidelines on one hand, and the participatory, socially-negotiated and discursive engagement of learners, on the other.

This outcome opens up further insight on how the construction of institutional brand identity may be pursued through the enactment of student engagement guidelines (Trowler 2010) as critical elements of intuitional pedagogy policy. As illustrated in Figure 6.1, the findings indicate that student engagement from both the strategic marketing and branding and tactical (pedagogical) dimensions become a source of actionable policy input that shapes the pedagogical policy and the marketing and branding objectives of HEIs. This is supported by findings in Trowler (2010), which reveal that student engagement is a salient element of contemporary pedagogy that seeks to leverage students' learning experience in the positioning of HEIs.

## 6.5 The link between institutional pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity of the selected HEIs

The link between institutional pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity was explored by seeking participants' opinions on whether pedagogy policy and related enforcement strategies influence the way the institution is perceived both internally and externally. The consensus that emerged among all categories of participants in all the selected HEIs is indicative of the emergence of the critical role of pedagogy policy in the institutional reputation of the selected HEIs. This outcome lends support to the findings in Peruta *et al.* (2015) and Ng (2016), which indicate that HEIs can maintain a strong competitive presence by integrating their pedagogical doctrines as essential elements of their institutional brand identity and positioning.

Another insight that is implicit in this outcome is the fact that the relationship between pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity may not evolve organically. The findings indicate that the evolution of such relationship is the outcome of well-articulated and vigorously-enforced pedagogy policy. The wider implication therefore appears to be that the main driver of a pedagogy-enhanced brand identity is the locus of a pedagogy policy that draws on market-led stakeholder engagement outcomes to articulate policy objectives and practice guidelines that are structured to be continuously discontinuous in the effort to understand emerging environmental trends.

The findings indicate that the management of universities and other HEIs should lead institutional brand management process. The evidence indicates that such efforts should follow the absolute identification of institutional sub-identities, the articulation of a desired institutional image, and the formulation of pedagogy policies and guidelines that would be disseminated, enforced and integrated in the positioning distinctions of the institution.

The findings also indicate huge variations in the way the non-student participants in this study perceived their institutions before and after joining the management and academic ranks. The insight that emerged from this is the prevailing situation of a non-strategic approach to marketing and branding, resulting in the uncoordinated approach to teaching and learning activities, confusion on what exactly the institutions really stand for, variations in the pedagogic values of staff, and variations in the way the selected HEIs are perceived across the stakeholder spectrum. The apparent low reputational equity that emerges from this, ultimately encumbers institutional competitiveness.

The schematic in Figure 6.2 illustrates the link between pedagogical practices and institutional identity formation. The diagram further illustrates how pedagogy policy makes prescriptions on institutional pedagogical practices and unifies these around augmented institutional values and systems and their convergent structures in the effort to construct institutional brand identity. This reinforces the reputational benefits of pedagogy-mediated HE brand identity as reported in Peruta *et al*. (2015) and NG (2016).

This conclusion is supported by the evidences in  the Royal Roads University's Learning and Teaching and Research model (RRU 2019), the Victoria Teaching and Learning Model (VTLM) of Victoria state institutions in Australia, the Maastricht and Aalborg universities problem-based pedagogy doctrines (Jansen 2019; Askehave *et al.* 2015; Aarborg University 2021) and the Institutional Education Framework (IEF)  (Hamilton *et al.* 2017).

 With regard to the benefits of weaving institutional pedagogical practices into the institutional brand identity of HEIs, the findings in Stevenson *et al.* (2014) and Hamilton *et al.* (2017) tend to be supported by the findings of this study, which indicate that the competitive position of the selected HEIs can be strengthened through the integration of active pedagogy policy into the architecture of their institutional brands.

This insight bridges the gap in our understanding of the extent to which the insertion of enacted pedagogical doctrines within the institutional brand identity of HEIs provides support for the reputational equity of those institutions. As illustrated in Figure 6.2, pedagogical practices of HEIs contribute to the perceived quality of their educational provisions. The diagram illustrates how the prevalence of policy-informed pedagogical practices draws impetus from institutional sub-identities to influence institutional brand knowledge and positioning. The implication of this is the emergence of a direct relationship between an institution's pedagogical practices and the perceived quality of its educational provisions. This outcome lends support to the findings in Stevenson *et al.* (2014) and Pinar *et al.* (2011, 2014), which report a relationship between the techno-social environment of HEIs and their pedagogical doctrine in the effort to orchestrate the types of pedagogical innovations that are responsive to stakeholder expectations while enhancing the reputational equity of the institution.

## 6.7 The reputational equity dimensions of the selected HELs

The research question sought evidence on the role of institutional pedagogical practices in the brand identity formation of HEIs. The brand identity concept revolves around the objectification of an institution's recognisable distinctions for the purposes of identification, affirmation and differentiation. These distinctions constitute the value frames which Stevenson *et al.* (2014) assert to be responsible for HEIs' self-identity. Thus, the construction and dissemination of self-identity values informs a group's behavioural identity. The consistency of behavioural identity values at the point of value exchange contributes to the formation of institutional brand image and reputation.

Drawing on this background, enacted pedagogical practices thus become one of those institutional competences (Urde 2013) and distinctions, the consistency of which would contribute to the reputational equity of HEIs. Thus, this study conceptualises reputational equity as a perceptual blockchain whose strategic imperative manifests in the legitimisation of an institution's social recognition and market position. Within this context, reputational equity emerges as a sustained agglomeration of neatly weaved attributes whose collective impacts initiate the identity and reputational evolution of the brand.

While presenting brands in general, and HE brands in particular, as entities that have become increasingly digital in their structures and purposes, this view of reputational equity implicitly contradicts the cultural view of the brand as reported in Heding *et al*. (2009) by presenting brands as purpose-driven digital assets that encapsulate value through the imitation of technological evolution and deployment and the impact of this at the points of value exchange. This insight is implicit of what may be referred to as the technology-enabled agency (TEA) as it highlights the level and consistency of integration that exists between its elements in order to project the types of distinctions that generate improved reputational capital.

Another insight that is implicit in this background is the fact that the connectivist and constructivist conceptualisation of the brand, as highlighted above, brings an added dimension that is not just on the general pedagogical practices of the selected HEIs, but also their TEL and open pedagogy awareness levels. The evidence reported in existing studies (OECD 2019; Wiley & Hilton 2018; Wiley 2013) cautions that there is an ongoing trend of changes in the traditional role of HEIs. These changes appear to be in response to the emergence of the skills and post-knowledge era (Ehlers 2020) and thus make the adoption of pedagogic approaches that guarantee the development of learner agency and the meta-cognitive capacity of learners (Hase & Kenyon 2013), an issue of strategic imperative for HEIs.

Drawing on this background, this study sought to identify the core reputation dimensions of HEIs in The Gambia, while exploring the degree of importance that stakeholders attach to defined pedagogical

doctrines as an essential element of institutional brand identity. The findings indicate that the following features are perceived to be critical in building strong brand reputation for HEIs:

*Table 6. 2: Reputational equity dimension of HEIs*

| UTG | AIUWA | GTTI | MDI |
|---|---|---|---|
| Physical environment and digital infrastructure<br>Teaching and learning innovation<br>Pedagogy policy<br>Faculty quality<br>Marketing and branding | National and international accreditation<br>Teaching and learning<br>Curriculum and its quality thrust<br>Teaching & Learning policy<br>Faculty quality<br>Physical infrastructure | Faculty quality<br>Training material<br>Teaching and assessment methods<br>Physical and digital infrastructure<br>Curriculum quality<br>Pedagogy policy<br>Staff capacity development<br>Marketing and branding. | Faculty quality<br>Learning environment<br>Enrolment, assessment policy<br>Marketing innovative teaching<br>Physical infrastructure |

As shown in Table 6.2 above, pedagogy-related features such as teaching and learning innovation, pedagogy policy, curriculum and its quality thrust, faculty quality and training attracted the highest mention by all categories of participants in the selected HEIs. The same is also the case with marketing and branding and the configuration of the learning environment.

The insight that has emerged therefore indicates that institutional pedagogical doctrines that are guided by institutional pedagogical policy guidelines are critical elements in the reputational equity formation of HEIs. This reinforces the findings in the preceding themes of brand management practices, institutional brand identity of HEI, and the link between institutional pedagogical practices and brand identity formation of HEIs. The insight that is implicit in this outcome is that the enactment of institutional pedagogical policy may not generate the intended reputational benefits, if such doctrines do not emerge as outcomes of market-led engagement of stakeholders that are knitted into an active positioning strategy of HEIs.

## 6.8 A synthesis of rationale and findings

Drawing on the research question, the problem statement of this study cited the HE brand management research gap in SSA. This is against the backdrop of the newness of The Gambia's HE sector, the contested quality of HEIs in The Gambia (World Bank 2020), the employability skills gaps of Gambian graduates, The Gambia's economic profile, and the envisioned role of HEIs in The Gambia's national development plan. Drawing on these units of analysis, the research purpose statement cited the emerging notion of institutional pedagogical identity (Hamilton *et al*. 2017) and trends in the global HE environment, including emerging marketing and pedagogical practices. The statement of purpose makes the assumption that generating a preliminary understanding of the marketing, branding and pedagogical

practices of HEIs in The Gambia will facilitate insight into their competitive and behavioural patterns and readiness to lead the country's competence-focused development aspirations. Drawing on this, this study elevates pedagogy as an institutional sub-identity, while seeking evidence of the factors that mediate the inclusion of institutional pedagogical identity as core a element of HE brands. Based on this rationale, the study pitches its significance on bridging the knowledge gap that currently exists on the brand management practices of Gambian HEIs. The study attributes its rationale to the quest for evidence on how teaching and learning practices of HEIs can be framed as institutional shared meanings that underpin their market positioning strategies.

### 6.8.1 Key findings

One of the key findings in this study, and a major contribution to the literature, is the emergence of institutional pedagogical doctrines as crtitical elements of the brand identity of HEIs. While this validates the notion of institutional pedagogical identity, it also addresses the research question and eliminates the pedagogy paradox in the HE branding. The findings indicate that the enactment of a pedagogy policy prescribes pedagogical practices which consequently become institutional shared meanings, while guiding the manifestation of teaching and learning practices and experiences as unique brand associations. This outcome clarifies the equivocation and a consequent knowledge gap that accompanies the reports by Peruta *et al.* (2015) and Ng (2016) on the role of pedagogy in the brand identity formation of HEIs. This outcome affirms the impact of institutional pedagogical identity on the perceived value of HEIs. Lai, Lung and Lai (2011) reinforce this in their work entitled 'The perceived value of higher education: The voice of Chinese students'. These authors draw on the Sheth Newman Gross model of consumption to posit that the experiential, usefulness and image value perceptions of HE brands emerge as intricate functions of institutional pedagogy and the positioning strategies of HEIs. What this analysis portends is that institutional pedagogical identity, as a brand identity complement, enhances the brand and reputational equity of HEIs.

Another key finding in this study is the emergence of factors that determine institutional pedagogical identity in the SSA context. These had not been clear in previous studies (Hamilton *et al.* 2017; Perut *et al.* 2015; Ng 2016). As shown in Figure 6.3 below, the findings indicate that pedagogy policy, stakeholder expectations and institutional environment at the macro and micro levels influence the articulation of innovative and contemporary pedagogical doctrines and practices. The implication of this is that enacted pedagogical practices are not the result of traditional conceptions of HE but the outcome of a tacit understanding of prevailing knowledge and competence trends, stakeholder needs and aspirations, and institutional mission and values that would normally be encapsulated in the pedagogy policy. The further implication of this is that institutional pedaogy policy is a phenomenon that draws on an overarching philosophy to continually respond to changing environmental trends in the same way that the institutional brand identity management process should respond.

248
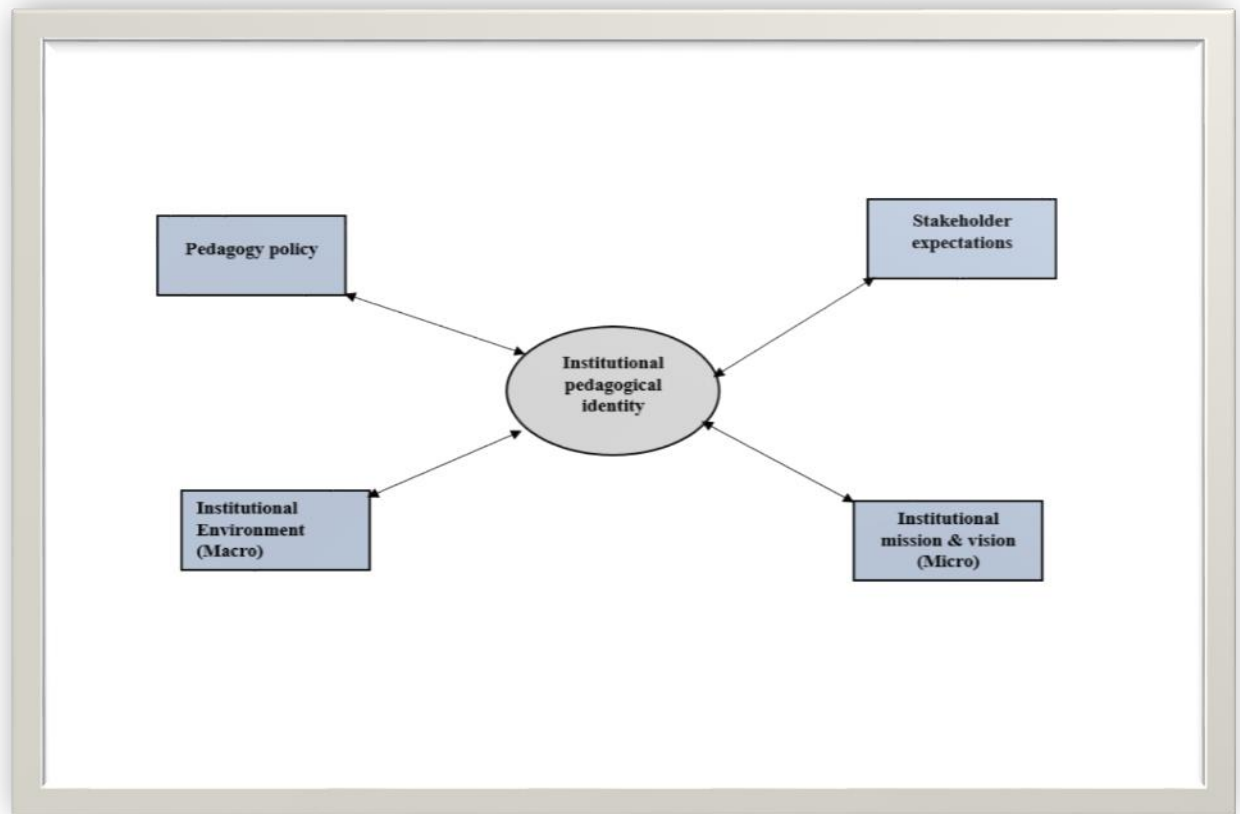
Figure 6. 3: Institutional pedagogical identity determinants

The third key finding in this study is the emergence of the link that is illustrated in Figure 6.2. The relationships that are illustrated in Figure 6.2 represent a logical framework that underpins the articulation of institutional pedagogical doctrine and its integration in the brand management toolkit of HEIs. While bridging exisiting knowledge gaps in HE branding, it also generates a process-based synthesis that supports the proposition of P-HEBIM in Figure 6.4 as a framework for the management of HE brands.

## 6.9 The emergence of the pedagogy-based higher education brand identity matrix (P-HEBIM)

Figure 6.2 illustrates a synthesis of those institutional elements which interact with the business environment to generate institutional behavioural traits. These traits consequently evolve to become institutional symbols of identity. This is further to the evidence in the literature (Heding *et al.* 2015) on the evolution of the brand from a positivist-determined organisational asset to a phenomenological construction that evolves in tandem with the needs and aspirations of consumers. Given the susbsisting scholarly debate on the suitability of exisiting branding models for HE products, services, and institutions and the persisiting knowledge gap in HE branding, this study proposes the pedagogy-based higher education brand identity matrix (P-HEBIM) in Figure 6.4 as a dedicated framework for HE branding. Against the background of exisiting gaps in the HE branding literature, the P-HEBIM emerges as a distillate of nine interlocking components which attempts to eliminate the paradox of the exclusion of pedagogy from prior HE branding studies and activities.
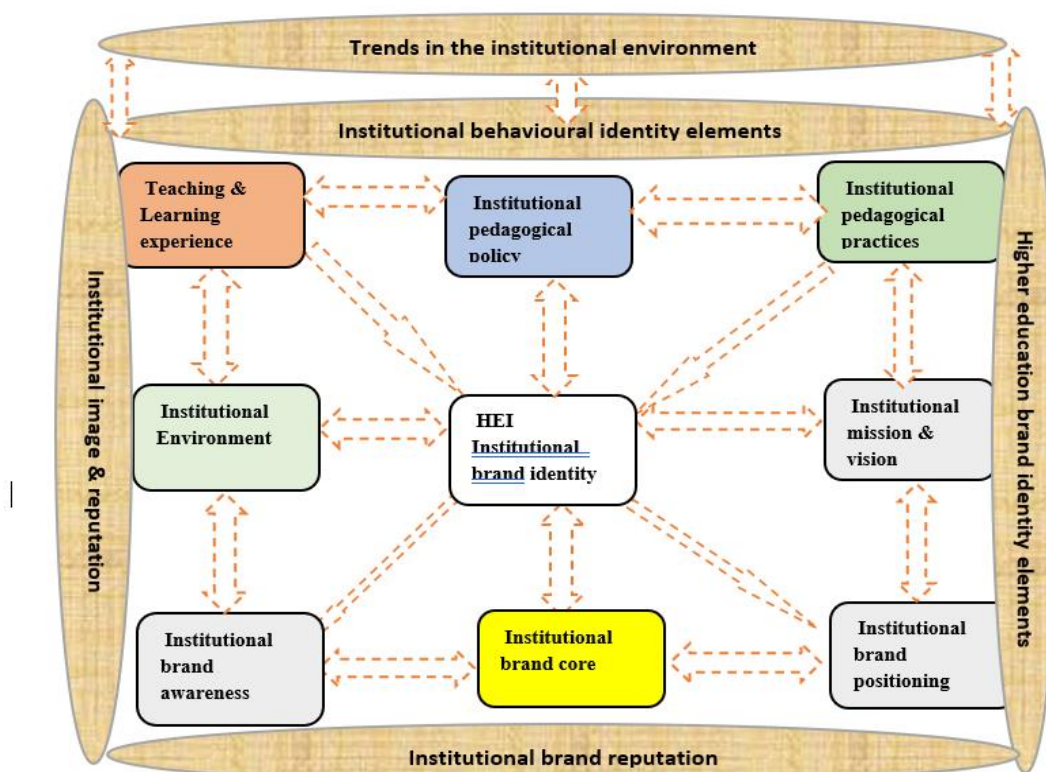


Figure 6. 4: A pedagogy-based higher education brand identity matrix (P-HEBIM)

Source: Researcher's construction

250

Table 6.3 outlines the managerial implications of the P-HEBIM. The table presents the matrix as a composite of three strategic priorities (stragey development, operational elements that target competitors, and brand communication strategies) in the articulation, design and marketing of HE brands. Drawing impetus from Urde (2013), the matrix proposes that the HE brand identity formation process be undertaken by aggregating the elements in the matrix on the basis of their respective diagonal, vertical and horizontal relationships. The elements in the right-leaning diagonal (institutional brand awareness, institutional brand identity, and institutional pedagogical  practices) support the articulation of institutional strategy and the assessment of its fit with institutional values. This pre-supposes that institutional branding objectives need to be pursued within the broader context of corporate  strategy. The left-leaning diagonal relationships (institutional positioning, institutional brand identity, and teaching and learning experience) indicate behaviours and activities that are designed to maintain a differented and value-added  market presence. These factors, by virture of their positions in the matrix, convey both reputational and self-concept objectives (Kapferer 2012; Wang 2010). The elements in the vertical relationship (institutional brand core, institutional brand identity, and institutional pedagogical policy) convey self-concept objectives within the broader context of constructing and communicating institutional shared meanings that underpin institutional value proposition. The elements in the horizontal relationship are symbolic of the externally-focused brand communication. This relationship draws on a clear knowledge of the brand identity attributes to communicate the brand positioning to external stakeholders. It is pertinent to mention that institutional brand identity remains a constant in all the relationship clusters that are implicit in the matrix. The constancy of the brand identity factor in all the relationship clusters of the P-HEBIM should not position institutional brand identity as an end in the institutional or corporate branding process, but as a pre-requisite process that unifies the configurations of all other factors in the effort to enhance the equity and perceived value of the brand  (Xi, Yang, Jiao, Wang & Lu 2022)  through the strategic engagement of internal and external stakeholders.

Table 6.3 :Managerial implications of the P-HEBIM

| 1. P-HEBIM right-leaning diagonal: Institutional strategy formulation & alignment | | |
|---|---|---|
| What is our pedagogical doctrine? How does it align with knowledge & competence trends in the business environment? | What are our core competences? How do they support our brand promise? | **Institutional pedagogical practices** |
| What is our brand promise? What are the core elements of our brand identity? How do our pedagogical practices reinforce these? | **Institutional brand identity (strategy)** | What are our core values and do they align with our pedagogical doctrine? Do they support our mission & vision? |
| **Institutional brand awareness** | What are brand communications strategy and channels? Do they reinforce our institutional brand identity? | What is our mission & vision? Do they support our strategic intent? |
| 2. P-HEBIM left-leaning diagonal: Competitive behaviour | | |
| **Teaching & learning experiences (competition)** | What are our core competences and how do they manifest in our value propositions? Do they offer superior value to our stakeholders? | What are the strengths and weaknesses of our competitors? |
| What is our brand promise? What are the core elements of our brand identity? How do they support our brand experience? | **Institutional brand identity (competition)** | What is our mission & vision? Do they support our strategic intent? |
| Who are our competitors? | What is our brand positioning and how does it align with our pedagogical doctrine and practices? | **Institutional positioning** |
| 3. P-HEBIM vertical relationships:  Institutional communication based on institutional norms and values | | |
| What is our pedagogy policy? What are its incentives?  Is it in alignment with our stakeholder expectations? | **Institutional pedagogy policy (internal communication)** | Who are our internal stakeholders? Do they have knowledge of our pedagogy policy? How do we create awareness of our pedagogy policy and its objectives? |
| What is our brand promise? What are the core elements of our brand identity? Do our employees have the right knowledge levels on these? | **Institutional brand identity (internal communication)** | What is our mission & vision? What is our behavioural identity? Do our employees and other internal stakeholders have the right knowledge levels on this" |
| What are our value proposition? What are our core competences? Are these in alignment with our mission & vision? How do these align with our pedagogical practices? | **Institutional brand core** | What are our core values? What are our core competences? Are these components of our institutional brand core? How do we communicate our institutional brand core to our internal stakeholders? |
| 4. PHEBIM horizontal relationships: External communication/Stakeholder engagement | | |
| Who are our stakeholders and what are their expectation? How do we engage them? | What is our brand promise? What are the core elements of our brand identity? Do these feature in our market positioning strategy? | What is our mission & vision? Do they reinforce our value proposition? How do we communicate these to our stakeholders? |
| **Institutional environment (external communication)** | **Institutional brand identity (external communication)** | **Institutional mission & vision (external communication)** |

| What are our stakeholder categories? What brand communication objectives do we pursue with each of them? | What are our core values? What are our value proposition? How do we express this to the understanding of our target markets? | What are our behavioural identity elements? Do these reinforce our brand identity? Are these supported by our mission and vision? Do these form part our stakeholder engagement objectives? |
|---|---|---|

*Table 6.3 :Managerial implications of the P-HEBIM*

## 6.10 Chapter summary

This chapter sought to present an analysis and contextual interpretation of the main findings of this study. On the theme of brand management practices of HEIs, the findings indicate that there are good levels of awareness on the emerging trend of competition in The Gambia's HE sector. The awareness levels demonstrated by different participant categories were critically examined. This examination took the form of critical evaluation of the levels of awareness that emerged vis-a-viz the marketing and branding practices of the selected HEIs. The evidence that indicates that the selected HEIs compete exclusively through portfolios of academic programmes that are neither positioned nor strategically differentiated, has been critically analysed including the highlighting of practices and processes that would introduce a shift from the prevailing production and product orientation of the selected HEIs to a more strategic customer-centric view of competition.

On the theme of institutional pedagogical practices, the variety of pedagogical approaches that emerged and the dominance of the lecturing approach were critically examined. This included an evaluation that highlights the descriptions, prevalence of use and policy status of the identified pedagogical practices. The evidence on the trend of a pedagogy policy void in the selected HEIs was analysed in the context of its impact on the perceived quality of the educational provisions of the selected HEIs, as well as its role in entrenching direct instruction as the dominant pedagogical method. Further to this is an evaluation of the emergence of direct instruction, problem-based learning, case-based learning, project-based learning and technology-enabled learning approaches against the backdrop of previously-reported findings. This analysis was specifically skewed towards highlighting how heutagogy, the PAH framework and the combined use of pedagogies that are located within the objectivist-behaviourist-constructivist-construcivist spectrum of learning epistemologies can be used as inputs in the innovative construction of pedagogic configurations. This was supported with a recommended framework for the integration of pedagogy into the brand-building architecture of HEIs.

The findings on institutional brand identity of the selected HEIs and the link between pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity were also examined, against the backdrop of the emergence of learner expectations and the institutional environment as factors that influence institutional brand

identity evolution. The existence of pedagogy policy and other institutional sub-identities were also examined as inputs and processes that underscore the evolution of institutional brand identity. The emergence of pedagogic approaches located within the constructivist and connectivist epistemologies as being more effective for deep learning was highlighted. This draws impetus from the evidence of a relationship between pedagogical approaches and learner experience on the one hand, and evidence of a relationship between peadogy policy and practices and institutional brand identity on the other. Figure 6.2 is indicative of efforts that have been made to highlight the role of pedagogy and other institutional sub-identities in the construction and positioning of institutional brand identity.

In an attempt to buttress the role of pedagogy in the evolution of institutional reputation, those factors that emerged as the reputational dimensions of HEIs were distilled and analysed. While reinforcing the findings in previous studies, this analysis highlighted the recurrence of institutional pedagogy policy, academic staff quality, institutional pedagogical approaches, digital and physical infrastructure, marketing and branding as complementary elements that remain implicit in the conceptual framework of this study. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the main findings of this study while proposing the P-HEBIM as a theoretical model for higher education branding.

# CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 7.1 Introduction

This study sought to examine the role of pedagogy in the brand identity formation of selected HEIs in The Gambia. This goal was predicated on the assumption that HEIs in The Gambia are subject to the trends of marketing and branding which have continually characterised the emerging behaviour of HEIs around the globe. Thus, this study drew its theoretical imperative from previous studies which identified the rising trend of competition in the global HE environment. This culminated in the examination and consequent prescription on how institutional pedagogy may be enacted and used as an active positioning element in the branding strategies of the selected HEIs.

This chapter draws on the analysis and the interpretation of the main findings of this study, to present the conclusions that emerged from the study. The conclusions on the brand management and pedagogical practices of the selected HEIs are presented in the second section of this chapter, as are the conclusions on the institutional brand identity of the selected HEIs and the contribution of institutional pedagogy to the evolution of institutional brand identity, and finally the conclusions on the evidences that emerged on the reputational equity dimensions of HEIs. Guided by the conceptual framework of this study, and the outcomes presented in the preceding chapters, the conclusions on the theoretical and managerial contributions of this study are presented in the third section. This is followed by the presentation of the recommendations and limitations in the fourth section. The recommendations seek to provide research design guidance for future research, as well as management insight that draws on the findings of this study to make prescriptions for the effectuation of institutional pedagogy as an active element of institutional brand positioning and identity. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and the researcher's personal reflections on this learning journey.

## 7.2 Meeting the aims of the study

One of the primary aims of this study was to bridge the gap in our understanding of how HEIs pursue competitive distinction through marketing and branding. Against the backdrop of the relative newness of HE in The Gambia, the emergence of the notion of institutional pedagogical identity (Hamilton *et al.* 2017) and the paucity of research in HE branding in SSA, this study sought to explore how the emergent notion of institutional pedagogy might draw on the evolving requirements of the knowledge and digital society to support the branding and positioning strategies of HEIs in The Gambia.

These aims emerged against the backdrop of the emerging evidence of the impact of marketisation, managerialism, commodification of HE and the pedagogical contestations that accompany them on the behaviour of HEIs (Stevenson *et al.* 2014). On this basis, four research objectives were pursued in this

study: to understand the management practices of the selected HEIs, to understand their pedagogical practices, to understand their brand identities, and to explore the link between their pedagogical practices and brand identities. The emergent outcomes formed the basis for all the conclusions and recommendations in this chapter.

## 7.2.1 The brand management practices of the selected HELs

The findings indicate that HE practitioners and managers in the selected HEIs appear to be aware of the emerging trend of competition in the sector (Stukalinar 2019; Grewal *et al.* 2020). The academic and management staff participant categories in this study demonstrated understanding of the link between government's liberalisation of the tertiary and HE sector and the emerging trend of competition in the sector. This understanding emerged alongside supporting evidence indicating that participants view marketing and branding as private sector practices that have been made necessary by the changing trajectory of the purpose of HE (OECD 2019; Ehlers, 2020) around the globe. Despite these awareness levels, the findings suggest that the selected HEIs do not engage in the strategic marketing and branding of their institutions. This is a paradox that may be explained from three potential scenarios that include the implicit shortage of institutional capacity to plan and implement strategic marketing and branding, lack of national incentive to adopt a strategic approach to competition, and lack of understanding of the role of marketing and branding in the competitive behaviour of HEIs (Melewar & Akrel 2005). The evidence indicates that the latter scenario emerged to be the reason for the sustenance of the dominant product and production business philosophies of the selected HEIs. These conclusions are drawn from the outcome of the analysis of participants' views on the marketing and branding practices of their institutions. This includes the analysis and interpretation of participants' views on the design, development and commecialisation processes through which the portfolio of academic programmes of the selected HEIs are brought to market. The conclusions also followed evidence that emerged on participants' perceptions of those institutional attributes that distinguish their institutions from competitors.

The findings support the conclusion that there exists a paradox between the higher awareness levels of most of the academic and management staff participants on the emerging trend of competition in the sector, and the capacity or willingness of the selected HEIs to confront the competition using marketing and branding strategies. The implication, therefore, is that the selected HEIs are yet to tune into the trends of marketing and marketisation which are emerging in response to new higher and tertiary education policy trends and the future skills phenomenon around the globe (Bogner 2017; Ehlens 2020; OECD 2019).

A further implication, as highlighted in the preceding chapters, is that the uniqueness of Gambian HEIs (on the basis of their integration with global competitive trends and best practices in the programming of HE) may pose international competitiveness disadvantages not just to the selected HEIs but also to the broader Gambian economy. This conclusion draws further impetus from the well-documented consensus on the nexus between higher and tertiary education and the economic development of nations (Kruss *et al.* 2015; Oketch *et al.* 2014; McCowan & Schendel 2015). It is pertinent to note, however, that the epistemic goal in the quest for evidence on the extent to which the selected HEIs' marketing and branding practices align with global trends, is encapsulated in the objective of making both theoretical and managerial contributions to HE management in SSA. In this effort, current practices of the selected HEIs around the themes of student engagement and institutional value proposition were critically examined. The conclusion that emerged reinforces the one made on the apparent non-integration of the HE programming practices of the selected HEIs in general, and their brand management practices in particular.

The emergence of word-of-mouth as the dominant source of university or academic programme information in the selected HEls, is the unintended outcome of the product- and production-orientation of HEIs. This conclusion tends to offer insight into the extent to which the traditional conception of HE influences institutional behaviour among the selected HEIs. This behaviour, as demonstrated in the evidence on the marketing and branding practices of the selected HEIs, tends to contradict the global trend of the changing conception of HE, including HE policies and infrastructure. HEIs around the globe tend to draw on their recognition of the emerging complexities of the HE market to construct value offers and positioning strategies which are intended to strengthen their competitiveness (Balagi 2016; Dean *et al*. 2016; Clark *et al.* 2020).

The resulting production and product approaches to the design and development of academic and consultancy programmes by the selected HEls, further highlight brand visibility and positioning opportunities that are not currently being used. This conclusion is supported by the views expressed in Trowler (2010) on the impact of using behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement strategies to optimise institutional positioning and the reputational equity of HEIs. Evidence of best practices in institutional marketing and branding suggests that the pursuit of institutional visibility and the enhancement of reputational equity of HEIs emerge as part of a symmetry of a managerialist approach that is emerging in the HE sector. Previous studies (Stukalinar 2019; Grewal *et al.* 2020) report that such symmetry begins with the identification of specific HE markets of interest and the use of actionable intelligence to develop a portfolio of academic and consultancy programmes. These programmes are then commercialised through a blend of institutional learning philosophies and infrastructure which build the foundation for the positioning strategies and reputation enhancement communication tactics of the institution (Chener 2014; Stukilinar 2019).

## 7.2.2 The pedagogical practices of the selected HELs

The pedagogical services of each of the selected HEIs was explored using participants' views on the most commonly-used teaching and learning methods, the availability of institutional pedagogy policy, and the relationship between pedagogy policy and institutional reputation.

While the teaching staff in all the selected HEIs use a blend of transmissive pedagogy, problem-based pedagogy (PBL), case-based learning (CBL), project-based learning (PrBL), and open and distance learning (ODL), the lecturing form of transmissive pedagogy, or the direct instructional approach, emerged to be the dominant teaching method in all the selected HEIs.

This insight emerged against the background of the evidence that teaching and learning activities are not supported by institutional pedagogy policy. This inference therefore draws on the insight that the absence of pedagogy policy provides the incentive for academic staff to substitute the policy void with their own pedagogical initiatives.

The findings indicate that the implication of the absence of pedagogy policy on the pedagogic behaviour of academic staff and the learning experience of students, is that the pedagogical discretions of the academic staff and the inconsistencies that accompany such individual discretions forms the symmetry through which institutional reputation evolves. This reinforces the views of Lugueth *et al.* (2018), which supposes that the pedagogic choices of teachers are influenced by professional identity-related including disciplinary and departmental loyalties, inherited pedagogical beliefs and the epistemic origins of the teacher. Institutional contexts which may include institutional disposition to the knowledge of the pervasive impact of pedagogy on students' leaning experience and institutional reputation, may be supported by teachers' emotions, cognitions and expectations, socio-cultural environment, and teachers' prior educational contexts.

The absence of a pedagogy policy in each of the selected HEIs tends to expedite the synergistic assembly of the factors mentioned above and their influence in stimulating teachers' decision to predominantly deploy the lecturing methods in their engagements with learners (Bates 2015).

It has to be noted, however, that the goal of exploring the pedagogic practices of the selected HEIs was not pursued as an end on its own. Instead, such goal was pursued as means of seeking insight into how pedagogic configurations of HEIs intersect with student learning experiences and the reputational equity of HEIs. The emergence of direct instruction as the dominant pedagogy would not carry much contextual significance if such insight is not analysed within the frames of their impact on the learning experiences of students. Hence, the findings indicate that the dominance of the direct instructional approach in the selected HEIs occurs more in those academic programmes that are delivered through locally-accredited curricula than in those franchised professional programmes that are accredited by

internationally-recognised awarding bodies. The selected HEIs, as franchisees in those internationally-accredited programmes, demonstrate institutional readiness on a set of criteria including the capacity to uphold the pedagogic values of such programmes. In doing so, the franchisee institutions submit their operations to the oversight procedures of European and North American countries where the headquarters of the franchisor organisations are domiciled.

The evidence that emerged indicates that academic staff who teach in the franchised programmes follow prescribed teaching standards and educational support materials that are judged to be the by-products of the pedagogy policies of such bodies as well as the regulatory requirements of their countries-of-origin (COO). Another conclusion that subsequently emerged is that the constructivist and connectivist inspired facilitative approaches that are recommended and enforced in the professional and externally-accredited programmes, generate deep learning and higher levels of student satisfaction at the expense of the direct instructional approach, which mostly generates surface learning (Biggs & Tang 2011; Biggs 2014; Gibbs 2014).

Another conclusion that emerged is that the enactment of institutional pedagogy policy would not only enhance the perceived quality of teaching and learning, but would also quite significantly enhance the reputation of the institution.

The insight on the role of pedagogy on students' learning experience (Boehner 2017; Bates 2015; Francis 2015) draws both scholarly and practitioner attention to the importance of a deliberate approach to the conception of institutional pedagogic values (Hamilton *et al.* 2017; Stevenson *et al.* 2014), including the framing and deployment of such values to the teaching and learning interface. The findings indicate that such framing needs to be policy-led and environmentally-sensitive, while presenting pedagogy as a tensed paradox that is discursive and evolutionary (King 2017). This approach provides further context for understanding the tensed environmental forces which interact to shape the changing epistemic values of society. Hence, the conclusion is that institutional pedagogy must be framed to respond to the emerging values of society (Delliot 2018; OECD 2019). The implication of this conclusion appears to be that the continuing emergence of new industries and the future skills phenomenon underscores the need for teaching and learning doctrines that invoke the tension between traditional conceptions of education and the competence requirements of the present models of knowledge and digital societies (Misra 2015).

Hence, the pedagogical and learning paradox implicit in this analysis purposefully seeks to instruct institutional distinctions as it seeks to highlight the need for teaching and learning approaches that provoke learners' self-reflection on the need to transcend a previously-known self through self-directed learning. While this conclusion may signal an implicit superfluity of the teacher in these new society models, the goal, however, emerges to be to re-imagine the teacher's role and construct differentiated

institutional competences (Urde 2013) that recognise the changing dynamics of knowledge while providing the context for anchoring the branding structures of HEIs.

Although the findings in this study indicate a pattern of pedagogic deployment that is conducted in an environment of pedagogy policy vacuum, it nonetheless facilitates insight into the fallacy of pedagogic singularity. The emergence of direct instruction, PBL, CBL, PrBL and ODL further support the notion of mixed pedagogy as the most effective institutional pedagogy doctrine (Godino *et al.*2019). Notwithstanding the evidence that teaching staff in all the selected HEIs use direct-instruction as the dominant pedagogical approach while using other methods as they deem necessary, the insight that emerged facilitates the conclusion that effective institutional pedagogy policies need to underscore the efficacy of the mixed pedagogy doctrine at the expense of alternative conceptions that draw impetus from single epistemologies of learning (Godino *et al.* 2019).

The mixed pedagogy doctrine emerged as a pedagogic configuration that facilitates the situation of teaching and learning in an activity continuum that guarantees role exchange between teacher and students at different points in the teaching and learning process. Following the evidence of the types of pedagogic approaches used in the selected HEIs, any effort to engineer a policy-based mixed pedagogy doctrine would require the contemplation and inclusion of systems of subject-specific norms, materials and processes, systems of measurable teacher-learner engagement and interactions that would aim to enhance learners' cognitive and affective abilities on an ongoing basis (Miller 2010; Svensson *et al.* 2017; Godino 2019).

These conclusions provide further theoretical support to the PAH model in which Balske and Mann (2020) and Hak and Keryon (2013) posit that mixed instructional approaches in HEIs, irrespective of the dominant epistemology of learning, can involve the use of direct instruction at the threshold of a pedagogic continuum wherein teachers would use guided instructional principles to facilitate learners' understanding of threshold concepts before exchanging roles with learners in the implementation of the more action-oriented and self-directed andragogic and heutagogic components of a defined teaching and learning configuration. This appears to be the theoretical foundation of the pedagogic principles that underscore the internationally-accredited professional programmes which command higher student satisfaction rates within the selected HEIs.

### 7.2.3. The institutional brand identity of the selected HELs

The evidence on the institutional brand identity of the selected HEIs reinforces the finding on the marketing and branding practices of the case institutions. This theme was explored from conceptual, visibility and reputational management perspectives. The aim of this approach was to facilitate insight into the spectrum of factors that constitute the self-concept frames of the case institutions. Then, the

study sought to examine how these factors are harnessed, aligned and integrated to generate institutional identification and differentiation. The premise that laid the foundation for this approach is drawn from MacDonald's (2013) view on the marketing and human development dimensions of institutional identity. This provided the context for the conceptualisation of institutional identity as the institutional notion of self that emerges from the context-driven interaction of institutional members and the institutional environment in the quest to identify institutionally-shared meanings and commit to a depersonalisation processes in order to solidify institutional self-understanding as the basis for identification and differentiation.

This provided the context for the inquiry into the institutional brand identity of the selected HEIs. Drawing on the conclusion that emerged from the findings on the brand management practices theme, no clear evidence emerged of an institutional effort that aims at strategically articulating the institutional identity and institutional brand identity. The conclusion, therefore, is that institutional brand identity is a function of the strategic marketing activities of an institution  The implication is that the identity concept of institutions without a demonstrable strategic marketing philosophy, would be reduced to disparate insignias such as logos, name tags, domain names, and vision and mission statements that are hardly aligned, coherent, consistent, or mutually reinforcing.

The findings indicate that this is the situation with the case institutions . This is an outcome that draws on the status quo of lack of institutional positioning to instruct a pattern of inconsistency in institutional self-concept. The unintended outcome of this emerged to be variations – and, to some extent, confusion - about what exactly the institutions stand for and what values emerge as their unique selling points (USPs) in an environment of multiple competing offerings.

The inherent conclusion that emerged from these findings is that institutional distinctiveness is a function of its marketing and branding strategy. In a situation where marketing and branding inertia prevail in an institution, the outcome would predictably be lack of institutional positioning and a consequent ambiguity on the identity and distinctions of the institution.

Efforts to create strong institutional brands, according to Downing and Outubango (2011) and Balmer *et al.* (2010),  ought to begin with the strategic analysis of the institutional environment with a view to identifying the assortment of factors that could be used as inputs in the construction of institutional brand features such as brand vision, brand culture, brand personality and brand essence (Rashd 2012; Urde 2016).  Such identity inputs, facilitated by a prerequisite strategic analysis process, enable the identification of sub-identities that would ultimately be aligned with the actual, communicated, conceived and ideal identities of the organisation. The findings indicate that the identity of an institutional brand would remain ambiguous in an environment of the continuing absence of a well-entrenched marketing and branding philosophy. Hence, the conclusion is that enacted institutional pedagogy doctrines of HEIs can be built into the brand identity architecture of such institutions, as an

institutional competence and identity element that has the potential to anchor the positioning strategy of the institution.

This is especially pertinent in an era of scholarly consensus on the shifting boundaries of knowledge and the re-purposing of HE with innovative pedagogies that draw on the concrete experiences of learners to build their employability and lifelong learning skills (OECD 2019; Cheng 2020; Ehlers 2020). Hence, the brand concept of HEIs manifests as a construct of subsidiary variables that exceed the superficial construction of logos and mission statements to include pedagogical practices, academic programmes, the professional identities of staff, and other institution competences that are integrated, positioned and communicated to specifically identified audiences (Urde 2016; Francis 2013).

### 7.2.4 The link between institutional pedagogy and institutional brand identity

Related to the fourth objective of this study, the theme on the link between institutional pedagogy and the brand identity formation of HEIs sought to facilitate insight into how the enactment of institutional pedagogic guidelines may contribute to the institutional identity formation activity thresholds of HEIs. Thus, institutional pedagogic identity was conceptualised as educational design and delivery principles that emerged as shared beliefs within an institution and contributed to the frozen schemas of the institution. This includes the complexity of settings that facilitate teacher-learner interaction and the role the institution plays in the process of intervening in its teaching and learning enterprise (Hamilton *et al.* 2017).

The findings indicate that institutional pedagogy is the outcome of institutional pedagogy policy, which some authors (Hamilton *et al.* 2017) refer to as Institutional Education Framework (IEF), which aligns with institutional mission and values to enact a blend of pedagogic principles and other educational practices that are communicated and internalised as institutional shared values. Institutional brand identity, on the other hand, emerges as a unique set of attributes which differentiate and simultaneously projects its essence to specific stakeholder audiences (Urde 2013; Urde & Greyser 2015). Thus, the essence of HEI brands becomes encapsulated in the symmetry between clarity on institutional vision, mission and positioning and its portfolio of academic programmes, institutional reputation, faculty quality, pedagogical enactments and student engagement strategies which converge to distill the strategic positioning of the institution. This is the outcome and relationship  illustrated in Figures 6.1 and 6.2. As depicted in Figure 6.2, the findings indicate that institutional pedagogy policy serves as a solid foundation for the evolution of institutional brand identity.

Hence, pedagogy policy draws impetus from a force-field of institutional sub-identities and actionable evidence of stakeholder expectations to instruct a set of educational practices and standards that would

not only be frozen as institutional shared meanings, but harnessed and communicated in the effort to strike institutional affirmation and differentiation.

The final inference, therefore, is that the competitive position of HEIs can be strengthened through the strategic analysis of stakeholder expectations and developing value offers that seek to meet these expectations through the active integration of enacted pedagogies in the branding architecture of such institutions. The implication is that the mixed pedagogic configuration that emerged in the preceding themes would be propagated as institutional shared meanings, supported by clearly-defined delivery standards, and integrated in all internal and external communications as reinforcements for institutional brand positioning.

### 7.2.5 The reputational equity dimensions of the selected HELs

Insight into the reputational equity dimensions of the selected HEIs was sought as a means of enhancing the robustness of the evidence on the emergence of institutional pedagogy as an essential element of the institutional identity architecture of HEIs. The decision to explore these emerged from the need to do an implicit comparison of the weight of importance that accompanies each reputational equity dimension. Hence, the recurrence of the pedagogical doctrine and other pedagogy-related factors increased the weight of their relative importance from minor to moderate to high-value factors within the matrix of values that influence the reputation of HEIs. The recurrence of each variable, in each of the selected HEIs, signals the weighted importance of its emergence as a high-value factor in managing the reputational equity of HEIs.

As shown in Table 6.2, physical and digital infrastructure, pedagogy policy, faculty quality, marketing and branding, institutional accreditation, programme curricula, training material quality and enrolment policy emerged as dimensions of the reputational equity of the selected HEIs. However, pedagogy policy and faculty quality had a combined recurrence that is many times higher than the physical enrolment of HEIs (Pinar *et al.* 2011, 2014). This reinforces the emergence of institutional pedagogy as a high-value component among factors that have impact on the reputation of HEIs.

### 7.3 Research contribution

This study sought to bridge the gap in our understanding of the use of marketing and branding within the competitive strategy toolkit of HEIs in The Gambia. The rationale for this goal was drawn from two pre-existing situations. The first is that the majority of previous studies on the branding practices of HEIs have focused on universities of Western origin (Boateng 2015). The second is that the relative newness of HE in The Gambia implies that the knowledge gap that exists as a result of the paucity of research on the branding of HEIs in SSA remains uniquely broadened in the specific context of The

Gambia (de Klerk & Sienart 2016). Drawing on this background, therefore, and on the emergence of the notion of institutional pedagogical identity (Hamilton *et al.* 2017) in the literature of HE marketing, this study sought to facilitate preliminary understanding of how institutional pedagogical practices can be leveraged in the institutional identity formation of HEIs in The Gambia.

### 7.3.1 Theoretical contribution

The main contribution of this study is the emergence of the proposed pedagogy-based higher education brand identity matrix (P-HEBIM) as a dedicated framework for HE branding. As shown in Figure 6.4, the P-HEBIM draws on the elements that are illustrated in Figure 6.2 to bridge exisiting gaps in the literature while providing a framework for the integration of institutional pedagogy into the branding architecture of HEIs. Despite finding evidence of the potential impact of pedagogy on the brand identity of HEIs, Peruta *et al.* (2015) and Ng (2016) made no framework proposals that underpin the use of pedagogy as an essential element of HE brands. This insight is emerging against the background of evidence (Clark *et al.* 2019; Foroudi *et al.* 2017; Chen 2019; Balmer *et al.* 2020) of rising scholarly interest in HE branding. Despite this, however, studies examining the link between pedagogy and HE brand identity are almost non-existent. In support of this view is the conclusion that is advanced in Peruta *et al.* (2015). These authors describe the relationhip between pedagogy and HE brand identity as being tenuous without further probing the dynamics of the relationship.

Drawing on the findings of this study and the evidence of gaps in the HE branding literature, the P-HEBIM seeks to provide guidelines on how the enacted epistemic and pedagogic values of HEIs can be leveraged in the institutional brand identity management process.

### 7.3.2 Managerial contribution

While serving as a novelty in the body of research on HE marketing in The Gambia, this study also facilitates insight into how institutional pedagogical practices can be framed as institutional sub-identities and used in the market positioning of such institutions. Thus, the model that is illustrated in Figure 6.2 and the proposed P-HEBIM shown in Figure 6.4 provide a managerial framework for the integration of pedagogy into the institutional identity framing guidelines for HE managers. This bridges our understanding of how the integration of enacted pedagogy doctrines within the brand elements of HEIs enhances institutional brand identity, image, and reputation. However, the caveat that is implicit in the managerial application of the P-HEBIM suggests that the absence of a pedagogy policy weakly precludes the emergence of institutional pedagogical image and identity. The implication of this is that an institutional behavioural identity void, which may emerge as a result of pedagogical and marketing policy ineptitude within HEIs, would co-exist with very pre-eminent visual identity symbols. This is a

situation which provides little incentive for managerial excellence and competitiveness of HEIs (Dimitova & Dimitova 2017; Voronov, Garkovenko, Safonov & Kosnikov 2018). The resulting situation provides a template for stakeholder impressions that are predicated on spontaneous management and academic practices. Consequently, such impressions become symbols of academic and pedagogic imagery around which the reputation of the institution would be constructed. This conclusion is supported by the findings of previous studies such as Grewal *et al.* (2022), Ng (2016), RRU (2019) and McCluskey *et al.* (2019).

## 7.4 Limitations of study

The outcomes of this study facilitate insight into the competitive behaviour of HEIs in The Gambia. This conclusion is made against the backdrop of the relative newness of HE in The Gambia and the scarcity of previous studies focusing on understanding the marketing and branding behaviour of HEIs in Africa. However, in an environment of rapid evolution of HE, one of the major limitations of this study emerges from its design choices. For example, using The Gambia as a single country case and the selection of four case institutions may be considered too narrow for an inquiry that seeks to facilitate understanding of the competitive behaviour of HEIs in the unique context of The Gambia.

Another design limitation emerged in using the case study strategy in investigating the marketing and branding practices of universities in SSA using The Gambian lens. The implication of this is that the study sought insight into the evolution of a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context. However, the limitation of this approach emerges in the dynamism of HEIs, in that their structural and statutory variations carry implications for the perceived relevance of the outcomes of this study. Although evidence, especially in qualitative research literature, exists on the acquisition of knowledge as a process that is driven more by contexts and uniqueness of phenomena rather than generalisations (Flyvbjerg, 2006), the outcomes of this study nonetheless carry the potential of being accompanied by variables whose complexities confine the relevance of the findings of this study only to the cases studied. Therefore, future research interests should build on the outcomes of this study to improve on this methodology by using a multi-country case strategy. The existence of unique environmental conditions in each country, and their relative higher and tertiary education experiences, would facilitate further insight into the pedagogical trends in SSA as well as the brand management practices of such institutions. The plurality of such contexts would mitigate the methodological limitations of this study while enhancing the conceptual confirmability of the study.

## 7.5 Recommendations

This section draws on the study's limitations, as well as the conclusions on its findings, to make recommendations for researchers and practitioners respectively.

### 7.5.1 Recommendations for future research

The design of the study sought to draw on existing learning theories (Vygotsky 1978; Dewey 1938; William 2017;Paiget 1985; Bruner 1996) that have had broad application in the epistemology of HE. The use of the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) (Urde 2013; Urde and Greyser 2015) as a supporting framework further highlights the interdisciplinary nature of this study. It is against this background that the conceptual framework of this study views the notion of institutional pedagogy as a function of institutional environmental trends supported by pedagogy policy environments that envision adaptability, responsiveness and distinction within the HE market.

In pursuing these goals, this study focused on The Gambia as a single country case. Future research may replace this single case strategy with a multi-country case alternative in order to facilitate insight not just into the appropriateness and adequacy of the cases (Ridder 2017) but to broaden the context for exploring how pedagogical experience, institutional uniqueness and national contexts interact with the marketing and branding behaviour of HEIs. This study focused on generating preliminary evidence on the pedagogical and marketing and branding practices of the selected HEIs. While evidence emerged on these practices across the themes related to the objectives of the study, there still exists a gap in our understanding of the factors that entrench these practices at the institutional level. The paradox that emerged with the evidence on institutional awareness of the emerging competitive trend in The Gambia's HE sector and the evidence of lack of strategic marketing practices by the managers of the case institutions, brings the need for future research in this area into sharp focus. Any attempt to investigate the factors that have entrenched this paradox go beyond the remit of this study. Hence, future research is needed to understand those environmental variables that foster the product and production orientation at the expense of strategic marketing philosophy in the selected HEIs.

Another area that may attract future research interest is to empirically examine the relationship between institutional environment and institutional pedagogical practices. The evidence that emerged in this study indicates the dominant use of transmissive pedagogy by academic staff in each of the selected HEIs, without any supporting evidence of the underlying reasons for this practice. The same applies to the relationship between pedagogy policy formulation and institutional brand identity. The variables, contexts and environmental conditions which sustain this symmetry need to be further investigated for the benefits of both theoretical and managerial understanding.

266

The reputational equity dimensions that emerged in this study offer another area for future research. The dimensions that emerged were not explored as independent units of analysis but as outcomes in the effort to identify the weight of institutional pedagogy as an active positioning variable for HEIs. As such, its multiple recurrence is observed and analysed in the context of the occurrence of other variables in order draw to draw conclusions on the degree of importance as a factor that contributes to the enhancement of institutional reputation. However, there is no evidence of the order of importance of these variables in their application to the branding structures of HEIs. Future research may therefore seek to identify the relative ranks of each of the dimensions as a means of generating evidence on the strategic positioning inputs of HEIs.

## 7.5.2 Recommendations for practitioners

This study was conceived as part of the effort to generate evidence that could be used to strengthen the competitive behaviour of HEIs in The Gambia. With the understanding that universities and other HEIs are national assets whose global competitiveness is akin to the competitiveness of their host countries and countries of origin, the search for scientific evidence on Gambian HEIs' conceptions of competition and their response to it, became the fundamental principle behind the design and implementation of this study. The trend of the emergence of new industries, the rapid obsolescence of technology and the substitution of the Keynesian consensus with neo-liberalism, triggered the re-imagination of HE. This includes education policy as well the structural dynamics of HE to the extent that new meanings and phenomena and their implications for the pedagogic doctrines of HEIs have become emerging lexicons of HE in the twenty-first century.

Against this background, the findings of this study indicate the existence of a paradox between the awareness levels of the managers of the selected HEIs of the global trend of marketing and branding of HE, and the marketing and brand management practices that prevail in these institutions. This paradox carries no evidence of equivocation in highlighting the practices and implicit conventions and norms that are asymmetrical to the global best practices in higher education (Peruta *et al.* 2015; Way NG (2016). This evidence facilitates insight on the current competitiveness prospects of Gambian HEIs and the Gambian economy. Based on this, the following higher and tertiary education management adaptations are recommended:

**Policy makers**

The collective brand reputation of Gambian universities equals the national HE brand reputation. To some extent, this carries implications for the country-origin (COO) effect when the broader national competitiveness of a country is evaluated. In this regard, policy makers and other regulatory stakeholders in the HE sectors in The Gambia need to enact statutory incentives (such as the appointment of chief marketing officers (CMOs) to lead institutional marketing, the development of an institutional marketing plan, copies of marketing reports with an institutional annual report) which will specify measurable and verifiable strategic marketing practices in the overall management and leadership philosophy of these institutions. These incentives, once ratified, would be included in the repertoire of regulatory requirements that must be fulfilled by HEIs in the country.

This regulation can also be extended to institutional pedagogy policy against the backdrop of the evidence that having an institutional pedagogy policy contributes to the brand identity and brand equity of HEIs. This would provide further incentive for university managers to enact and implement pedagogical doctrines that would guide teaching and learning practices, while serving as values and competences that differentiate the institution.

**University leaders/managers**

HE leaders and managers need to recognise that  current trends in the programming of HE are underscored by post-globalisation, neoliberalist phenomena such as marketisation and commodification. The government's liberalisation of the sector even alludes to this. Therefore, HE managers in The Gambia need to recognise the service dominant logic (S-D) of the emerging HE landscape, recognise its market, value co-creation implications and adopt strategic marketing thinking in their proposition of value. The recommended strategic marketing thinking needs to be underscored by value-based marketing principles while drawing on the proposed P-HEBIM as a brand management framework. This recommendation is made against the backdrop of the understanding that the value proposition of universities and other HEIs manifest in their academic programmes, the perceived quality of teaching staff, institutional reputation, institutional infrastructure, stakeholder engagement strategies (Pinar *et al.* 2011, 2014) and their institutional pedagogy doctrines (Hamilton *et al.* 2017). The implication, therefore, is that the managers of the selected HEIs should aim to develop and differentiate these value propositions through the identification of specific target markets (Valitove 2014; Dean *et al.* 2016) and draw on the evidence of the needs and expectations of the identified target markets in the design and development of differential values that offer exclusive features and associations beyond the basic premise of teaching and learning.

**University chief marketing officers/ marketing managers**

The findings of this study indicate that the business orientation of Gambian universities and other HEIs is largely based on the production approach to portfolio development. The CMOs or university marketing managers should lead the branding process. Drawing on the proposed P-HEBIM, marketing should henceforth be treated as a critical component of the competitive strategy of HEIs. Stakeholder engagement can then be conducted with the strategic intent of building the positioning strategy of the institutions around its pedagogical competences, with the goal of securing institutional advantages in student enrolment, staff recruitment, national and international rankings, and institutional brand and reputational objectives.

## 7.6 Personal reflection

This study was originally inspired by this researcher's phenomenological conceptions of the relative competitiveness of African HEIs. The study was partly conceived by this researcher's interactions with different HE systems, his observation of the emerging trans-nationality of HE in Africa, and his perception of the relative competitiveness of African educational outcomes at different points of convergence at the global level. These encounters and observations led to what emerged as this researcher's heuristic approximation of a situation of pedagogic crisis in HEIs in The Gambia. This status quo stimulated the researcher's belief in the need to conduct an inquiry into the current situation of HE programming and the transnational readiness of HEIs in The Gambia.

This inspiration emerged against the backdrop of the emerging realities of neoliberalism, the changing conceptions of knowledge, the future skills phenomenon and their pedagogic implications. These new realities included the considerations that were made as this researcher took note of the subsisting interactions of HE with the trend of skills mobility in transnational Africa. The implication of this background is that this study was conceptualised from an evaluative and comparative standpoint while focusing on assessing the link between institutional pedagogical doctrines and the brand equity of HEIs using the socio-cultural learning theory and the brand process model as frameworks of analyses. At this stage, the importance of pursuing a preliminary insight into the role of pedagogy on the evolution of institutional identity and reputation had not become apparent. Following enegagements during the supervision process, the need for a brick-by-brick unpacking of the intellectual path towards understanding existing gaps in the literature on the instrumentalist view of the role of pedagogy in HE branding began to emerge. This facilitated this researcher's understanding of the conceptual and theoretical issues, especially those that should precede insight into institutional brand equity within a matrix of such factors as institutional pedagogy, institutional identity, and institutional branding process, as the main constructs in the study. This led to re-imagining the research focus from a brand equity focus to pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity focus. The conceptual framework

was subsequently amended to reinforce the qualitative design of the study. As the focus shifted from an assessment towards engaging in an inductive journey of understanding the interplay between the constructs, it became clear that the multiple blends of the interpretivist research philosophy would be needed to interrogate existing studies and emergent data in order to derive a theoretical conclusion on the role of pedagogical practices in the brand identity formation of HEIs.

Then, the challenges of seeking such an outcome with a single country case study began to emerge. While the authenticity of this challenge was acknowledged, the logic of this researcher's HE practitioner status and the relevance of his practice context could not be overlooked. Hence, a deliberate decision was made to attempt to mitigate the limitations of the single country case strategy by selecting case institutions on the basis of the appropriateness criteria which essentially facilitated an evaluation of the relative fitness of the selected HEIs based on the main aims of study. This was supported with a strong consideration for the adequacy of the chosen number of case institutions in the effort to provide a good mix of pedagogical experiences, and an overall view of HE programming learning curves that are different but complementary at institutional levels. This provided the conceptual and methodological flow that facilitated the outcomes of this study.

The importance of the opportunity provided by this personal reflection emerges in its support for this researcher to identify his conceptual baggage and gaps in his ways of knowing at the inception of this study. It provided the opportunity for critical reflection on this researcher's initial thought processes regarding the study, his personal assumptions and preconceptions of the research process especially at doctoral level and how this compares to the emergent processes, the relational dynamics that emerged between the researcher and supervisor on one hand, and the researcher and the research participants on the other. These are episodes that have had profound impact not just on the outcome of this study but also on the professional and epistemic evolution of this researcher.

# REFERENCES

Aaker, D.A. (1992). The Value of Brand Equity, J*ournal of Business Strategy,* Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 2732.

Aaker, D. (1991). *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalizing on the Value of a Brand Name*. The Free Press, New York.

Aaker, D. (1996). *Building Strong Brands*. New York: The Free Press.

Aaker, D. A., & Keller, K. L. (1990). Consumer evaluations of brand extensions. *Journal of Marketing,* 54(1), 27–41.

Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research,* 34(3), 347–356. Available at https://doi.org/10.1177/002224379703400304. Accessed: September, 2019

Aalborg University (2015). *Problem-Based Learning, Copenhagen:* Aalborg University

Aalborg University (2021). Educate for the future: PBL, Sustainability and Digitalisation 2021, *International Research Symposium on PBL series, 8th International Research Symposium on PBL,* August 15-17, 2021

Abeysekera , L.and Dawson , P (2014). Motivation and cognitive load in the flipped classroom: definition, rationale and a call for research *Higher Education Research and Development* 34(1):1-14

Abimbola, T. (2009). Brand  and organisation identity and reputation: Bold approaches to big challenges. J*ournal of  Brand Management* 16, 219–220 (2009). https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2008.43

Abratt, R. and Kleyn, N. (2011). Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate reputations: Reconciliation and integration. *European Journal of Marketing* 46(7/8): 1048–1063.

Accenture (2018). To affinity and beyond: From me to we, the rise of the purpose-led brand. *Accenture.* Available at https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/thought-leadership-assets/pdf/accenture-competitiveagility-gcpr-pov.pdf. Accessed June 2020

Adlmaier-Herbst, D.G &  Musiolik, T.H. (2015). *Building Strong Digital Brands, Project paper on: Importance of situations for brand experience Design of experiences through digital media Brand Experience in Digital Media Advancement,* 8(3), 126–135.

Aguinis, H., & Solarino, A. M. (2019). Transparency and replicability in qualitative research: The case of interviews with elite informants. *Strategic Management Journal*, 40(8), 1291–1315.

Ajayi, J., Lameck, K., Goma, G., & Johnson, A. (1996). *The African Experience with Higher Education*, The Association of African Universities. Athens: Ohio University Press. Accra:

Akkerman, S.F. and Meijer, P. C (2011) A Dialogical Approach to Conceptualizing Teacher Identity Teaching and Teacher Education: *An International Journal of Research and Studies*, v27 n2 p308-319 Feb 2011.

Akyol, Z. & Garrison, D.R (2011). Assessing metacognition in an online Community of Inquiry, *The Internet and Higher Education* 14(3):183-190

Akyol, Z., & Garrison, D. R. (2011). Understanding cognitive presence in an online and blended community of inquiry: Assessing outcomes and processes for deep approaches to learning. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 42(2), 233–250.

Alastair Henry, A., & Mollstedt, M.(2021). The other in the self: Mentoring relationships and adaptive dynamics in preservice teacher identity construction, *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction,* Volume 31, 100568

Albion, P. (2015). Project-, problem-, and inquiry-based learning. In: *Teaching and digital technologies: big issues and critical questions*. Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, Australia, pp. 240-252.

Alemu, S. K. (2018). Meaning, Idea and History of University/Higher Education: Brief Literature Review. FIRE: *Forum for International Research in Education,* 4(3). Available at {www. https://doi.org/10.32865/fire20184312

Alexander, R.J. (2019). Whose discourse? Dialogic pedagogy for a post-truth world, Dialogic Pedagogy: *An International Online Journal,* Vol. 7.

Alexander, R.J., Hardman, F., Hardman, J., Longmore, M. and Rajab, T. (2017). *Changing talk, changing, teaching: Interim report from the in-house evaluation of the* CPRT/UoY Dialogic Teaching Project. York: Cambridge Primary Review Trust and University of York.

Alfieri, L., Brooks, P.J., Aldrich, N.j., and Tenenbaum,H. (2011) Does Discovery-Based Instruction Enhance Learning? *Journal of Educational Psychology* 103(1):1-18

Anastasiu, L. (2019. The Importance of Applying the Value Chain Analysis in the Higher Education System. *International Conference on Applied Research in Business, Management and Economics 12 – 14 December, 2019 Barcelona, Spain and Oxford:* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Anderson, T., & Dron, J. (2011). Three generations of distance education pedagogy. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning,* 12(3), 80-97. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v12i3.890

Andrews, G. and Russell, M. (2012). Employability skills development: Strategy, Evaluation and Impact. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning [online].* 2(1), pp. 33- 44

Archibald, D. (2010). Fostering the development of cognitive presence: Initial findings using the community of inquiry survey instrument, T*he Internet and Higher Education* 13(1):73-74

Artherton , M.C.,& Meulemans, Y.N. (2021) (2021).  Threshold Concepts Theory as a Pedagogical Tool for Articulating Transformational Learning: An Initial Exploration, J*ournal of Transformative Education,* 19(2): 147-1

Artigue, L.M &   Blomhøj, M. (2013). Conceptualising inquiry-based education in Mathematics, *ZDM Mathematics Education,* 45:797–810.

Askehave, I., Prehn, P.J., and Pedersen, M.T. (2015). *Problem-Based Learning.* Copenhagen: Aalborg University

Association of African Universities. (2013). Transforming African Higher Education for Graduate Employability and Socio-Economic Development; *13ᵗʰ General Conference of the Association African Universities, 28 May 2013 to 31 May 2013,* Liberaville, Gabon.

ATUPA & AU (2021) *Open Education Resources for Youth Employability Skills Training in Africa (YESTA) Community of Practice. Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning Report.* Available at {https://aspyee.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/YESTA%20CoP%20MERL%20Report.pdf}. Accessed, December 2021

Bada, S. O., & Olusegun, S. (2015). Constructivism learning theory: A paradigm for teaching and learning. *Journal of Research & Method in Education,* 5(6), 66-70.

Bae, S.& Kokka K. (2016). *Student Engagement in Assessments: What Students and Teachers Find Engaging,* Stanford Centre for Opportunity Policy in Education. Available at www. https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/library/publications/1434 Accessed: September, 2020

Bhargava, V. R. & Bedi, S. (2022). Brand as Promise. *Journal of Business Ethics* 179(3): 919-936.

Balaji M. S., Roy, S.K, & Sadeque, S. (2016). Antecedents and consequences of university brand identification, *Journal of Business Research,* 69(8): 3023-3032

Balmer, J. M.T (2009) Corporate Marketing: Apocalypse, Advent and Epiphany. *Management Decision, 4*7(4): 544 -572.

Balmer, J.M.T & Liao, M. (2007). Student corporate brand identification: An exploratory case study, *An International Journal, Decision,* 12(4): 356-375

Balmer, J.M.T. (2010), Explicating corporate brands and their management: reflections and directions from 1995, J*ournal of Brand Management,* 18(3): 180-196

Balmer, J.M.T. & Greyser, S.A. (2006). Corporate marketing: Integrating corporate identity, corporate branding, corporate communications, corporate image and corporate reputation. *European Journal of Marketing,* 40 (7/8):  730-741

Balmer, J.M.T.,  Mahmoud, R. and Chen, W. (2020). Impact of multilateral place dimensions on corporate brand attractiveness and identification in higher education: Business school insights, *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 116

Barnham, C. (2021). Brand essence: The structure and dynamics of the brand. *International Journal of Market Research*, 51(5): 593-610. Available at

{https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353821345_Brand_Essence_The_Structure_and_Dynamics_of_the_Brand} Accessed: December, 2021)

Bates, A.W.( 2015). *Teaching in a digital age .Guidelines for designing teaching and learning* .Tony Bates Associates Ltd, Vancouver. Available at {https://opentextbc.ca/teachinginadigitalage/}. (Accessed October 2020)

Beatly, B. (2016). *Hybrid flexible course and program design: Models for student-directed hybrids [Blog post]*. Retrieved from http://www.drbrianbeatty.com/wordpress/

Beetham, H. & Sharpe, R. (2007). *Rethinking Pedagogy for a Digital Age. Designing for 21ˢᵗ Century learning*. London: Routledge

Beetham, H., & Sharpe, R. (Eds.) (2013). *Rethinking Pedagogy for a Digital Age: Designing for 21st Century Learning* (2ⁿᵈ ed.). New York: Routledge.

Beetham, H., & Sharpe, R. (Eds.). (2019). *Rethinking Pedagogy for a Digital Age: Principles and Practices of Design* (3rd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351252805

Belgrave, M. (2016). *From empire's servant to global citizen: A history of Massey University.* Palmerston North: Massey University Press.

Bell, S. (2010) Project-Based Learning for the 21st Century: Skills for the Future, *The Clearing House* 83(2):39-43

Bentley, H. (2021). *"I've come so far it's hard to say it all": A narrative approach to changes in perceptions of student identity in a student success program* [Doctoral thesis, Purdue University]. https://doi.org/10.25394/PGS.14445585.v1

Bergami, M. & Bagozzi, R. P. (2000). Self-categorization, affective commitment and group self-esteem as distinct aspects of social identity in the organization. *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 39(4): 555-577

Bergan, S., Gallagher, T., Harkavy, I., and Munck, R. and Land, H.V. (eds.)(2021) Higher Education's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Building more sustainable and democratic future. *Council of Europe Higher Education Series* no.25.

Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity* (Revised Edition). New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

Bhattacharya, S.; Faisal, M.(2020) University branding during Covid-19: A study on the role of social media in promoting COVID-19 awareness and building brand image. *Journal of Content, Community and Communication,* 12:280-290

Białoń, L.(2015) Creating Marketing Strategies for Higher Education Institutions. *Marketing of Scientific and Research Organizations,* 18(4): 129-145

Biggs, J .B. (2003). *Aligning Teaching and Assessment to Curriculum Objectives (Imaginative Curriculum Project,* LTSN Generic Centre)

Biggs, J. B. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university: What the student does*. London: McGraw-Hill Education.

Bhargava, V.R & Bedi, S. (2022). Brand as promise. *Journal of Business Ethics* 179: 919–936

Black, J. (2008) *The Branding of Higher Education.*Available at http://www.semworks.net/papers/wp_The-Branding-of-Higher-Education.php. (Acccessed September 2020)

Blaschke, L M., & Hase, S. (2019). Heutagogy and digital media networks: Setting students on the path to lifelong learning. Pacific *Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning,*1(1): 1-14.

Blaschke, L. M., & Marín, V. I. (2020). *Applications of heutagogy in the educational use of e-portfolios.* Revista de Educación a Distancia red. Available at https://edtechbooks.org/-TbP. Accessed: December, 2019.

Blaschke, L.M. (2012). Heutagogy and lifelong learning: A review of heutagogical practice and self-determined learning. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 13(1): 56-71.

Blaschke, L.M., and Marin, V.I (2012) Applications of Heutagogy in the Educational Use of E-Portfolios, red. *Revista de Educación a Distancia.* Núm. 64, Vol. 20. Artíc. 6, 30-09-

Blaschke, L.M., & Hase, S. (2015). Heutagogy: A holistic framework for creating 21st century self-determined learners. In M.M. Kinshuk & B. Gros (Eds.), T*he future of ubiquitous learning: Learning designs for emerging pedagogies* (25-40). Springer Verlag.

Bluden, A. and Scmolze, N. (2004). Mind and Society by Lev Vygotsky Mind and Society Written: 1930; *Source: Mind and Society. L. S. Vygotsky*. Available at www. https://pdfcoffee.com/vygotsky-mind-and-society-pdf-free.html. Accessed: April, 2020

Bobe, B.J. & Kober, R. (2015) Measuring organisational capabilities in the higher education sector. *Education and Training,* 57(3): 322-342

Boehner, M.M.(2017). *High quality teaching and assessment in TVET: The road to enhanced learning outcomes. Series on quality oin TVET: Volume 2.Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission.* (Available at: https://www.academia.edu/35212852/High_Quality_Teaching_and_Assessing_in_TVET_The_Road_to_Enhanced_Learning_Outcomes_High_Quality_Teaching_and_Assessing_in_TVET_Series_on_Quality_in_TVET_Volume_2_Tertiary_and_Vocational_Education_Commission. Accessed: June 2020

Bolden, R., Jones,S., Davis, H. and Gentle, P. (2015). *Developing and sustaining shared leadership in higher education. Leadership Foundation in higher education.* Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288591994_Developing_and_sustaining_shared_leadership_in_higher_education. Accessed: January 2021

Bowles, M., Ghosh, S., & Thomas, L. (2020). Future-proofing accounting professionals: Ensuring graduate employability and future readiness. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability,* 11(1)**:**1–21.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57–71). American Psychological Association. Available at {https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004} Accessed { September 2021)

Breda, A., Font, V. & Pino, L. (2018). Valorative and normative criteria in the Didactics of Mathematics: the case of constructed didactic suitability. *Bolema: Boletim de Educação Matemática,* 32(60): 255-278.

Brenner, P. S., Serpe, R. T., & Stryker, S. (2014). The causal ordering of prominence and salience in identity theory: An empirical examination. *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 77(3): 231–252.

British Council (2014) *Can Higher Education Solve Africa's Job Crisis? Understanding Graduate Employability in Sub-Saharan Africa, Going Global* Available at https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/graduate_employability_in_ssa_final-web.pd. (Accessed December 2019)

Bronnenberg, B.. J, Dubé, J & Moorthy, S. (2019). The economics of brands and branding. In *Handbook of the Economics of Marketing.* Volume 1: 291-358.

Brown, A.D. (2017). Identity work and organisational identification.. *International Journal of Management Reviews* 19(3): 296–317

Browne, J. (2010). *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education: Independent Review of Higher Education and Student Finance in England,* London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Brubaker, J. (2013). SAMR: *Model, metaphor, mistakes [Blog post].* Available at techtipsedu.blogspot.com/2013/11/samr-model-metaphor-mistakes.html|. (Accessed July 2020)

Bruner, J. (1966). Toward a Theory of Instruction. In Bruner, J. (1996). *The Culture of Education,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brusoni, M., Damian, R., Sauri, J.G., Jackson, S., Kömürcügil, H., Malmedy, M., Matveeva, O., Motova, G., Pisarz, S., Pol, P., Rostlund, A., Soboleva, E., Tavares, O., & Zobel, L. (2014). *The Concept of Excellence in Higher Education. Brussels: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.* Available at www.enqa.eu/publications. (Accessed June, 2020)

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2011). *Business Research Methods,* 3rd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Buil, I., De Chernatony, L. and Martínez, E. (2013). Examining the Role of Advertising and Sales Promotions in Brand Equity Creation. *Journal of Business Research,* 66: 115-122.

Buil, I., Martínez, E. & de Chernatony, L. (2013). The influence of brand equity on consumer responses. *Journal of Consumer Marketing,* 30(1): 62-74

Burgess, C. (2016). Conceptualizing a pedagogical cultural identity through the narrative construction of early career Aboriginal teachers' professional identities; *Journal of Teacher Education.* Available at: http://www.elsevier.com/locate/tate. (Accessed March 20th, 2019)

Burke, P. J., Stevenson, J.& Whelan, P. (2015).Teaching 'Excellence' and pedagogic stratification in higher education. *International Studies in Widening Participation,* 2(2): 29-43

Butcher, N. & Moore, A. (2015). *Understanding Open Educational Resources (OERs).* Vancouver: Commonwealth of Learning

Campus France (2020). *5,300,000 internationally mobile students around the world.* Available at www. /ressources.campusfrance.org/publications/chiffres_cles/en/chiffres_cles_2020_en.pdf (Accessed March 2021)

Candela, A. G. (2019). Exploring the function of member checking. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(3)

Carter, M.J. & Fuller, C. (2015). Symbolic interactionism. *Sociopedia* 1(1):1-17

Carter, M.J. (2013). Advancing identity theory: Examining the relationship between activated identities and behaviour in different social contexts. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 76(3): 203–223

Caswell C.J. & LaBrie, D.J. (2017). Inquiry Based Learning from the Learner's Point of View: A Teacher Candidate's Success Story. J*ournal of Humanistic Mathematics,* 7(2): 161-186

Caughlan, S., Juzwiz, M.M., Kelly, S., Borsheim-Black, C. & Fine, J.C (2013). English teachers developing dialogically organised instructional practices. *Research in the teaching of English.* 47(3)

Celeveland-Innes, M. and Wilton, D. (2018). *Guide to blended learning. Commonwealth of Learning.* Available at http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/3095 (Accessed July 2021)

Chapleo, C. & Reader, P. (2014). *Higher Education Brands and Data. Should Branding Metrics in UK Universities Be Better Informed?* London: Sense Publishers.

Chapleo, C. (2010). *What defines 'successful' university brands?* Available at http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/18857/3/Chapleo_Final_Version_5_Nov_as_published_%28_Successful_Brand_Paper%29.pdf

Chapleo, C. (2015) Brands in Higher Education. *International Studies of Management & Organization,* 45(2): 150-163

Chapleo, C., & Clark, P. (2016). Branding a tertiary institution by committee: An exploration of internal brand analysis and management processes. *Journal of Brand Management, 2*3(6): 631–647

Chapleo, C. & Simms, C. (2010). Stakeholder analysis in higher education: A case study of the University of Portsmouth. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 14(1): 12–20.

Charlene. T. (2016). Constructivism and pedagogical reform in China: Issues and challenges. *Globalisation Societies and Education*. 1-10.

Chemi, T. & Krogh (Eds) (2017). *Co-Creation in Higher Education: Students and Educators Preparing Creatively and Collaboratively to Challenge of the Future.* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers

Chen, C.T., (2019). The mediating effect of brand identity on brand knowledge and the operational development of universities. *South African Journal of Business Management* 50(1): 416. Available at https://sajbm.org/index.php/sajbm/article/view/416/1335} Accessed: March 2020

Cheng, Y .C (2020) *The future of education after COVID-19. Multiple disruptions and lessons.* Hong Kong: UNESCO/Regional Education Centre

Cheng, Y. C. (2019). *Paradigms shift in education: Towards the third wave of effectiveness.* London: Routledge/Taylor Francis

Chernev, A. C. (2014). *Strategic Marketing Management* (8th ed.) Cerebellium Press, Inc

Chickering, A. W., & Ehrmann, S. C. (1997). Implementing the seven principles: Technology as lever. *AAHE Bulletin*, 49(2): 3-6

Christiansen, E., Kuure, L. Morch, A. & Lindstrom, B.(2013). *Problem-Based Learning for the 21st century. New practices and learning environments.* Copenhagen: alborg University Press

Christie, F. 2016. Careers guidance and social mobility in UK higher education: practitioner perspectives. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* 44 (1): 72- 85

Christodoudes, G. & De Chernatony, L. (2010). Consumer-Based Brand Equity Conceptualisation and Measurement: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Market Research* 52(1)

Chung, E., Turnbull, D. and Chur-Hansen, A. (2014). Who are 'non-traditional students'? A systematic review of published definitions in research on mental health of tertiary students. *Educational Research and Review,* 9(22): 1224–38

Chung, E., Turnbull, D., & Chur-Hansen, A. (2017). Differences in resilience between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' university students. *Active Learning in Higher Education,* 18(1), 77–87. Available at https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787417693493 Accessed: December 2021

CIM (2021) *what's the point of a brand strategy? The six big benefits of setting a brand strategy, and why it should be a priority for today's marketers.* Available at https://www.cim.co.uk/content-hub/editorial/what-s-the-point-of-a-brand-strategy/ Accessed: June 2021

Clark, P.,Chapleo, C., & Suomi, K. (2019). Branding higher education: An exploration of the role of internal branding on middle management in a university rebrand. *Journal of Tertiary Education and Management.* 26: 131-149

Cleveland-Innes, M., & Campbell, P. (2012). Emotional presence, learning, and the online learning environment. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning,* 13(4): 269–292.

Cloete, N. (2016). For sustainable funding and fees, the undergraduate system in South Africa must be restructured. *South African Journal of Science,* 112: 3-4

Coates, H. (2007) A model of online and general campus-based student engagement. *Assessment and Evaluation of Higher Education*, 32(2)

Cohen, M. Z., Kahn, D. L., & Steeves, D. L. (2000). *Hermeneutic phenomenological research: A practical guide for nurse researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

COL (2021) *New employment pathways for 150,000 learners*. Available at www. https://www.col.org/news/july-2021-issue-of-connections-now-available/ (Accessed October 2021)

Colman, Z. (2022). How to create a strong, successful brand identity for your brand? Brand identity is of paramount importance to a business. Need help creating a brand identity for your brand, here we are to help you out! Available at : https://creatitive.com/creating-brand-identity/ Accessed: March 2023

Collins, K.M.T., Onwuegbuzie A. J., & Jiao Q.G. (2006). Prevalence of Mixed-methods Sampling Designs in Social Science Research, Evaluation & Research in Education, *Journal of Mixed Method Research,*19(2): 83-101

Confederation of British Industry (2019) *Getting young people work ready*. Available at https://www.cbi.org.uk/media/2960/cbi_work-readiness.pdf (Accessed January 2020)

Conole, G. (2010). A holistic approach to designing for learning: A vision for the future. *In: Annual International CODE Symposium, 18 Feb 2010,* Chiba, Japan.

Cooper D.R. and Schindler, P.S (2014). *Business research methods*. (12th edition). London: McGraw-Hill

Cormier, D. (2011). Rhizomatic education: Community as curriculum. *Innovate, 4(5).* Available at//www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=550..Accessed September 2019

Corno, L. & Anderman, E.M.( 2015). *Handbook of Educational Psychology*. London: Taylor and Francis Ltd

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D. (2019). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and mixed method approach.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications

Cross, M. (2018). Steering epistemic access in higher education in South Africa. Instructional dilemmas. *Codesria/Eas/ Clascso*

Daniela, L. (2019). *Didactics of Smart Pedagogy: Smart Pedagogy for Technology Enhanced Learning*. London: Springer International Publishing.

Davies, W. (2017) *The limits of neoliberalism: authority, sovereignty, and the logic of competition.* London: Sage.

De Beers (2019). Approaches to Realising a Purpose Driven Brand. *De Beers Group Diamond Dialogue Series in partnership with Positive Luxury,* De Beers Group

De Chernatony, L. (2009). Towards the holy grail of defining `brand'. *Marketing Theory,* 9(1):101-105

De Charnatony, L. (2010). *From brand vision to brand evaluation. The strategic process of growing and strengthening brands,* London: Routledge

De Chernatony, L., & Dall'Olmo Riley, F. (1998). Modelling the components of the brand. *European Journal of Marketing,* 32(11/12): 1074–1090

De Simone, C. (2014). Problem-based learning in teacher education: trajectories of change. International *Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* 4(12): 17-29

Dean, D., Arroy-Gamez, R. E., Punjaisri, K., & Pich, C. (2016). Internal brand co-creation: The experiential brand meaning cycle in higher education. *Journal of Business Research,* 69(8), 3041–3048.

Deloitte (2018). *Preparing tomorrow's workforce for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.* Available at https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/gx-preparing-tomorrow-workforce-for-the-fourth-industrial-revolution.html. (Accessed December 2019)

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Desierto, A. and De Maio, C. (2020). The impact of neoliberalism on academics and students in higher education: A call to adopt alternative philosophies, *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, 14(2): 148-159. Available at: https://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/731 (Accessed July 2020)

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and Education.* New York: Macmillan Company. Available at https://www.scirp.org/(S(351jmbntvnsjt1aadkposzje))/reference/ReferencesPapers.aspx?ReferenceID=1610444 Accessed: January 2018

Dholakia, R.R. and Acciardo, L.A. (2014). Branding a state university: Doing it right. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education,* 24(1)

Dibley, L. (2011). Analyzing narrative data using McCormack's lenses. *Nurse Researcher*, 18: 13–19

Dimitrova, G. & Dimitrova, T. (2017). Competitiveness of the universities: Measurement capabilities. *Trakia Journal of Sciences*, 15(l): 311-316

Doran G. (2017) The Role of Higher Education for Africa's Sustainable Development. *NCURA Magazine*. XLIX: 56-58

Dorri, M., Yarmohammadianb, M. H, & Nadi, M.A. (2012). A review on value chain in higher education. Procedia - S*ocial and Behavioral Sciences* 46 ( 2012 ) 3842 – 3846

Dougherty, K. J., & Natow, R. S. (2015). *The politics of performance funding.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

Dougherty, K.J. & & Natow, R.S (2019). Performance-based funding for higher education: how well does neoliberal theory capture neoliberal practice? *Higher Education* (2020) 80:457–478

Dowling, G.R., and Otubanjo, T. (2011). Corporate and organizational identity: two sides of the same coin. *AMS Review,* vol. 1, issue 3, No 8, 182 pages

Downes, S. (2007). *What connectivism is Half An Hour, Teaching in Digital Age* Available at https://opentextbc.ca/teachinginadigitalage/chapter/3-6-connectivism/. (Accessed December 2020)

Downes, S. (2014) *The MOOC of One, Stephen's Web, Teaching in Digital Age* .Available at https://opentextbc.ca/teachinginadigitalage/chapter/3-6-connectivism/}.Accessed December 2020

Drăghicescu, L. M., Petrescu, A. M. A., Stăncescu, I., & Gorghiu, L. M. (2018). The Relevance of Continuous Training Programmes Dedicated for Teachers from Pre-University Education. *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala,* 10(3):6-16.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., Jackson, P.R., & Jaspersen, L.J. (2018) *Management & Business Research (6th edition),*London: Sage

Eaton, S. E., Wagner, S., Hirashiki, J., & Ciancio, J. (2018). *Understanding and Exploring Signature Pedagogies for TESOL Teacher Education.* Calgary: University of Calgary.

Edelman, D.C. (2010) Branding in the Digital Age: You're Spending Your Money in All the Wrong Places, *Harvard Business Review(HBR)*.Available at {https://hbr.org/2010/12/branding-in-the-digital-age-youre-spending-your-money-in-all-the-wrong-places}.Accessed June,2021

Education Scotland (2016) *The development of learners; employability in Scotland's Colleges: A thematic aspect report by Education Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council.* Livingston: Education Scotland

Effah, E.A (2017) *Assessing the applicability of student-based brand equity constructs in university institution preference in Ghana. A doctoral thesis.* Available at https://repository.londonmet.ac.uk/1225/1/EffahEbenezer%20-%20Complete%20thesis.pdf Accessed: January 2020

Ehlers, U.D. & Kellermann, S. A. (2019). Future skills – The future of learning and higher education. Results of the International Future Skills Delphi Survey. Karlsruhe. Available at https://nextskills.org/future-skills-report-2019/ Accessed: March 2020

Ehlers, U.D. (2020) *Future Skills :Future of learning and future higher education.Higher education in Europe. Play to win.Eu parliament.*Available at: https://nextskills.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Future-Skills-The-Future-of-learning-and-higher-education.pdf Accessed: June 2020

Engida,G. (2016) How can Digital Government support the development of Knowledge Societies. *Keynote Lecture at ICEGOV2016.*United Nations University

Erlingsson, C. & Brysiewicz, P. (2017) A hands-on guide to doing content analysis. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine.* 7(10): 1016.

EUA (2018). Trends 2018: *Learning and Teaching in the European Higher Education Area.* Belgium: European Universities Association

Fajardo-Castaneda, J.A (2011) *Teacher identity construction : exploring the nature of becoming a primary school language teacher.* Available at{https://theses.ncl.ac.uk/jspui/handle/10443/1326

Fanghanel, J. (2007). *Investigating University lecturers' Pedagogical Constructs in the Working context.* York: HEA

Foroudi, P., Dinnie, K., Kitchen, P. J., Melewar, T. C. & Foroudi, M. M. (2017). IMC antecedents and the consequences of planned brand identity in higher education. *European Journal of Marketing, 51*(3): 528–550. Available at https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-08-2015-0527 Accessed: December 2022

Ferrett, T.A., Geelan, D.R., Schlegel, W.M., Stewart, J.L. & Huber, M.T (2013) *Connected Science: Strategies for Integrative Learning in College.* Indiana: Indiana University Press

Feucht, F. C., Lunn Brownlee, J., & Schraw, G. (2017). Moving beyond reflection: Reflexivity and epistemic cognition in teaching and teacher education. *Educational Psychologist,* 52(4), 234–241.

Filip, A. (2012). Marketing Theory Applicability in Higher Education. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 46, 912-916.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 12 (2) 219-245.

Fomunyam, K. G. (2020). Higher Education Branding in Africa: A Social Media Perspective. Universal *Journal of Educational Research,* 8(12), 6941 - 6952.

Fongwa, S. (2018) *Towards an Expanded Discourse on Graduate Outcomes For business: A framework for action.* Deloitte/GlobalCoalition for Education.Available at {http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/eac/v22n3/02.pdf} Accessed: July, 2020)

Forbes Insight (n.d). The Age of Brand, Agency & Customer Collaboration : 4 Keys to Success in Translating Marketing. Visions Into More Engaged Customers. Forbes in association with Oracle Marketing Cloud.no. 212

Francis, A. (2015) *Paths of Becoming: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Inquiry into Teacher Candidate Professional Self Understanding.* PHD Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, University of Ottawa

Fried, L., Mansfield, C., & Dobozy, E. (2015). Teacher Emotion Research: Introducing a Conceptual Model to Guide Future Research. I*ssues in Educational Research,* 25, 415-441.

Fry, H., Ketteridge, S., & Marshall, S. (Eds.). (2008). *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Enhancing Academic Practice* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Fundira, M. (2021). The efficacy of core competences at private tertiary colleges in South Africa. *Global Science Journal*, 9(9). Available at: www.globalscientificjournal.com Accessed: June 2022

Funa, A.A. & Talaue, F.T. (2021) Constructivist Learning Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: Investigating Students' Perceptions of Biology Self-Learning Modules. International Journal of Learning, *Teaching and Educational Research* v20 n3 p250-264 Mar 2021

Gallagher, S., & Garrett, G. (2013). *Disruptive education: Technology enabled Universities.* United States Studies Centre, University of Sydney.

Galsby, P. (2015) Future Trends in teaching and learning in higher education. Institute for teaching and learning, Avialable at {https:// itali.uq.edu.au/resources/papers-reports} Accessed: June 2020

Gao, F. (2021). Narrative inquiry into Chinese university ESP teachers' transformative learning [Doctoral thesis, Purdue University]. https://doi.org/10.25394/PGS.14445585.v1

Gambia College, (2020) *The History of Gambia College.* Available at https://gc.edu.gm/.Accessed December, 2020

Garnett, F. (2013) *The PAH Continuum: Pedagogy, Andragogy & Heutagogy.* Available at [https://heutagogycop.wordpress.com/2013/03/04/the-pah-continuum-pedagogy-andragogy-heutagogy/].Accessed: March 2021)

Garrison, D. R. (2011). *E-Learning in the 21st Century: A Framework for Research and Practice.* London: Taylor & Francis.

Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education model. *The Internet and Higher Education, 2(2-3), 87-105.*

Garrison, D. R., Cleveland-Innes, M., & Fung, T. S. (2010). Exploring Causal Relationships among Teaching, Cognitive and Social Presence: Student Perceptions of the Community of Inquiry Framework. *The Internet and Higher Education,* 13, 31-36.

Garrison, D.. (2009). Communities of Inquiry in Online Learning. *Encyclopedia of Distance Learning.* 352-355.

Garrison, J ; Öhman, J. & Östman, L. (eds.) (2022). *Deweyan Transactionalism in Education: Beyond Self-Action and Inter-Action.* London: Bloomsbury

Gatfield, T.J., Barker, M. and Graham, P. (1999) Measuring student quality variables and the implications for management practices in higher education institutions: An Australian and international student perspective, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 4(2): 73-79

Gentles, S.J, Charles, C., Ploeg, J. & Mckibbon, K.(2015). Sampling in Qualitative Research: Insights from an Overview of the Methods Literature. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(11): 772-1789

Gernstein, J. (2013) *Moving from Education 1.0 Through Education 2.0 Towards Education 3.0 Educational technology faculty publications and presentations.* Availlable at: https://core.ac.uk/display/61743551?utm_source=pdf&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=pdf-decoration-v1 Accessed: July 2020

Gheysari, H., Rasli, A., Roghanian, P., & Norhalim, N. (2013). A review on the market orientation evolution. P*rocedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences.* 40. 542–549.

Gholam, A. P. (2019). Inquiry-Based Learning: Student Teachers' Challenges and Perceptions. *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education,* 10 (2). Available at https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/jiae/vol10/iss2/6. Accessed February, 2020

Giacalone, D. (2016). Enhancing student learning with case-based teaching and audience response systems in an interdisciplinary Food Science course. *Higher Learning Research Communications,* 6 (3).

Gibbs, G. (2009). *Analysing Qualitative Data (Series: The SAGE Qualitative Research Kit).* London: Sage

Gibb, A. & Price, A. (2014). A Compendium of Pedagogues for Teaching Entrepreneurship (2nd ed.) Available at https://www.scirp.org/(S(351jmbntvnsjt1aadkozje))/reference/referencespapers.aspx?referenceid=268991 Accessed: August, 2021

Gioia, D.A., Majken, S. & Kevin. G. C. (2000) Organizational Identity, Image, and Adaptive Instability *Academy of Management ReviewV*ol. 25, No. 1.Available at https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/amr.2000.2791603. Accessed March 2020

Glantz, E., Gamrat, C., Lenze , L., and Bardzell, J. (2021) Improved Student Engagement in Higher Education's Next Normal. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*

Global Media Insight (2020) *You Tube and Social Media Marketing* .Available at { https://www.globalmediainsight.com/in-the-news].Accessed January ,2021

Godino, J., Catricheo, H., Burgos, M., Wilhelmi, M. (2019). Analysis of Didactical Trajectories in Teaching and Learning Mathematics: Overcoming Extreme Objectivist and Constructivist Positions. *International Electronic Journal of Mathematics Education.* 14. 10.12973/iejme/3983.

Golombek, P. & Doran,M. (2014)Unifying cognition, emotion, and activity in language teacher professional development,*Teaching and Teacher Education,* Volume 39,PP 102-111,

Gonçalves, S. and Majhanovich, S.(2021) Pandemic and remote teaching in Higher Education Coimbra: CINEP/IPC.

GOTG (2017) *National Development Plan (208 -2021),* Banjul: GOTG

Government of The Gambia (2017) *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016- 2030: Accessible, Equitable, and Inclusive Quality Education for Sustainable Development.* Banjul: GOTG Government Of The Gambia 2017)

Gratton, C. and Jones, I. (2015) *Research Methods for Sports Studies (3rd Edition).* London: Routledge.

Grewal, R., Meyer, R. & Mittal, V. (2022). Education and marketing: Decision making, spending, and consumption. *Journal of Marketing Research,* 59(1), 1–10

Greyser, S.A. & Urde, M. (2019). What does your corporate brand stand for? *Harvard Business Review.* January-February 2019. Available at https://hbr.org/2019/01/what-does-your-corporate-brand-stand-for. Accessed: April 2020

Grossman, P., Pupik Dean, C.G., Kavanagh, S.S., Herrmann, Z. (2019). Preparing teachers for project-based teaching. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 100 (7), 43–48.

GTHI 2020). *About Us, Our School.* Available at https://www.gthi.gm/about. (Accessed May 2020)

GTTI (2018). *Tracer Study Report (2015-2016).* Banjul: GTTI

GTTI (2020). *The University of Science, Engineering and Technology. Institutional transformation programme.* Banjul: GTTI

Guess, A.K (2014). A Methodology for Case Teaching: Becoming a Guide on the Side. *Journal of Accounting and Finance* 14(6)

Guillen, F, & Ekida, D.(209) Qualitative Research: Hermeneutical Phenomenological Method J*ournal of Educational Psychology - Propositos y Representaciones*, v7 n1 p217-229 Jan-Apr 2019

Gummesson, E. (2005). Qualitative research in marketing: Road-map for a wilderness of Complexity and unpredictability. *European Journal of Marketing* 39 (3/4): 309-327.

Gutek, G. (2014). *Philosophical, ideological, and theoretical perspectives on education. (2nd Ed.).* New York: Pearson.

Gymera, G.O. & Burke, P.J. (2017) Neolibralism and curriculum in higher education: a post-colonial analysis. *Teaching in Higher Education,* 23:4, 450-467,

Halupa (2015) Pedagogy, Andragogy, and Heutagogy. 10.4018/978-1-4666-8571-0.ch005.

Halupa, C. (2016). The Changing Roles of Online Deans and Department Heads in Small Private Universities. J*ournal of Open, Flexible, and Distance Learning,* 20(2), 32-44. Distance Education Association of New Zealand.

Hamilton, D; Grundy, S; Agger-Gupta,N; Veletsianos G. & Marquez, P. ( 2017). Change Leadership and the Development of Institutional Education Frameworks. *A paper presentation at the Southeast Asia Ministerial Education Organisation Conference.* Ho Chi Minh Vietnam, July 27-28, 2017

Haneda, M., & Sherman, B. (2016). A job-crafting perspective on teacher agentive action. *TESOL Quarterly*, *50*(3): 745-754.

Hannan, S. (2021). Building a Brand in Higher Education: A Review of the Literature on Higher Education Institutions Brand Management. *Proceedings of the 5th Asian Education Symposium, 2020 (AES2020)*.Available at { https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/aes-20/125958598} . Accessed: Janaury 2021

Hanover Research (2015) *Best practices in improving reputation and brand recognition in higher education*. Arlington: Hanover Research

Hanover Research (2019). 2020 Trends in Higher Education. Available at: https://www.hanoverresearch.com/reports-and-briefs/2020-trends-in-higher-education/ Accessed: December 2020

Harkrider, L., Sahatjian, Z. , MacDougall, A., Johnson, J., Devenport, L. & Mumford, M. (2013). Improving case-based learning with clear content and simple presentation, *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 13: 56-69

Harrison, H., Birks, M., Franklin, R., & Mills, J. (2017) Case study research: Foundations and methodological orientations. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research 18(1),* Art 19

Hartikainen, S., Rintala, H, Pylväs, L. & Nokelainen, P. (2019). The concept of active learning and the measurement of learning outcomes: A review of research in engineering higher education, *Education Sciences*, 9(4). https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9040276

Hartman, B.; Moberg, C.R. and Lambert J.M. (2013) Effectiveness of problem-based learning in introductory business courses, *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies*

Harvard Business School (2020) *Promoting excellence and innovation in case method teaching* .Available: https://www.hbs.edu/teaching/Pages/default.aspx. [Accessed; June 2020]

Hase, S. & Kenyon, C. (2007) *Heutagogy: A child of complexity theory*. Graduate College of Management Papers. 4. 10.29173/cmplct8766.

Hase, S. (2014) Skills for the learner and learning leader in the 21st century. In L.M. Blaschke, C. Kenyon, & S. Hase (Eds.), *Experiences in self-determined learning* (pp. 99-110). USA: Amazon. Available: https://uol.de/coer/announcements/free-oer-now-available-experiences-in-self-determined-learning

Hase, S. (2016) Self-determined learning (heutagogy): Where have we come since 2000? *Southern Institute of Technology Journal of Applied Research, Special Edition*. Available: https://www.sit.ac.nz/Portals/0/upload/documents/sitjar/Heutagogy%20-%20One.pdf.

Hase, S. and Kenyon, C. (2013) *The nature of learning* in S. Hase & C. Kenyon eds. *Self-determined learning: Heutagy in action*, London: Bloomsbury, 19-38

Hatch, M. J. and M. Schultz (2003). Bringing the corporation into corporate branding. *European Journal of Marketing* 37(7/8): 1041-1064.

Hativa, N. & Goodyear, J. (2002) *Teacher thinking, beliefs and knowledge in higher education*. Amsterdam: Kluwer Academic Publishers

Headleand, C. (2021) *The chat 211; Student engagement* . Available: https://lthechat.com/2021/09/03/lthechat-211-student-engagement. [Accessed September, 2021]

Healey, M., Flint, A., & Harrington, K. (2014) *Engagement through partnership: Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. York: HEA. Available: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/engagement-through-partnership-students-partners. Accessed: [May 2020].

Heding, T., Knudtzen, C.F., and Bjerre, M. (2020) *Brand management: Research, theory and practice*, Abingdon: Routledge

Heding,T., Knudtzen, C.F., and Bjerre, M. (2009*) Brand management: Research, theory and practice*, Abingdon: Routledge

Heding,T., Knudtzen, C.F., and Bjerre, M. (2016) *Brand management: Research, theory and practice*, Abingdon: Routledge

Heding,T., Knudtzen, C.F., Bjerre, M.(2015) *Brand management research, theory and practice*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge

HEFCE (2011) *Opportunity, choice and excellence in higher education*. Bristol, England. HEFCE. Available at www.hefce.ac.uk/news/hefce/2011/strategy. [Accessed,Janaury 2021]

HEFCE (2015, February) *Learning and teaching excellence: Learning gain. Higher education funding council for England*. Available: www.hefe.ac.uk/it/lg.[Accessed January 2021]

Hegarty, B. (2015) Attributes of open pedagogy: A model for using open educational resources.1

Hein, G.E. (1991) Constructivist learning theory: The museum and the needs of people. CECA *International Committee of Museum Educators Conference*, Jerusalem Israel, 15-22 October 1991

Helmsley-Brown, J., & Oplatka (2006) Universities in a competitive global marketplace: A systematic review of the literature on higher education marketing. *International Journal of Public Sector Management,* 19(4), 316–33

Hemsley-Brown, J., Melewar, T,C.,  Nguyen,B.  & Wilson, E. J (2016). Exploring brand identity, meaning, image, and reputation (BIMIR) in higher education: A special section. *Journal of Business Research,* 69(8): 3019-3022

Hermans, H., & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2010) *Dialogical self-theory: Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society. Dialogical self theory: Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society*. 1-392

Higgs, B. (2014) Threshold concepts. Navigating the route. In: O'Mahony, C., Buchanana, A.O' Rourke, M. and Higgs, B.(eds.) 'Threshold concepts'. *Proceedings of the Fourth Biennial Threshold Concepts Conference, Cork National Academy for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning* ,pp. 13-21

Higgs, B., Kilcommins, S. and Ryan T. (2010) eds., *Making connections: Intentional teaching for integrative learning*. Cork: NAIRTL.

Hilman, H. & Kaliappen,N. (2014) Market orientation practices and effects on organizational performance: Empirical insight from Malaysian Hotel Industry. Available: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244014553590 [Accessed September, 2020]

Hitch, D., Macfarlane, S. & Nihill, C. (2015) Inclusive pedagogy in Australian universities: A review of current policies and professional development activities. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*. 6(1)1, 135-145

Hodder, I. (2012) *Entangled: An archaeology of the relationships between humans and things*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell

Hodder, I. (2016) *Studies in human-thing entanglement*. Stanford: Available: www.ian-hodder.com/books/studieshuman-thing-entanglement. [Accessed June, 2020]

Hodgkinson-Williams, C.(2010) Benefits and challenges of OER for higher education institutions. Available: http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/3042 [Accessed December, 2019]

Holmes, K. A., & Prieto-Rodriguez, E. (2018) Student and staff perceptions of a learning management system for blended learning in teacher education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 43*(3).http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v43n3.2

Holmes, L. (2013) Competing perspectives on graduate employability: possession, position or process?' *Studies in Higher Education*, 38:4, 538-554,

Hudson, B.(2019) Epistemic quality for equitable access to quality education in school mathematics, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 51:4, 437- 456. Available: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00220272.2019.1618917. [Accessed March, 2020]

Humble, N. & Mozelius, P. (2022) Content analysis or thematic analysis - Similarities, differences and applications in qualitative research. In: Humble & Mozelius, *Research Methods in computer and systems science. Project and paper presented at the 21st European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies (ECRM 2022),* University of Aveiro, Portugal

ILO(2013) *Enhancing youth employ yability. The importance of core skills. A policy brief*. Geneva: ILO

ILO (2019) *Skills for a greener future, A global view. ILO global report. ILO in Higher Education in South Africa?* Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa

Askehave.1., Prehn, H.L., Pedersen, J. & Pedersen, M.T. (2015). *Problem –based learning*. Copenhagen: Aaborg University

Ivy, J. (2001) Higher education institution image: A correspondence analysis approach. *The International Journal of Education Management*, 15 (6): 276-282.

Ivy, J. (2008) A new higher education marketing mix: The 7Ps for MBA marketing. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 22 (4):288-299.

Jackson, D. (2016) Re-conceptualising graduate employability: The importance of pre-professional identity. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 35(5), 925–939.

Jansen, W. (2019). *Problem-based learning at Maastricht University*. Maastricht: Innovation EDLAB

Jermolajeva, J. & Tatiana, B. (2017) Professional identity of higher education teachers in samples of Riga and Simolensk society. *Integration Education Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*. 1. 197. 10.17770/sie2017 vol 1.2284

Jo Hatch, M. and Schultz, M. (2003) Bringing the corporation into corporate branding, *European Journal of Marketing*, 37 No. 7/8, 1041-1064

Johannson, M. (2010) Pedagogic identities in the reform of school mathematics. *Proceedings of the Sixth International Mathematics Education and Society Conference* Uwe Gellert; Eva Jablonka; Candia Morgan eds, Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2010, 1, p. 291-300

Johnson, M., Cowin, L. Wilson, I. & Young, H. (2012) Professional identity and nursing: Contemporary theoretical developments and future research challenges. *International Nursing Reviews*. 59. 562-9. .

Johnson, R., & Waterfield, J. (2004) Making words count: the value of qualitative research. *Physiotherapy Research International: The Journal for Researchers and Clinicians in Physical Therapy*, 9 3, 121-31

Johnson, R. B. (2014). *Mixed methods research design and analysis with validity: A primer.* Department of Professional Studies, University of South Alabama, USA.

Jones, C.& Shao, B. (2011) The net generation and digital natives: Implications for higher education. Available: https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-net-generation-and-digital-natives%3A-for-higher-Jones-Shao/06a78f83d3e461f46ac9da9ba184d401505a46f7. [Accesssed January, 2020]

Joo-Eon, J. (2017) The impact of brand concept on brand equity, *Asia Pacific Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 11 (2), 233-245,

Joseph, G. V. & Thomas, K. A. (2020) Volatility of digital technology enabled learning through social media: Educators' apprehensions. *Test engineering and Management*. 82, 5832 – 5839

Kadlec,A. (2015) Outcome-based funding and stakeholder engagement. *Lumina Issue Papers*. Availabale: https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/kadlec-shelton-ofb-full. [Accessed March 2020]

Kahangwa, G. (2014) The effect of the knowledge-based economy on higher education practices in Tanzania. *University of Dar es Salaam Journals*, 32

Kahu, E.R. & Nelson, K. (2018) Student engagement in the educational interface: Understanding the mechanisms of student success, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37(1), 58-71

Kahu, E.R. (2013) Framing student engagement in higher education, *Studies in Higher Education*, 38 (5), 758-773

Kantar, L.D., & Massouh, A. (2015) Case-based learning: What traditional curricula fail to teach. *Nurse Education Today*, 35 (8), 8-14

Kapferer, J-N. (2012) *The new strategic brand management: Advanced insights and strategic thinking*. London: Kogan Page.

Kasozi, A. B. (2014) Trends in higher education regulation in sub-Saharan Africa. *International Higher Education*, 75, 21-22.

Kelchtermans, G. (2005) Teachers' emotions in educational reforms: Self-understanding, vulnerable commitment and micropolitical literacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(8), 995-1006. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.06.009

Kelchtermans, G. (2009) Who I am in how I teach is the message: Self-understanding, vulnerability and reflection. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 15(2), 257-272

Keller, K.L., (1993) Conceptualising, measuring and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing.* 57(1), 1-22

Keller, K.L., (2001) Building customer-based brand equity. *Marketing Management.* 10(2), 14-19

Keller, K.L. (2013) *Strategic brand management*. United States of America. Pearson Education Limited

Kieu, T., Mogaji, E., Mwebesa, C., Sarofin, S., Soetan, T. & Vululle, S. (2020). Moving from research to practice: Marketing higher education in Africa. In: E. Mogaji, F. Maringe & R. E. Hinson, (eds). *Strategic Marketing of Higher Education in Africa.* Abingdon Oxfordshire: Routledge

Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020) Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, *42*(8), 846-854

Kilcommins, S. (2010) The use of learning journals in legal education as a means of fostering integrative learning through pedagogy and assessment. *Conference Proceedings*. Available from:http://eprints.teachingandlearning.ie/view/creators/Kilcommins=3AShane=3A=3A.defa ult.html

Kim, H., Sefcik, J. S., & Bradway, C. (2017) Characteristics of qualitative descriptive studies: A systematic review. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 40(1), 23–42

King J. (2017) Pedagogy as tension: Exploring the relationality of teaching and learning for post-standardised education. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning,* 12 (1), 25-40

Kirkwood, A. & Price, L. (2016) *Technology enabled-learning implementation handbook*. Burnaby: Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

Kirschner, P. A., Sweller, J. & Clark, R. E. (2006) Why minimal guidance during instruction does not work: An analysis of the failure of constructivist, discovery, problem-based, experiential, and inquiry-based teaching. *Educational Psychologist.* 41, 75–86

Kiyimba, N., Lester, J. & O'Reilly, M. (2019). *Using naturally occurring data in health research: A practical guide.* New York: Springer

Klobas, J. E., & McGill, T. J. (2010) The role of involvement in learning management system success. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 22(2), 114–134.

Koehler, M. J., Mishra, P., Kereluik, K., Shin, T. S., & Graham, C. R. (2014) *The technological pedagogical content knowledge framework. In Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology* 4th ed pp. 101-111. Springer New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-3185-5_9

Koehler, M.J, & Mishra, P. (2009) What is technological pedagogical content knowledge? *Journal Contemporal Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*

Kolb, D.A (2015) Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development, 2nd ed., New Jersey: Pearson Education

Korstjens, I. & Moser,A. (2018) Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing, *European Journal of General Practice*, 24,1, 120-124,

Kotler, P. and Keller, K.L. (2012) *Marketing management*. 14th ed, Pearson Education.

Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G.(2012) *Principles of marketing*, Boston: Pearson Prentice hall

Koumi, J. (2015) *Potent pedagogic roles for video: Serving learning objectives* University of the Philippines Open University.

KPMG (2020). The future of higher education in a disruptive world. Available at: https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/industries/government-public-sector/education/the-future-of-higher-education-in-a-disruptive-world.html Accessed: December 2021

Krishna, A. (2010) *Sensory marketing. Research on the sensuality of products*. Routledge, New York.

Krishna, A., Elder, R. S., & Caldara, C. (2010) Feminine to smell but masculine to touch?: Multisensory congruence and its effect on the aesthetic experience. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 20(4), 410–418

Krueger, R. A. & Casey, M. A. (2000) 3rd ed Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kruss, G., McGrath, S., Petersen, I. & Gastrow, M. (2015). Higher education and economic development: The importance of building technological capabilities. *International Journal of Education Development* 43, 22-31

Kucukali, E. (2017) Teacher identity and transnational experience: A case of an EFL teacher from Georgia teaching in Turkey. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET), 4*(4), 458-473

Kukulska-Hulme, A., Beirne, E., Costello, E., Coughlan, T., Ferguson, R., &FitzGerald, E. Gaved, M., Herodotou, C., Holmes, W. Mac Lochlainn, C. Mhichíl, M., Rienties, B., Sargent, J., Scanlon, E., Sharples, M., & Whitelock, D. (2020) *Innovating Pedagogy 2020: Open University Innovation Report* 8. 10.13140/RG.2.2.26971.72480

Kumar, M., & Garg.N., (2010) Aesthetic principles and cognitive emotion appraisals: How much of the beauty lies in the eye of the beholder?. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 20(4), 485– 494.

Lai,L.S., TO, W.M., Lung, J.W.Y. & Lai, T.M (2011). The perceived value of higher education: The voice of Chinese students. *Higher Education* 63: 27-287

Larmer, J., Mergendoller, J., & Boss, S. (2015). *Setting the standard for project based learning.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD

Lackeus, M. (2015). Entrepreneurship in education, what, why, when, how. *Entrepreneurship 360 background paper,* OECD, Paris.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2013). Transfer of Learning Transformed. *Journal of Research in Language Studies.*63(S1): 107-129

Latour, B. (2012) Reagregando o social: uma introdução à Teoria do AtorRede. Salvador: EDUFBA. Braga, C. & Suarez, M. (2018) Actor-network theory: new perspectives and contributions to consumption studies. *Journal of Understanding the Concept of Public Sphere in Social Management: Ideas for an Empirical-Descriptive and Normative Reconstruction.* Cad. EBAPE.BR, v. 16, nº 2, Rio de Janeiro, Apr. /June 2018. 218-231

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985) *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications

Lindow, M. (2011) *L Weaving success: Voices of change in African higher education.* IIE, New York, 2011. ISBN-13: 978-0-87206-342-6. p.239

Lingard L. (2019). Beyond the default colon: Effective use of quotes in qualitative research. *Perspect Medical Education* 8(6): 360- 364. Available at https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0055Q-7 Accessed: December 2022

Loh, J. (2013) Inquiry into issues of trustworthiness and quality in narrative studies: A perspective. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(33), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2013.1477

Lourdes Guàrdia. L., Clougher, D., Anderson, T. & Maina, M. (2021). IDEAS for transforming higher education: An overview of ongoing trends and challenges. Available at: https://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/5206. Accessed: April 2022

Luguetti, C., Oliver, K. L., Aranda, R., & Enriquez, O.N. (2018). Developing teachers' pedagogical identities through a community of practice: Learning to sustain the use of student centered inquiry as curriculum approach. *Journal of Sports, Education and Society.*

MacDonald, G. P. (2013) Theorizing university identity development: multiple perspectives and common goals. *Higher Education*, 65(2), 153-166

Mackenzie, T.(2016) Inquiry-based learning .Bringing inquiry-based learning into your class

Magrini, J. (2012). Existentialism, phenomenology and education. *Philosophy Scholarship*. Paper 30.

Maguire, M. & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *AISHE-J, 9, 3351*. Available at http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/3354. Accessed: May 2022

Makgosa, R. & . Molefhi, B.A. (2012). Rebranding an institution of higher education in Botswana, *Business and Economic Research, Macrothink Institute*, 2(2), 1-13

Mario, T., Hani, G.M., and Omella, P. (2021) Drivers of student engagement in higher education: A behavioral reasoning theory perspective. higher education: *The International Journal of Higher Education Research*, 82 (3), 499-518

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011) *Designing qualitative research* 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Marshall, C., Rossman, G. B. (2011) *Primary data collection methods designing qualitative research*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Matsuda, J. (2017) Pursuing the illusive but true identity: the corporate brand identity in strategic brand management- A qualitative single case-study of supercell Oy. A postgraduate degree dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Social Science Sand Business Studies, University of Eastern Finland.

McAdams, D.P., McLean, K.C (2013) Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 22(3):233-238. doi:10.1177/0963721413475622

McCluskey, T, Weldon, J., and Smallridge, A. (2019) *Rebuilding the first year experience, one block at a time: A Practice Report. Student Success*, 10 (1). pp. 1-15. ISSN 2205-0795

McCowan, T. & Oketch, M. (2017) Towards a public good indicator in African higher education. *Paper presented at the bi-annual conference on The Education and Development Forum* (UKFIET) in Oxford.5th - 7th September

McCowan, T. & Schendel, R.(2015) *The impact of higher education in development*. In: McGrath,S. and GU, Q!.eds Routledge Handbook for International Education and Development. London: Routledge

McDonald, M. & Wilson, H.(2016) *Marketing plans: How to prepare them, how to profit from them,* 8th ed. London: Wiley

McLain, M.(2021) Developing perspectives on 'the demonstration' as a signature pedagogy in design and technology education. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education* 31: 3-21

Mcloughlin, C., & Lee, M. J. W. (2008) The three P's of pedagogy for the networked society: Pesonalisation, participation and productivity. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 1, 10-27

McNaughton, S. M., & Billot, J. (2016) Negotiating academic teacher identity shifts during higher education contextual change. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21(6), 644–658. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2016.1163669

MDI (2018) *Student handbook*. Available at https://www.mdi.edu.gm/about-us/ [Accessed: May, 2020]

MDI (2020) *History, academic programmes, and partnerships*. Available at:
https://www.mdi.edu.gm/about-us/ Accessed: May 2020

Melewar T.C. & Akel, S. (2005) The role of corporate identity in the higher education sector: A case study, Corporate Communications: *An International Journal*, 10(1): 41-57

Melewar, T.C. and Nguyen, B. (2015). Five areas to advance branding theory and practice. *Journal of Brand Management*, 21(9), 758-769

Meyer,J. & and Land, R. (2006) *Overcoming barriers to student understanding threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge*. London: Routledge Taylor Francis Group

Miller, M.B (2015) *A case study of academics' epistemic – pedagogic identity in the context of neoliberalism.* PhD Thesis, James Cook University. Available at
www.researchonline.jcu.edu.au/499980/.[Accessed 1st October, 2019]

Milligan, A. & Wood, B. (2010) Conceptual understandings as transition points: making sense of a complex social world, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 42:4, 487-501, DOI: 10.1080/00220270903494287

Mintz, S. (2020) *It's time for a radical rethink of the role of university professors* Available at https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/its-time-radical-rethink-role-university-professors [Accessed December 2020]

Mishra, R. (2015) From monologue to dialogue: Interpreting social constructivism with a Bakhtinian perspective. *International Journal of Progressive Education, 11*(1), 73-81

Mishra, S. and Panda, S. (2020) *Technology enabled learning: Policy, pedagogy and practice*. Vancouver: Commonwealth of Learning

MoBSE (2013) *National education policy (2004-2015).*Banjul: Government of The Gambia (GOTG)

Mogaji, E. (2019). *Branding private universities in Africa: An unexplored territory*. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3457571 Accessed: January 2020

Mogaji, E., Farinloye, T. & Aririguzoh, S.A. (2017). Marketing higher education in Africa: A research agenda. *Academy of Marketing Conference Paper on Marketing of Higher Education SIG Colloquium at Kingston University London*

Mogaji, E.,Maringe, F. & Hinson, R.B. (eds) (2020). *Strategic marketing in higher education in Africa* (1st edn). London: Routledge

Mogaji, E., Restuccia, M., Lee, Z., & Nguyen, N.P. (2022). B2B brand positioning in emerging markets: Exploring positioning signals via websites and managerial tensions in top-performing African B2B service brands. *Industrial Marketing Management* 108(2023): 237–250

Mohammed, S. & Kinyo, L.(2020) Constructivist theory as a foundation for the utilization of digital technology in the lifelong learning process. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 21, 4, 90-109

MoHERST (2015) *National tertiary and higher education policy (2014-2023).* Banjul: GOTG

MOHERST (2017) *Higher education sector data review programme*. Banjul: GOTG

MoHERST (2021) *Sector setreat with higher education institutions*, March 2021. Banjul: GOTG

MOHERST (2021) *The Gambia TVET Policy (2021-2030)*, Banjul: GOTG

MoHERST (2018) *Government to transform GTTI into a technical university*. Quarterly Report. Banjul: GOTG

Morgan, J.H. (2013). Re-inventing the tutorial in an internet world: An enhancement of an old English tradition. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences.* 5(3): 522-532

Morse, J. M. (2015) Critical analysis of strategies for determining rigor in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Health Research*, *25*(9): 1212–1222. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004

Moser, A. & Korstjens, I. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection and analysis. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1): 9-18 https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375091

Motulsky, S.L. (2020) Is member checking the gold standard of quality in qualitative research? *Conference session. APA Conference*, *virtual.*

Mourad, M, Ennew, C. & Kortam, W (2011) Brand equity in higher education. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning,* 29 (4 ), 403 – 420

Muchnik-Rozanov, Y. & Tsybulsky, D.  (2019) Towards understanding the language of student teachers' reflections in the context of professional identity development, *Reflective Practice*, 20 (4), 520-532

Murtonen, M., Gruber, H., & Lehtinen, E.(2017) The return of behaviourist epistemology: A review of learning outcomes studies, *Educational Research Review*, 22, 114-128

Mushemeza, E.D. (2016) Opportunities and challenges of academic staff in higher education in Africa. *International Journal for Higher Education.* 5, (3)

Naidoo, R. (2010). Global learning in a neo-liberal age. *In E. Unterhalter,  & V. Carpentier eds., Global inequalities and higher education: Whose interests are we serving?* pp. 66-90

NAQAA (2018) *The history of NAQAA*. Banjul: NAQAA

NAQAA, (2020) *List of registered tertiary TVET providers in The Gambia*, Banjul: NAQAA

Narver, J.C. and Slater, S.F. (1990) The effect of market orientation on business profitability. *Journal of Marketing*, 54, 20-35

Nesari, A. (2015) Dialogism versus monologism: A Bakhtinian approach to teaching. *Procedia – Social and Benhavioral Sciences, 205, 6th World Conference on Psychology, Counseling and Guidance,* 642-647

Neubauer, B. E., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio, L. (2019) How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, 8(2), 90–97

Ng, C.J.W. (2016). 'Hottest brand, coolest pedagogy': Approaches to corporate branding in
Singapore's higher education sector. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 26(1): 41-63

Ng, I.C.L. & Forbes, J. (2009). Education as service: The understanding of university experience
through the service logic. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*. 19.
10.1080/08841240902904703.

Nguyen, N. & LeBlanc, G. (2001). Image and reputation of higher education institutions in students'
retention decisions. *The International Journal of Educational Management*, 15(6), 303-311

Nnodim, P. (2007). Husserl and Heidegger on the meaning of phenomenology thesis XII. *A
Philosophical Review*. 15, 15

Nureev, R., Volchik, V., & Strielkowski, W. (2020) Neoliberal reforms in higher education and the
import of institutions. *Social Sciences*, 9(5), 79

Nyangau, J. Z. (2014) Higher education as an instrument of economic growth in Kenya. *Forum for
International Research in Education*, Available at:
http://preserve.lehigh.edu/fire?utm_source=preserve.lehigh.edu%2Ffire%2Fvol1%2Fiss1%2F
3&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages [Accessed May, 2020]

OACPS (2022). Policy Support Facility  Country Background Report The Gambia, OACPS R&I
Programme, Brussels: OACPS

O'Connell, A. (2016) Seven blended learning models used today in higher ed. Available at:
http://acrobatiq.com/seven-blended-learning-models-used-today-in-higher-ed/ Accessed: June
2020

Obasi, I.N., & Olutayo, A. (2009). Globalization, the Bologna process and African universities:
Limits and contradictions of market-oriented higher education reforms. *Journal of Higher
Education in Africa*, 7: 159-187

Ochwa-Echel, J. (2013) *Neoliberalism and university education in sub-Saharan Africa faculty
research and creative activity*. 104. https://thekeep.eiu.edu/eemedu_fac/104

OECD (2019) Future of  education and skills 2030, conceptual learning framework. Available at
www.oecd.org/education/2030-project Accessed: March 2020

OER Africa (2021) OER in higher education. Available at: https://www.oerafrica.org/oer-in-HE
[Accessed April 2020]

Oketch, M., McCowan,T. & Schendel, R.(2014) *The impact of tertiary education on development.
Systematic literature review for DFID*. London: Institute of Education.

Onwuegbuzie, A. (2012) Introduction: Putting the mixed back into quantitative and qualitative
research in educational research and beyond: Moving toward the radical middle. *International
Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*. 6, 192-219. 10.5172/mra.2012.6.3.192.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Leech, N. L., & Collins, K. M. (2012) Qualitative analysis techniques for the
review of the literature. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(28), 1-28. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-
3715/2012.1754

Opoku, R., Abratt, R., & Pitt, L. (2006) Communicating brand personality: Are the websites doing the talking for the top South African business schools? *Journal of Brand Management*..

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2019) *Future of education and skills 2030, OECD Learning Compass 2030. A Series of Concept Notes*. Paris: OECD

O'Reilly, M. & Kiyimba, N. (2015). *Advanced qualitative research: A guide to contemporary theoretical debates,* London: Sage. Available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/capr.12365. Accessed: December 2022

O'Reilly M, Kiyimba N, Drewett A. (2020). Mixing qualitative methods versus methodologies: A critical reflection on communication and power in inpatient care. *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research.* 2021(21): 66–76

Orr, D., Lubeck, M., Schmidt, P.J., Ebner, M., Wannemacher, K., Ebner, M. & Dohmen, D. (2022). Higher Education Landscape 2030. A Trend Analysis Based on the AHEAD International Horizon Scanning. Available at https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-44897-4#affiliations. Accessed: January 2023

Östman, L. & Öhman, J. (2022) A transactional methodology for analysing learning, Mind, Culture, and Activity. Avialable at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10749039.2022.2042029 Accessed: January 2023

Overton-de Klerk, N. & Sienaert, M. (2016). From research excellence to brand relevance: A model for higher education reputation building. *South African Journal of Science,*112 (5): 174-177

Padgett, D. K. (2013). Qualitative research. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Social Work, 1-9. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.013.330

Palmer, A., Kkeonig-Lewis, N., & Asaad, Y.(2016). Brand identification in higher education: A conditional process analysis, *Journal of Business Research,* 69: 3033-3040

Pankaj S., Wood, C. and Wharton, A. (2022). Reimagining knowledge acquisition in UK higher education in a post-pandemic landscape. CEO Research and Policy Paper. Available at: //efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.rcl.ac.uk/app/uploads/2022/12/r

PASGR/SPHEIR (2021). Developing capacity for teaching excellence: Lessons from Pedagogical Leadership in Africa (PedaL). Available at: https://pedal-africa.org/developing-capacity-for-teaching-excellence-lessons-from-pedagogical-leadership-in-africa-pedal/ Accessed: Janaury 2022

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, 42(5): 533–544

Park, C.W., Eisingerich, A.B., Pol, G. and Park, J.W. (2013) The role of brand logos in firm performance, *Journal of Business Research*, 66 (2), 180-187

Park, C.W., MacInnis, D.J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A.B. and Iacobucci, D. (2010) Brand attachment and brand attitude strength: Conceptual and empirical differentiation of two critical brand equity drivers, *Journal of Marketing*, 74 (6), 1-17

Patrick, V. & Hagtvedt, H. (2011) Aesthetic incongruity resolution. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 48. 10.2307/23033439.

PedaL (2022) Catalysing systemic change in teaching and learning in African universities. Available at: https://pedal-africa.org/.[Accessed April, 2022]

Pegg, A., Waldock, J., Hendy-Isaac, S. and Lawton, R. (2012) *Pedagogy for employability*. Maidenhead: L Higher Education Academy

Piaget, J. (1985) *The equilibration of cognitive structures: The central problem of intellectual development*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (original work published 1975)

Peruta, A., Hamula, S., & Gayeski, D. (2015). The complex challenge of branding in higher education: Where's the pedagogy? *Advertising & Society Review* 16(3)

Pillay, P. (2011). *Higher education and economic development. Literature review*. Cape Town: Council of higher education transformation

Pinar, M., Trapp, P., Girard, T., & Boyt, T. (2011). Utilizing brand ecosystem for branding and building brand equity in higher education. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 25 (7), 724-739

Pinar, M., Trapp, M, Girard, T., & Boyt, T.(2014). University brand equity: An empirical investigation of its dimensions. *International Journal of Education Management*, 28(6), 616-634

Popovic A, Stankovic LJ, Djukic S. (2015). Positioning strategies of higher education institutions in the Republic of Serbia, *Teme,* 39(3)

Pokorny, H. & Warren, D (2021) *Enhancing teaching practice in higher education,* 2nd ed., London: Sage Publications Ltd

Prinz D. (2014) The new branding reality. Game changer of game over? *Branding Magazine*, BM,R, Issue 07-300

Preater, A.(2018) Neoliberalism, Marketisation, and Higher Education – University of West London public professorial lecture. Available at https://www.preater.com/2018/03/08/neoliberalism-marketisation-and-higher-education/  Accessed: November 2020

Saide, 2019. Open learning principles Enabling successful learning. Available at: https://www.oerafrica.org/resource/saide-%E2%80%93-enabling-successful-open-learning-all Accesssed: October 2020

Saso, L. (2021). Digitalization and innovation of university education in the post-Covid era. Available at: https://www.unica-network.eu/publications/digitalization-and-innovation-of-university-education-in-the-post-covid-era/  Accessed: March 2022

Subedi, K.R. (2021) Detemining the sample in qualitative research. *Scholars Journal,* l4: 1-13

Tiffany-Kinder, R. (2020). If you can hear my voice: A narrative inquiry into the professional journey of eight first-year teachers (Publication Number 2492269411) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawai'i at Manoa]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Tracy, S. J. (2020). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact* (2nd ed.). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons

Thorne,S. (2020). On the use and abuse of verbatim quotations in qualitative research reports. *Nurse Author and Edito*r, (30): 4-6

UKCES (2010). UKCES employer perspectives survey 2010. Availabale at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukces-employer-perspectives-survey-2010 Accessed: August 2020

UNDP (2022). Human Development Report. Washington: United Nations

Unesco & Aalborg University (2020) Aalborg Centre for problem-based learning in Engineering, Science and Sustainability under the auspices of UNESCO. Available at https://www.ucpbl.net/.Accessed December 2020

UNESCO (2011) The Competence era. Available at { http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/c/competence#:~:text=(CEDEFOP%202011).,relevance%20to%20all%20domains%2Fsubjects.}Aaccessed;March, 2020

UNESCO (2014) *BRICS building education for the future: Priorities for National Development and International Cooperation.* Paris: UNESCO

UNESCO 2020) Future Skills – The Future of learning and higher education .{Available at https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/en/2020/04/14/future-skills-the-future-of-learning-and-higher-education/).Accessed December, 2020)

UNESCO (2012) *The Paris OER Declaration 2012:* Paris: UNESCO

UNEVOC (2020) *Promoting quality in TVET using technology.  A practical guide* .Germany: UNESCO

UniRank (2021) Gambian University Rankings. Available at {https://www.4icu.org/gm/}. Accessed October 2021

Universities UK (2018) Impact of universities. Available at https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/topics/impact-universities/skills-and-economyact of universities .Accessed Janaury, 2020

University World News (2009) The Gambia Plans to develop higher education. .Available at https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20090827172338291.Accessed December 2019

University World News (2020) Higher education is key to building back better post-COVID. Available at https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=202010300934476. Accessed: December 2020

Urde, M. (2013). The corporate brand identity matrix *Journal of Brand Management*, 20 (9):742-761.

Urde, M. (2016).The brand core and its management over time, *Journal of Product & Brand Management,* 25(1):26 - 42

Urde, M. and Greyser, S.A. (2014). The Nobel prize: a 'heritage-based brand-oriented network", Working Paper 15-010, *Harvard Business School, Boston,* 19 August.

Urde, M. and Greyser, S.A. (2015). The Nobel prize: the identity of a corporate heritage brand, *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 24 (4): 318-332.

UTG (2020) The University of The Gambia: Schools and faculties .Available at: https://www.utg.edu.gm/.Accessed May, 2020

Valitov, S. (2014). University Brand as a Modern Way of Winning Competitive Advantage. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences. 152. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.09.198.

Vallaster, C. & Chernatony, (2005). Internal brand building and structuration: The role of leadership. *European Journal of Marketing.* 40. 761-784.

Van der Klink, J., van der Wilt, G.J., Zijlstra, F.R.H., Schaufeli, W.B.,Burdorf, A.; Bültmann, U., Brouwer, S., Abma, F.I., Robroek, S.J., Cuijpers , M., Arends, I., Ouweneel, A.P.E., van Casteren, P., & Meerman, J.(2018). Development of an instrument to measure Sustainable Employability: A joint contribution of a consortium. Available at { https://research.tilburguniversity.edu/en/publications/development-of-an-instrument-to-measure-sustainable-employability

Varadharajan, M. (2014) Understanding the Lived Experiences of Secondary Career Beginning Teachers. PHD Thesis Submitted to University of Technology, Sydney.

Varghese N.V. (2016). Governance Reforms in Higher Education in Africa. A Study of Selected Countries in Africa. Paris: IIEP/UNESCO

Vaughan,N. , Cleveland –Innes, M., & Garrison, R. (2013) Teaching in blended learning environments. Creating and Sustaining Communities of Inquiry, AU Press
 Connected Science: Strategies for Integrative Learning in College

Vasudeva, S. & Mogaji E., (2020). Paving the way for world domination: Analysis of African universities' mission statements. In: E. Mogaji, F. Maringe & R. E. Hinson, eds. *Understanding the Market in Higher Education in Africa.* Abingdon Oxfordshire: Routledge

Victoria University (2019) The VU way. Engaged learning in Block Mode. Available at https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/the-vu-way.pdf.Accessed January, 2020

Vignoles (2017) Identity: Personal AND Social: In Oxford Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology, 2nd ed London: Oxford University press

Vignoles, V. L., Schwartz, S. J., & Luyckx, K. (2011). Introduction: Toward an integrative view of identity. *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 1–27). Springer Science + Business Media. Available at {www. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_1). Accessed  June 2020

Vokatis, B. & Zhang, J. (2016) The Professional Identity of Three Innovative Teachers Engaging in Sustained Knowledge Building Using Technology. *Journal of Frontline Learning and Research.* 14(1):58-77

Voronov, A.A., Garkoveno, V.E, Safonov,A.A & Kosnivov, S.N. (2018). Higher education competitiveness: Definition, assessments & ways of growth. *European Research Studies Journal*, Special1: 525-534

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Available at {www.ouleft.org/wp-content/uploads/Vygotsky-Mind-in-Society.pdf}. Accessed :{ October 1st, 2019}

Waeraas, A. & Solbakk, M. (2008). Defining the essence of a university: lessons from higher education branding. *Higher Education.* 57(4):449-462.

Walcott, I. (2003) The commoditization of higher education and the learning revolution.  A Digital economy and online learning project paper at the 10th Cambridge International Conference on Open & Distance Education At: Cambridge, UK, in June

Walliman, N.  (2011) Research Methods:The basics  (3rd Edition). Abingdon: Routledg

Wang, Y., Han, X., & Yang, J. (2015). Revisiting the blended learning literature: using a ComplexAdaptive Systems Framework. *Educational Technology & Society,*18 (2), 380 – 393

Watson, I. (2013). Digital Natives or Digital Tribes?. Universal Journal of Educational Research. 1. 104-112. 10.13189/ujer.2013.010210.

Wawrzynski, M.R., Heck, A.M., & Remley, C.T. (2012). Student Engagement in South African Higher Education. Journal of College Student Development, 53, 106 - 123.

Wayne, T., Farinloye, T., & Mogaji, E. (2020). Analysis of African universities' corporate visual identities. .Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338729476_Analysis_of_African_universities'_corporate_visual_identities/citation/download.Accessed February 2021

WEF (2016) The future of jobs: employment, skills and workforce strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.Avialable at https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A71706.Accessed January 2020

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wenger, E.,  McDermott, R.A. and  Snyder, W.  (2002) Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge. Harvard Business School Press, Boston, 4-5.

Wiley (2013) Wiley, D. (2013). What is open pedagogy? Available at https://opencontent.org/blog/archives/2975 . Accessed Janury 2019

Wiley, D. and Hilton III, J. L. (2018) "Defining OER-Enabled Pedagogy", *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning,* 19(4).

Williams, K. (2008). Troubling the concept of the academic profession' in 21st Century higher education. *High Education.* 56: 533-544. DOI: 10.1007/s10734-007-9109-x.

Williams, M.K. (2017). John Dewey in the 21st Century, *Journal of Inquiry & Action in Education,* 9(1): 91-102

Wise, C. R. (2020). *Teacher identity and the core: A narrative inquiry into the relationship between teacher identity and lesson planning in the common core era* (Publication Number 2488283832) [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Memphis]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global

Witkowski, P.L., & Cornell, T. (2015). An Investigation into Student Engagement in Higher Education Classrooms. InSight : *A Journal of Scholarly Teaching, 1*0, 56-67.

Witt, A. (2020) Towards a Working Definition of Open Pedagogy. Milne Library Faculty/Staff Works. 8.Available at https://knightscholar.geneseo.edu/library-research/8.Acessed: January 2021

Woihuter, C.C. & Jacob, L/ (2021) The COVID-19 pandemic:Streamlining or capsizing the global higher education revolution.*Perspectives in Education 3*9(1) 291-303

Wong, L., Tan, G.W., Hew, J.J., Ooi, K.B., & Leong,L. (2022) Mobile social media marketing: a new marketing channel among digital natives in higher education?, *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education,* 32:1, 113-137,

Woods (2010) Wood, E. (2010) Developing Integrated pedagogical approaches to play and learning, in P. Broadhead, J. Howard, and E. Wood, (eds) Play and learning in the early years: from resear to practice, London, Sage, pp 9-26.

World Bank (2020) Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa .Available at { https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/764421611934520379-0090022021/original/OneAfricaTEandCovidupdated.pdf} Accessed January 2021

World Bank (2021) Tertiary Education is key to rebuilding COVID-hit economies.available at {https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/09/25/world-bank-tertiary-education-is-key-to-rebuilding-covid-hit-economies}.Accessed October, 2021

World Bank.( 2020). Systematic Country Diagnostics for the Republicof The Gambia: Overcoming a No-Growth Legacy. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at {https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/782131589568063735/pdf/The-Gambia-Systematic-Country-Diagnostic.pdf} Accessed July 2020.

World Bank (2022) The Gambia: Growth and Competitiveness Project Performance Report. Washington D.C: Independent Evaluation group/World Bank

Xi, X., Yang, J., Jiao, K., Wang, S. & Lu, T. (2022). We buy what we want to be: Understanding the effect of brand identity driven by consumer perceived value in the luxury sector. *Frontiers in Psychology*. Available at  doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1002275  Accessed: November 2022

Yang, H.-P., Yen, D. and Balmer, J.M.T. (2020) 'Higher education: a once-in-a-lifetime purchase', Qualitative Market Research, 23 (4), pp. 865 - 890. doi: 10.1108/QMR-12-2017-0169

Yazan, B. (2018) A Conceptual Framework to Understand Language Teacher Identities. *Journal of Secondary Language Teacher Education*, 1 (1):21-28

Yazan, B. (2018) A Conceptual Framework to Understand Language Teacher Identities. *Journal of Secondary Language Teacher Education*, 1 (1):21-28

Yin, R.K. (2014). Case Study Research: Design and Method (3rd edn), *Los Angeles,CA: Sage*

Yorke, M. (2010). Employability: aligning the message, the medium and academic values. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*. 1. 2. 10.21153/jtlge2010vol1no1art545.

Zegwaard, K. E., Campbell, M., & Pretti, T. J. (2017). Professional identities and ethics: The role of work-integrated learning in developing agentic professionals. *International Perspectives on Education and Society*, 32, 145-160

Zeleza, P.T and Okanda, M.(2021) Enhancing the Digital Transformation of African Universities. Journal of Higher Education in Africa / Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en AfriqueVol. 19, No. 1 (2021), pp. 1-28 (28 pages)

Zepke, N. (2013) Student Engagement: A complex business supporting the first year experience in tertiary education. *International journal of First Year in higher educatio*n.Vol.4, issue 2.PP1-

Zhang, Y. & Wildemuth, B.M (2009). Qualitative Analysis of Content. Applications of Social Researc*h Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science*.

Zhang, Y., & Wildemuth, B. M. (2009). Unstructured Interviews: Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science. Exeter: Libraries Unlimited.

Zhenghao, C., Alcorn, B., Christensen, G., Eriksson, N., Koller, D., and Emanuel, E.L.(2015) Who's Benefiting from MOOCs, and Why? *Harvard Business Review*, September 22

Zhang, M., Wang, W., Millar, R., Li, G., & Yan, F. (2017). Coping and compromise: A qualitative study of how primary health care providers respond to health reform in China. *Human Resources for Health*, 15(1): 50. doi:10.118612  PMID:28778199960-017-0226-z

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 : INTERVIEW GUIDES

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE STAFF CATEGORY

#### 1. Introduction and background to the interview (5 minutes)

- The interviewer introduces himself with name and function,
- explains the objectives and purpose of the study,
- informs the interviewee, about capturing responses on audio-recorded format, how long the interview will take, what kind of questions it includes and what will happen with the data gathered through the interview,
- assures participants that all the collected data will be treated with strict confidentiality,
- respects the respondent's right to withdraw participation in the study

#### 2. The Interview (35 minutes)

#### Participant's Background

1. What is your job title and what does it entail?
2. How long have you worked for your institution?
3. How long have you worked in your current role?
4. Overall, how long have you worked in the HE sector?

#### $RO_1$: To understand the brand management practices of selected HEIs in The Gambia

5. How does your institution respond to competition in the sector?
6. Does your institution have a deliberate branding strategy?
7. What would you say are your institution's core offerings?
8. How do you want these offerings to appeal to your student and non-student stakeholders?
9. In your view, are there features and attributes that make your institution better than and/or different from other universities in The Gambia? If yes, what are these?

#### $RO_2$: To understand current pedagogical practices of these HEIs

10. Would you say there is a general internal awareness of specific values that your institution would like to be identified with? *{Participant's response will be followed with further probing in the direction of the response}*
11. Does your institution have an institution-wide or discipline-specific policies on pedagogy? *{Participant's response will be followed with further probing in the direction of the response}*
12. Are there signature pedagogies associated with your university? *(If yes, interviewer will probe to generate response on what they are and how they work).*
13. Are they communicated when promoting the university?

#### $RO_3$: To explore the institutional brand identity of these HEIs

14. Prior to joining your institution, were there specific non-visual attributes that you would easily identify your institution with?
15. If any, have such attributes remained the same or have they changed over time?

16. Do these attributes feature directly or indirectly in stakeholder communications?
17. What is your institution's positioning? *(What would you say your institution stands for?)*
18. What are the values behind what it stands for?

**RO₄: To explore the link between institutional pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity at these HEIs**

19. Would you say your institution's policies on pedagogy and their enforcement strategies influence the way the institution is perceived both internally and externally?
20. Would you say that your institution's pedagogical practices influence its identity as an HEI?

**3. Conclusion (5 minutes)**

21. Is there something that you would like to add to the points already covered in the interview?

# INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

**1. Introduction and background to the interview (5 minutes)**

- The interviewer introduces himself with name and function,
- explains the objectives and purpose of the study,
- informs the interviewee how long the interview will take, what kind of questions it includes and what will happen with the data gathered through the interview,
- assures participants that all the collected data will be treated with strict confidentiality,
- respects the respondent 's right to withdraw participation in the study

**2. The Interview (35 minutes)**

**Participant's Background**

1. What is the title of your degree?
2. At what level are you currently in your studies?

**RO₁: To understand the brand management practices of selected HEIs in The Gambia**

3. What specific factor(s) made you choose this university over other universities in the country?
4. How did you become aware of these factors? (Was it through word-of-mouth, website, advertising, sponsored events, etc)
5. In your view, are there features and attributes that make your institution better than and/or different from other universities in The Gambia? If yes, what are these?

**RO₂: To understand current pedagogical practices of these HEIs**
6. When you think of your university, do certain methods of teaching and learning come to mind? *(Interviewer will use the direction of response to probe further).*
7. How does this compare to other universities in The Gambia?
8. Would you say that your lecturers' teaching methods are a factor in your ability to learn effectively?
9. Does your university have an institution-wide or discipline-specific policies on pedagogy?
10. If no, would you like to see an institution-wide or discipline-specific policies on pedagogy??

**RO$_3$: To explore the institutional brand identity of these HEIs**

11. Would you say an actively enforced institution-wide pedagogy policy would have positive impact on the image and reputation of your university?

**RO$_4$: To explore the link between institutional pedagogical practices and institutional brand identity at these HEIs**

12. Would you say that your institution's pedagogical practices influence its identity as an HEI?

**3. Conclusion (5 minutes)**

13. Is there something that you would like to add to the points already covered in the interview?

# APPENDIX 2: CONTENT ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

| Case Institution | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Data Sources | | | | | | |
| Reading strategy | **Intensive** | | | | | |
| Date | **May 2021** | | | | | |
| **Combined data sources & features** | **Cues and codes** | **Presemt/not present** | **Latent meanings & descriptions** | **Emerging category** | **Pattern of occurrence** | **Emergent Themes** |
| **Historic information** | Institutional artefacts | | | | | |
| **Academic programmes & university services listings listing** | Academic programmes listings | | | | | |
| **Institutional identity symbols** | Institutional logo | | | | | |
| **University admission information** | Academic access information | | | | | |
| **Support services information** | Student support information | | | | | |
| **Integration of sources with other social media sources** | Integrated data sources | | | | | |

| Pedagogical philosophy information | Mission statement extract | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other institutional visibility features | Projection of university image | | | | | |

**APPENDIX 3: LOGOS OF CASE INSTITUTIONS**
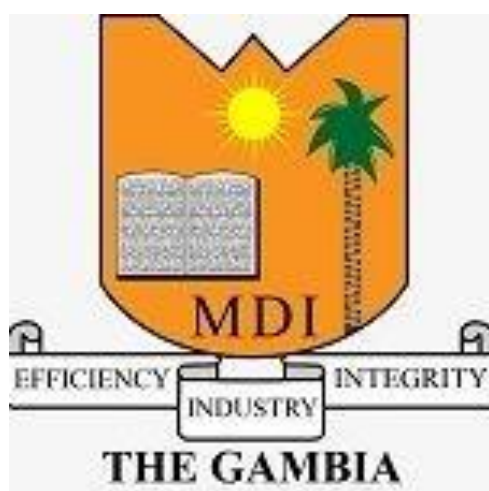
# APPENDIX 4: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

07 July 2020

**Mr Ozioma Ikonne (219048827)**
**School Of Man Info Tech &Gov**
**Westville Campus**

Dear Mr Ikonne,

**Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001571/2020**
**Project title: Exploring the role of pedagogical practices in the brand identity formation of selected Gambian Universities**
**Degree: PhD**

## Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 04 June 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.**

This approval is valid until 07 July 2021.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

--------------------------------------------
**Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)**

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood    ■ Howard College    ■ Medical School    ■ Pietermaritzburg    ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS