

A Clarion Call for Decolonisation of Curriculum in South Africa: The Struggle Left Unattended

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to explore in greater details and assess the potency of the current educational curriculum's responsiveness towards socio economic issues and market demand. The paper proposes the need for the decolonising of the inclusive and well-resourced education in South African educational contexts. The clarion call for decolonisation of curriculum in South African institutions of learning be it basic education and higher education endure to relish appeals both from the students and the academics. Decolonisation of education, therefore, rest upon academics who coordinates teaching and learning in public educational institutions. For instance, on the 26 November 2020 the Minister of higher education Dr Blade Nzimande noted students who enrol for courses that are not short of in the market breeding more unemployment with government spending funds on students that are not going to be employed. The question that rises from his speech is: Why are those courses offered by institutions of higher learning if they are not contributing to the unemployment reduction? The paper adopted the Afrocentricity Theory by Asante (1980) in order to strengthen the argument that the current curricula is guarding against unemployment being addressed. The paper uses the Constitution of Republic of South Africa 1996, chapter 2, section 29, and subsection 2 to fortify the argument. The paper further proposes that a decolonised well-resourced education as a basic human need that will serve as a panacea to the tripartite debacles faced by the country of which are poverty, unemployment, and inequality. The inability of the curriculum to respond to contextual issues is as of the lack of capacity of both Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training.

Keywords: Afrocentrism, Decolonisation, Education, Language, Socio-economic issues

1. Introduction

The fall of imperialism and apartheid gestured another vision for a democratic South Africa that would change the agenda that victimised Africans (Musitha & Mafukata, 2018). One of the transformations since the advent of democracy should be that of focusing on rooting out the colonial education system. Transformation in Higher Education has been an ongoing concern in post-apartheid South Africa, especially in light of universities' expected contribution to economic and socio-political transformation (Padayachee, Matimolane & Ganas, 2018). The setting of South African higher education is fairly a perplexing one, overflowing with disparities, absence of assets and staff (Fomunyan & Teferra, 2017). Thus, far the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), Chapter 2, Section 29, and subsection 2: State that everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably

practical. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including considering equity practicability; and the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices. Language is the most useful asset of authority, and it remains the best hindrance in endeavours to decolonise education in Africa and especially in South Africa (Musitha & Mafukata, 2018).

The calls for decolonisation of educational curriculum and technique in South African universities keeps on getting attention out of uproars from the two students and the academics (Ajani, 2019). The failure to push for essential development in the educational curriculum serves to sentence Africans to modest and incompetent work while whites receive education that prepares them to deal with the economy of the country (Gumede 2012, 178; Musitha & Mafukata, 2018). The question remains, in what manner would education be

able to be decolonised in South African universities, if the educational program offered to undergraduates in each universities stays ethnocentric and Western in both nature and structures? (Ajani, 2019). Decolonisation, regardless of its theoretical hazardous, is developing as a profitable system for scrutinising and revitalizing the educational development programme (Cherrington, Botha & Keet, 2018). Consistently, graduates are delivered and ended up facing the reasonable world outside the four dividers of their higher education institutions (Ajani, 2019). The attainment of decolonisation of the educational system stays on the instructive skills and substance delivery of the lecturers (Fomunyam, 2017b; Ajani, 2019). Higher education in Africa is surrounded around returns; what benefits individual and the country or society, is for the general public to disperse, when the researcher is just captivated by thoughts as opposed to being receptive to the general public (Pillay, 2015; Ajani, 2019:103). Numerous issues that surfaced over the span of the discussion, in any case, few appeared to have generated consensus on what is to be decolonised and how (Turok, 2018).

2. Afrocentricity Theory

This paper is augmented by the "Afrocentricity Theory" as the relevant theoretical framework in analysing the effects of the colonised educational curriculum. The argument is based on the South African context as one of the African countries that experiences challenges of having degrees that are not responsive to the market demand and societal problems of unemployment, gender inequality and poverty. The issue of unresponsive curriculum in South Africa has escalated to Africa as a whole. That is done through classifying some university degrees as professional and others as academic qualifications. Therefore, the Afrocentricity theory also referred to "the theory of social change" is a relevant theoretical framework that standpoint a good chance of analysing African issues including the clarion call for decolonisation of curriculum as it was left unattended. Similarly, the paper is grounded by the Afrocentricity Theory better explained by Asante in his book titled "Afrocentricity: the theory of social change" published 1980 and 2003. The Afrocentric theory "provides educational thought on power, dominance, racism and the need to escape victimisation". From the Afrocentricity perspective, it can be argued that there is a need to escape from colonised means of teaching and learning. Escaping

from colonisation curriculum will reduce the tripartite socio-economic issues that South Africa is faced with. Therefore, the clarion call for a decolonised curriculum cannot be avoided further as it can resolve firmly the problems the country is encountering through the unbalanced curriculum that is just being provided at institutions of higher learning. The 2016 fees must fall movement/protest in South Africa was not conducted solely for free education but a free well decolonised education which will be responsive to the market demand and the societal problems encountered by the South African rainbow nation.

3. Understanding Decolonisation

Decolonisation is a difficult notion, given that past nations have changed and different meanings of colonialism, which have distinct facts and many consequences within the decolonisation discussion (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). "Decolonisation can be comprehensively understood as an umbrella term for assorted efforts to oppose the unmistakable however interlaced process of colonisation and racialisation, to authorise change and review in reference to the authentic and continuous impacts of these procedures, and to make and keep alive methods of knowing, being, and relating that these procedures look to exterminate" (Stein & Andreotti, 2017:370; Zembylas, 2018:1). Celliers (2017), Musitha and Mafukata, (2018) opines decolonisation as the challenge between the conventionalists and the reformists with the previous needing to keep up status quo as usual while the last tries to transform it.

The most difficult enquiry presently faced by lecturers in South African universities is undoubtedly that of "the meaning and understanding of decolonisation" (Oliver, 2018). Decolonisation would accordingly be reversal, substitution and recentring Africa as the focus of African higher education by tackling the ills of expansionism and supplanting African higher education's continually settling star grouping with African hypotheses in African university education (Ajani, 2019). Hence, Gordon (2011) states that decolonisation should not go on to meetings of actual factors, cultural conditions, and social-finance settings, while at the same time being all about sensitive, logical, and consolidated refined learning meetings, which are adapted to the transformation of Africans in particular. Social proliferation, development and legitimation for

learning events is the fundamental function of higher education (Ajani, 2019). This might widely be seen as 'decolonising' them, which is another way to say students must be independent in thinking, talking, and writing (Olivier, 2018).

4. Language

The most important but also most tricky responsibility facing a decolonising drive to find your own "character" in a certain African language seems to be a gradual semantic undertaken to destroy any hint of colonisation from a particular language, for an easy explanation of all philosophy, including the oppressor's belief (Olivier, 2018). It is sarcastic that the country may now benefit from the formerly colonised educational system that wanted to confine portions of the society to languages other than English (Owino, 2002). If a colonised people use a colonial language to write their literatures, they will be unable to regain their selfhood and recover their cultures, economics, and politics from a colonial strangle hold (Chaka, Lephahala & Ngesi, 2017). Masenya (2021) opines that language learning and indigenous knowledge systems must be at the focus of the decolonisation agenda. It is thus clear that language learning will assist in the integration of the african knowledge with that of african knowledge in particular the indigenous knowledge system.

The people of Africa were hardly passive recipients of English as the language became established in official schooling as well as informally on farms and in the workplace (Owino, 2002). The history of English in South Africa reveals that it was first imposed on people (Chetty, 2008). "The problem of language policy in Africa that puts English against African languages has created a stratified society with two classes of people: *the advantaged elite class in authority and the marginalised ordinary people*" (Owino, 2002:209). South African universities should consider intellectualising chosen African languages for use as mediums of teaching and learning when the majority of students speak and are fluent in the language as a mother tongue (Kaschula, 2016).

5. Curriculum Reforms

Curriculum decolonisation does not entail solely South African material for pedagogues (Mashiya, Meda & Swart, 2020). Reforming the curriculum does not entail that doors of learning with materials

that have Western roots will be closed; rather, it merely entails incorporating South African and African Knowledge into the present curriculum (Mashiya et al., 2020). The importance of decolonizing the educational curriculum in South Africa, and throughout the continent of Africa, cannot be ignored, because the educational program is the primary vehicle of knowledge generation in higher education (Ajani, 2019). It has been argued that South African universities have acquired Western models of scholarly association since their inception, which have usually rejected knowledge about colonised Africa (Heleta, 2016; Higgs, 2016; Le Grange, 2016; Zembylas, 2018).

The new curriculum reform should provide the knowledge that at heart is of decolonisation (Ajani, 2019). Decolonizing the educational curriculum entails a variety of techniques. It entails recreating the norms and genuine setup of learning programmes that are fundamentally intertwined with the western universities and racial power (Ajani, 2019). Olivier (2018) opines that students and some academic staff individually require the decolonisation of the educational system. The #Rhodesmustfall and #Feesmustfall protest in higher education sector in South Africa during 2015 and 2016 brought into sharp center of questions concerning the call for decolonisation of the educational system (Chisholm, Friedman & Sindoh, 2018). Fomunyam and Teferra (2017) claims that educational program talk ought to be set apart by a variety of voices. It can further be argued that without addressing the question of language, any attempt of decolonising education will be futile. "Re-curriculumation, or the process of transforming educational curricula towards a decolonising agenda, forms the most tangible and immediate way in which education can be reshaped and delivered" (Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2019:26).

6. Unresponsiveness of Curriculum Towards Socio Economic Issues

The inability of the educational program to deal with logical questions allows students to develop while at the same time focusing on providing them with a big voice was a cause for worry (Fomunyam & Teferra, 2017). Higher education has been aimed since 1994 at transforming and redressing cruel apartheid practices (Fomunyam, 2017a). The curriculum that just focuses on the events in the study hall and what students do with their achievements has to be transformed to meet social standards (Fomunyam &

Teferra, 2017). Responsiveness of education would address employability or financial responsiveness (Fomunyam & Teferra, 2017). Decolonisation of the educational system in South Africa would be one way of making education sensitive to local economic problems and increasing ways to deal with them (Fomunyam & Teferra, 2017).

This lack of responsiveness motivates why financial forces remain in the hands of a few people and unemployment continues to grow. (Fomunyam & Teferra, 2017). Prah (2017) emphasises that the question of social relevance must be tackled directly through education. The author(s) strongly believe that educational needs must be effective in fulfilling social requirements as societal conditions change and in order to create better equipped human resources, the structure, contents, and shape of education systems also need to change. The curricula must be based on social concerns, in order for individuals at the grassroots level to effectively address the challenges they are confronted with. Colonial education was driven by the widespread conviction that the "superior" white class of Europe should lead the "less-developed" people of the hue of other continents into civilisation (Mart & Toker, 2010).

Decolonisation activities are frequently defined as tactics to delineate, deconstruct, reject, or oppose current standards and utilise many other widespread conflictual approaches (Booysens, 2016; Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2019). This makes curriculum reforms a reaction instead of a response or a path towards colonial standards and enables education to be sensitive to society's demands.

7. The Struggle Left Unattended

In 2016, the protest against #FeesMustFall was not just aimed at scrapping fees off but was also an appeal for free, well decolonised education. Only those in state power chose to provide free education to protestors while leaving behind a well decolonised education. In his farewell address, when former President Jacob Zuma was pressured to leave office, he announced that free higher education will take place in South Africa. A thoroughly decolonised education is currently a fight left unattended by an appeal made by activists who protested nationwide. If students are to be completely empowered to take responsibility of their own fate, a decolonised higher education course should be seriously considered (Mutekwe, 2014).

Becker (2017) argues that there is no doubt that South Africa has a need to change higher education. Author(s) seeks to differ with the views of Becker (2017) that decolonisation should not take place. Davids (2016) contends that universities are supposed to symbolise and transform through their constitutional duties of social, political, epistemological, and capital reform. The appeal for South African university students to decolonise education and institutional structures is founded in the fight for social justice, equity, and equity (Albertus, 2019). Universities should be in the vanguard of the neglected fight for decolonisation. The problem that leads to the famous charges of 2016 must be overturned by demonstrations that were not only financial access to school but rather the decolonisation of higher education (Becker, 2017).

Somo (2016) believes that South Africa's government has been prioritising the subject of a fee free, well decolonised education system over a very long period and any other item that could not cope with the call of the student community. Le Grange, (2016), considers it necessary to recognise that further efforts need to be taken to emancipate and transform the lives of many of our poor, but also their education through institutions of higher education. Because of the students' demonstrations in 2015 and 2016, there has been a rejuvenated interest in the subject of decolonisation, especially of universities, in higher education in general. (Mutekwe, 2017). "The South African higher education (HE) student community has constantly accused its government of not giving education the priority it deserves, preferring to compare it with that of the other developing countries such as Cuba" (Mutekwe, 2017:144). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), however, argues that the decolonial of South African higher education is required as a result of colonial and neo-colonial politics perpetuating epistemic inequalities.

The student demonstrations in the 2015-2016 South African higher education institutions advocated for the decolonisation and equality of access to these places (Costandius, Nell, Alexander, McKay, Blackie, Malgas & Setati, 2018). #feesMustFall focuses on two complicated and linked problems, which the statement "free decolonised Black Education" simply expresses free well-resourced quality education (Griffiths, 2019). Today the fight for which the 2015-2016 students requested was left unattended. The question we have as authors is, who will attend the call to decolonise the curriculum?

8. The Role Played by the Universities in an Attempt to Decolonise the Education

De Carvalho and Florez (2014), believe that without a proper decolonisation definition the universities cannot decolonise the curriculums. In their views "decolonised curriculum, though the concept remains a grey area typically entails academics and students ridding higher education institutions of the procedures, values, norms, practices, thinking, beliefs, and choices that mark anything non-European and not white as inferior (De Carvalho & Florez, 2014; Mutekwe, 2017:143)". With regard to university decolonisation, Dr Blade Nzimande advocated for the Africanisation of universities during his speech at the summit for higher education in October 2015 (Le Grange, 2016). Dr. Blade Nzimande was right to give responsibilities to the universities for ensuring a decolonial shift in the education system. Le Grange, (2016) argues further that at the summit, Nzimande encouraged institutions to look at the question of curriculum decolonisation. The question for us all is that have universities heard the appeal of the Minister for Higher Education and Training eloquently and passionately? Keet (2014) and Mashiyi et al. (2020) argue in favour of and support for a colonial agenda with the focus on epistemic "othering" and "hermeneutical injustice" as the Higher education sector is complicit.

In order to transform the educational sector in South African universities through the decolonial route (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017), African academics have to accept that they are the products of very problematic "westernised" universities and constantly open up themselves to the painstaking but decolonial process of "learning to dislearn" to retrain. Mashiyi et al. (2020) indicate that the decolonised curriculum is the university's ultimate responsibility and is to be guided by critical university academics. In particular, university graduates' employers have called on institutions to adapt and update their curricula in order to meet changing economic and social demands and to better educate students for a changing world of work (Griesel & Parker, 2009; Padayachee, Matimolane & Ganas, 2018).

The South African higher education is in dire need of decolonisation and transformation, but the current institutional culture and architecture does not create room for this to happen at any level, beginning from the curriculum, student population, knowledge

creation and university hegemony (Fomunyam, 2017b:177). Universities have to rethink, reconstruct, and restructure the curriculum in full and put South Africa, Southern Africa, and Africa at the 10th centre (Heleta, 2016). In addition, with the guidance of the Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa, universities have to rewrite their knowledge of decolonisation so that all Universities can understand the decolonised curriculum that relate to their purpose (Fomunyam, 2017b). Heleta (2016) believes that universities still need internationally competent university graduates to operate in a complicated, interconnected society. Author(s) argue that the universities must take a lead in the path of ensuring that curriculum takes a decolonial turn as they are responsible for knowledge generation and human resources production. Universities must begin to be concerned on whether the labour force they produce can competently resolve the problems that the society are facing.

9. Where to from Here?

It is incontestable to note that it seems that it is African scholars who are gatekeeping a process of decolonisation. The later is one of the problems that we must first resolve, and we believe that a call for decolonisation is not an attack to African scholars. The war that African scholars need to wage should be that of ensuring that the education that is being delivered in universities should be a pertinent solution to the problems of poverty, unemployment, and that of inequality. It is the duty of those who are directly involved in teaching and learning at universities to lead the project of ensuring that a South African curriculum takes a decolonial turn. Majority of the South African universities are having a deputy vice chancellor that heads teaching and learning department. As much as the teaching and learning division in universities deals with quality assurance of the academic programmes the institution offers, there's a need to blend the department with duties of curriculum decolonisation. The question we have for African scholars is are academic programmes that are not responsive to the socio-economic issues of quality?

The department of Higher Education and Training should together with Center for Higher Education (CHE) establishes a committee that will lead the project of decolonisation of curriculum in South Africa. The rational for the Department of Higher Education and Training to lead with Center for

Higher education is due to the mere fact of having a commonly accepted understanding of decolonisation. What is more painful about the colonised educational curriculum is that it steals from the have nots as it toys with the hope that when one comes from university one must be able to address the socio-economic issues only to find out that there is nothing that can be done. Most African families invest a lot of money in the education of their children, so such an investment must yield positive outcomes. The positive outcome in the long run should be that one must be in possession of a decolonised education that will enable the labour force produced by the universities to be responsive towards the socio-economic challenges.

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion that can be drawn from the decolonisation literature perused is that curriculum need to take a decolonial turn. This is the struggle that as of now deserves to be resolved and no longer be left attended. With the emergence of a well quality resourced education, we are to see South Africa having socio economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment and inequality being lessor. From the employability of the Afrocentricity theory, indeed, there is a need to escape from colonised means of teaching and learning. The paper revealed that the struggle of a call for a decolonised education was left unattended at a time where the response to the fees must fall protest was a free education. The paper further noted that the current educational system of South African Higher Education and Training is generating a surplus of labour force that cannot resolve the societal challenges at the grassroots level. Author(s) conclude that the clarion call for decolonisation can no longer be postponed further and that it cannot no longer be reduced to a theme for mere public lectures by universities without an aim of doing the actual work of decolonisation.

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