Introduction

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Decolonising higher education in the changing world

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The decolonisation of higher education is a critical yet highly debatable discourse in the early 21st century where scholars from across the world are moving towards a more congruent and borderless notion of education and responsiveness. The need for decolonisation in higher education, and more so in African higher education, cannot be overemphasised, especially in this era of globalisation and internationalisation where Africa and its education systems are continuously being misconstrued as possessing the same level of capital and political will to engage at a variety of levels. Education and decolonisation in Africa should embrace the notion of the pluriversal in response to the diverse contextual differences and realities permeating the local landscape, which in itself is longing for engagement and interrogation, so as to drive change and development.

Mamdani (2016) argues that the modern African university as we know it was built on a European model intended to colonise the minds of students and perpetuate a Eurocentric vision of society. To him, this university (referring to all universities or most for they all follow this model) began as a colonial project with the ambition to create universal scholars who stood for excellence regardless of context and who would serve as the vanguard of the 'civilising' mission without reservation or remorse.

However, the 21st century Africa cannot afford to simply engage the luxury of excellence without reservation or remorse, for the university is at the heart of the African development project and the broader transformation of the African continent. Higher education in Africa is framed around returns; returns for the individual and returns for the nation or society. These returns, especially for the

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society, begin to dissipate when the scholar is simply fascinated by ideas rather than being responsive to the society. The departure from such European ideas to a more nuanced and contextual understanding and practice of higher education constitutes the beginning of the decolonisation project in Africa. Adding to this Ismail argues that

> *Europe presents ... the centre ..., centre and end, first and last; last, thereby first ..., pivot, nucleus, foundation, heading, grounding/commanding principle; and the other: end, mature, conclusion, ultimate, telos. Europe as lasting, settled ..., institutes the subject by pushing aside the other continent, the only other that matters, that matters only as other. The subject is never, is always already otherwise. (Ismail 2017:40-41)*

With European scholars presenting Europe as the epicentre for higher education and scholarship in general, African scholars need to reorient scholarship on the continent to make Africa the centre. Globalisation and internationalisation in higher education are increasingly parading European ideals and notions across Africa through a variety of mechanisms with key amongst them being funding and research collaborations. Pondering on African research agenda and its unresponsive nature as pertaining to the continent, Musasa argues that

> *Africa's intellectual agenda has largely been set by Euro-American interests and that this reflects former colonial relationships and geopolitical power. More recently emergent economic powerhouses like China, India and Brazil are also muscling in on the production of knowledge on Africa…These are sometimes framed as south-south research projects, reflecting historical collaborations and solidarity of developing countries that could be traced to the Bandung conference of 1955. (Musasa, 2017, p. 15)*

Conversations around decolonisation are quite pertinent at this time for the re-shaping of Africa's educational and research agenda to focus on Africa and African educational thought. Musasa continues that

> *Africans scholars are worried that they are being crowded out of framing their own intellectual agenda, aided by the fact that their state governments do little to support local research and researchers. Also of concern is that little is being done to engage seriously with the production of knowledge falling outside the formal academy and ... has led to a wide distinction between what African scholars know and experience of their worlds and what they learn in the academy and its applicability to their societies.*

Such disparity has led to the view that formal education orients African scholars to serve the interests of dominant geopolitical powers rather than their own societies. (Musasa 2017:15)

Decolonisation, therefore, according to Fanon (1963) would be reversal, replacement and re-centring Africa as the focus of African higher education by reversing the ills of colonialism and replacing the continuously colonising constellations of Eurocentrism in African higher education with African thoughts and theories.

Gomes (2017) argues that in spite of an extreme diversity in terms of institutional designs, political environment and economic predicaments, the global landscape of higher education systems today are increasingly being influenced by common trends that raise a number of perplexities while reframing the idea and the practice of the university. These trends, which significantly oppose the idea of contextual responsiveness in favour of global and borderless education, raise several questions in African higher education, especially regarding its social function and the core nature of its existence. If, therefore, there has ever been a time more pertinent for decolonisation in higher education, especially African higher education, that time is now. This is because if the shackles of imperialist thought are not broken but left to be watered by the incessantly encroaching forces of globalisation and internationalisation, the mind would remain forever colonised. Ngũgĩ articulates this better when he argues that the height of colonisation

was the mental universe of the colonized, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others. (Ngũgĩ 1986:20)

Until this process of mental colonisation is untangled, the colonised will never be completely liberated and this process of liberation cannot happen with Eurocentric views but rather with schools of thought anchored on African or the people's realities. Mamdani (2016) emphasises this by arguing that if universities could be displaced from politics or knowledge production made immune to power relations, then place or centre would not matter in responsive higher education– but this is not the case. The power dynamics and the role of ideas, especially those

coming from the global North to become the epicentre of knowledge construction in the global South, especially in South Africa or Africa as a whole, which are at the centre of the decolonisation question. Lamenting on the state of education and the laxity exhibited by academics in the drive for decolonisation, Biney quotes Thomas Sankara and points out that

> *either because of intellectual laziness or simply because it has tasted the western way of life. Because of these petty bourgeois forget that all genuine political struggle requires rigorous theoretical debate and they refuse to rise to the intellectual effort of conceiving new concepts equal to the murderous struggle that lies ahead of us. Passive pathetic consumers they wallow in terminology fetishized by the west as they wallow in western whiskey and champagne in shady looking lounges. (cited in Biney 2018)*

The question, therefore, is far beyond whether we need to decolonise to the more rigorous question of how we need to decolonise and ensure recolonisation never takes place.

Mamdani (2015) further argues that decolonisation needs an African approach so as to develop an African solution, especially because a contextual solution is required. Context is not the opposite of a universal value or standard. Neither is it a reference to a particular or different culture. Context is an understanding that any concrete situation is an outcome of multiple processes: historical, political, economic, social and moral. The call for a contextual understanding is an argument that we need to understand the precise articulation of multiple processes in the creation of a single solution. An African approach to an African problem is essential because the master's house (colonialism) cannot be destroyed with the master's tool (theories) but requires a culturally responsive approach. An African solution must be culturally specific and thus opposed to not only a 'one-size-fits-all' approach but also to universal understandings of the challenges and solutions.

Higher education generally focuses on the rationale as well as the reasonableness of learning programmes that are specific to historical and geographical locations. Clearly, these should not be the monopoly of any group or institution on the continent but a function of multiplicity on the continent premise on the deconstruction of higher levels of organised thinking that was propagated as particular to the West. Decolonisation, therefore, should not disengage from the reality that all societies,

including those in traditional, pre-colonial contexts, designed their education on thoughtful, analytical trajectories that defined and justified this education as socially important, culturally and linguistically viable, and capable of ameliorating the livelihood of its recipients. Decolonisation should rather engage the central role of universities in social reproduction, and in the creation and legitimation of knowledge.

Decolonisation and its place in higher education are a subject of significant interest in both social movements and scholarly critique across the globe. Decolonisation can be broadly understood as an umbrella term for diverse efforts to resist the distinct but intertwined processes of colonisation, to enact transformation and redress in reference to the historical and ongoing effects of these processes, and to create and keep alive modes of knowing, being, and relating that these processes seek to eradicate. Colonisation has both material and epistemic dimensions, which together shape social relations and enshrine categories that are then used to justify occupation of indigenous land, expropriation and expendability of black life, the binary, heteropatriarchal gender system, and claims about the universality of modern Western ideas. It is on this note that this book seeks to explore a variety of issues in the decolonisation process in the higher education arena and to provide a pathway or foster the discussion as higher education systems entangles itself from the shackles of colonialism.

One of the aspects of higher education engaged in this volume for decolonisation is the curriculum and knowledge. The decolonisation of the curriculum in South Africa in particular and the continent at large cannot be overemphasised. The curriculum is the principal vehicle of knowledge construction in higher education and constitutes the forms of disciplinarity as well as interdisciplinarity in the higher education sector. Curriculum and the knowledge it propagates must be at the core of decolonisation. Fomunyam and Teferra (2017) and Fomunyam (2017b) argue that curriculum content in South African higher education lacks responsiveness as a result of colonialism in South Africa. Mignolo argues that the curriculum, production of knowledge and transformation of understanding could have either a liberating force or a regulating function. The liberating function is the core of the decolonisation of the curriculum and knowledge. The regulating force on the other hand refers to "the diverse totality that in Western thought is dominated by Christian theology and secular science and philosophy has been, since the Renaissance, a totality that developed hand in hand with imperial expansion and colonial subjection" (Mignolo, 2006, p. 485). To this end, simply changing the contents of the totality

will not suffice but rather there is need for the decolonisation of the curriculum and knowledge. The decolonisation of knowledge and the curriculum would definitely be challenging because it will confront the global North's struggle for world domination. Decolonisation of the curriculum requires border thinking as a method, especially because other forms of knowledge are constantly at risk, many times not only because they contest the content of dominant knowledge but because they are eroding the very epistemic foundations of imperial modernity. Decolonising the curriculum implies a variety of processes. It entails deconstructing the principles and historical foundation of knowledge, which are intrinsically interwoven with the establishment of Western capitalism and the racial matrix of power. It also entails the re-inscription of other forms and principles of knowledge and understanding that have been eliminated as primitive, traditional or irrational by the defenders and practitioners of modernity. Decolonising the curriculum, therefore, is a must in the decolonisation of higher education.

Another aspect critical in the decolonisation of higher education is methodology. Knowledge construction in higher education is a function of the methodology used and it in turn determines whether or not the knowledge constructed is trustworthy or not. Methodology is the core of research and informs whether or not the knowledge constructed is trustworthy. Braun, et al. (2013) argue that decolonising methodology is all about creating room for individuals to conduct research using approaches that are edifying and free from restricting influences. They aver that these includes phenomenological and transformative approaches that inform research. These are critical approaches that aim to promote social justice by exposing and questioning the power dynamics of society, including power inequities and alternative worldviews, which are enmeshed in the culture and worldview of local people and serve to support its continuation by judging which research constructs are valid, determining how constructs are defined, and deciding which variables need to be controlled based on local experiences. Decolonising methodology will therefore ensure that indigenous research is designed, controlled and reported by indigenous people who understand the context and the challenges affecting it. Discussing the decolonisation of methodologies, Smith (2013) argues that this process entails determining as researchers within a particular context what research priorities should be; the ways research should proceed; the training of local researchers and research assistants; the creation and discussion of culturally appropriate ethics for research; the development of culturally sympathetic methods; the continued collaboration with local communities; the development and

dissemination of literature on research from a contextual standpoint in a variety of fields and disciplines; the education of the wider research community, including scientific, academic and policy communities, and accountabilities to and outcomes for the local people. Decolonising methodology is, therefore, broad and critical for the overall decolonisation of the higher education landscape.

Pedagogy and teaching and learning constitute other aspects of higher education that require decolonisation. While pedagogy constitutes how the curriculum is delivered, teaching and learning is the actual process of knowledge construction. Pedagogy and teaching and learning therefore go hand in hand. The one both enforces and determines the effectiveness of the other, and the other determines the suitability of the one. Without teaching and learning, universities would simply be research establishments. Teaching and learning, no matter the format, is critical in the higher education landscape and the decolonisation of the same as well as how it is enacted is of primary importance in the decolonisation agenda. Sinclair (2004) argues that the decolonisation of pedagogy and teaching and learning goes beyond merely knowing the information to teach to the greater task of teaching it in ways that are liberating. The teaching and learning process should empower all participants to reach their full potential. The decolonising of teaching and learning would ensure that both students and lecturers involve themselves in the process of developing contextually relevant pedagogical constellations. This would ensure the blossoming of the local or traditional knowledge foundations, which have few mirrors in western pedagogy. McGregor (2012) and Fomunyam (2017a) argue that decolonising teaching and learning and pedagogy is all about developing and using approaches that would help students to understand that structures of colonisation still exist and enable them to navigate or dismantle such structures. Decolonising pedagogy is also about developing and employing strategies and approaches that disrupt those structures at the individual and collective levels, resulting in the re-centring of indigenous or African ways of knowing or teaching and learning, of being and doing, and facilitate engagement with possibilities for making change using the learning experienced. Pedagogical approaches, therefore, are key in the decolonisation of teaching and learning, and teaching and learning itself would determine the effectiveness of such approaches in the decolonisation process. Shahjahan, et al. (2009) conclude that decolonising pedagogy and teaching and learning would emphasise the importance of self, subjectivity and interdependence with others who form our community. It would also create a learning environment that begins by nurturing the inner self and allows space for personal development. Decolonising pedagogy and teaching and

learning would empower all stakeholders to acknowledge and accept that there are multiple ways of knowing and theorising equity issues, and to use these methods to make an inclusive curriculum and pedagogy. It will also allow the development of alternative epistemological viewpoints to be expressed and legitimised within the classroom. Decolonising pedagogy and teaching and learning would ensure that the educational experiences of all students in the higher education sector are free from all influences of colonialism.

The last area discussed, vital for decolonisation within the higher education sector, is language. Language is the medium of instruction and determines whether or not students are able to construct meaning from anything that is happening within the classroom or the higher education sector as a whole. The language debate in the decolonisation process cannot be overemphasised. Mignolo (2009) argues that English language frames are institutionally and linguistically anchored in Western Europe. He suggests that other languages, such as the five modern European imperial languages (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German and French), have influenced and are gradually epistemiciding other languages. The six mentioned languages created the tool for a given conception of knowledge that extended to the European colonies from the Americas to Asia and Africa. Mignolo (2009) avers that the decolonisation of linguistic features and its influences on knowledge-making or construction focuses on the borders between the Western foundation of knowledge and understanding (epistemology and hermeneutics) and its confrontation with knowledge construction in non-European languages and institutions. Language, therefore, is at the centre of knowledge construction, and if Africa is going to be the centre of its education systems, as the decolonisation projects seek to ensure, then the language of instruction must be deconstructed. Fanon argues that

> *to speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization… The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionally whiter – that is, he will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language. (Fanon, 1970, p. 8)*

This by extension refers to the effect of foreign languages on the individual and how he or she is influenced by language. Fanon's dictum applies to the disciplines and also to the sphere of knowledge in general. Obviously, Fanon's point is not to be recognised or accepted in the club of 'real human beings' defined on

the basis of white knowledge and white history, but to take away the imperial/ colonial idea of what it means to be human as defined and articulated in the language. The importance of tackling the language debate in the broader process of decolonisation cannot be overemphasised. Language is inherent in culture, and cultural capital, alongside social, economic and political capital (which are all greatly influenced by language), are critical for knowledge construction. The level of command one has of a particular language determines how effective one is in the knowledge construction process.

This volume picks on these issues amongst others as it seeks to theorise the decolonisation of higher education in the era of globalisation and internationalisation. Decolonising the higher education landscape is a herculean task with a variety of estuaries requiring engagement. This volume offers critical insight on decolonisation within the higher education arena, especially in this era of globalisation and internationalisation. However, it is worthy to note that the areas of decolonisation discussed are not exhaustive nor do they cover every issue engaged within this volume. This serves rather an introduction to the broader spectrum of research on decolonisation.

The volume is divided into three parts and thirteen chapters. The first part consists of two chapters and is entitled 'Decolonisation in the Global Era'. The second part, 'Decolonising Curriculum, Language and Teaching and Learning', consists of six chapters. The final part, 'Decolonising the University and Research', consists of five chapters.

This volume comes as a useful addition to the research on decolonisation by providing useful contextual inside on decolonisation in the era of globalisation and internationalisation.

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