

Integrating Decolonization and Africanization into the Curriculum Transformation Activities of South African Universities

T Ncanywa, N Mesatywa and S Matope
Walter Sisulu University, South Africa

Abstract: Decolonization and Africanization as indigenous knowledge systems have long been marginalized and under-reported within the education pedagogical space. The paper explores the prospects of integrating decolonization and Africanization into South African universities through curriculum transformation activities. The paper employs a qualitative conceptual approach, where themes are discussed based on reviewed literature. The thematic analysis is based on the processes in curriculum transformation, decolonization, and Africanization of the curriculum, curriculum transformation framework guidelines, and an integrative approach to curriculum transformation. This paper could add value to the development of Afrocentric discourse that can address issues of indigenous practices and content that speaks to undocumented marginalized communities. Various decolonized theoretical knowledge that is critical to lend an understanding to insights and voices of internal and external stakeholders using a bottom-up approach could contribute to critical pedagogies that are smear and yet different to present knowledge systems in education.

Keywords: Decolonization, Africanization, Indigenous knowledge system, Curriculum transformation, Marginalized communities, Bottom-up approach

1. Introduction

Colonization can be viewed as an intergenerational trauma based on subjugations to oppressive, demeaning one's cultural practices and language (Arday, Zoe-Belluigi & Thomas, 2021; Etieyibo, 2021). The young generation may not be blatantly conscious of the nuances and manifestations that have led to the marginalization that exists in diverse societies. However, there is a need for curriculum transformation and development that promotes humanness in African practices through the interruption of generational trauma of marginalization. Currently, there are deliberations that purport that schools, universities, and churches are sites that are currently offering programs to maintain, perpetuate and reproduce coloniality. Hence, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) remarks that seemingly, there is an absence of African universities but what we have are universities in Africa. The implication of this statement is that not only academic discourses should marginalize Eurocentric domination but should rather claim their own intellectual space as presently the South African education system is resident in Western modernism (Gumede & Biyase, 2016; Arday *et al.*, 2021). It becomes, therefore, imperative to critically reflect on and negate any form of ideology, theory,

relationships, and institutions, which support integrated decolonized and Africanized curriculums.

South Africa has made commendable changes in its educational landscape since 1994, especially the curriculum transformation issues (Harms-Smith & Nathane, 2018). There is a need for universities to decolonize the curriculum to speak to real-life changes and have an impact on society. Decolonising the curriculum can be described as reforming the teaching and learning process to address the local and current economic and socio-political challenges (Gumede & Biyase, 2016). When curriculums are decolonized, it means cleaning drastic outcomes from the Bantu Education system that divided the locals into advantaged and disadvantaged systems (Lotz-Sisitka & Lupele, 2015; Arday *et al.*, 2021). According to Etieyibo (2021), decolonization is an attempt to reverse the colonial paraphernalia that was imposed on Africans for a long time.

Some literature indicates challenges that universities have when implementing curriculum transformation that has elements of decolonization and Africanization (Costandius & Bitzer, 2015; Blignaut, 2017; Saurombe, 2018). For instance, Blignaut (2017) argued that curriculum transformation

should relate to societal needs, and provide relevant knowledge that reflects an African society, as the existing one does not show the direct relationship between a curriculum and the desired society needs. Blignaut (2017) further allude that students at African universities ignore the indigenous knowledge obtained from their societies and ultimately face a cultural shock when they replace it with a contemporary culture that does not favour them. The best lessons can be learned from Costandius and Bitzer (2015) in their Islamic model adopted in Egypt's Al Azhar University when other universities adopted a Eurocentric colonized model. Saurombe (2018) debates that transformation in universities is incomplete, because curriculums are inconsistent with the cultural values of our societies, and can be completed through the integration of indigenous knowledge in universities. Mendy and Madiope (2020) noted a research gap in integrating decolonization and Africanization into university curriculum transformation activities, that there is no framework in the education transformation literature to show how the concept can be infused into the existing curriculums in universities.

Decolonization and Africanization as indigenous knowledge systems have long been marginalized and under-reported within the education pedagogical space (Hungwe & Ndofirepi, 2022). Decolonization of higher education in Africa includes indigeneity in education, addressing racial issues, and involves the concept of 'Ubuntu' (Etieyibo, 2021). It is novel to tackle the decolonization matter and to have insights into an African context in higher education. Hence, the paper explores the prospects of integrating decolonization and Africanization into universities through curriculum transformation activities. On that note, the following themes are discussed: the processes in curriculum transformation, decolonization and Africanization of the curriculum, curriculum transformation framework guidelines, and an integrative approach to curriculum transformation. The discourse could add value to literature and contribute to critical pedagogies that are smear and yet different to present knowledge systems in education.

2. Theoretical Literature Review

For decolonization and Africanization into universities through curriculum transformation, the paper adopts the psychosocial theory. The theory originated from Erikson in 1963, when there was an

association between teaching and learning within curriculum transformation with Africanization (Shava, 2016; Mashiyi, Meda & Swart, 2020; Ngoepe & Saurombe, 2021). The psychosocial theory views the process of curriculum transformation to integrate teaching and learning with different dimensions such as personal growth, developing an identity that includes cultural aspects, and valuing historical features and reality in life issues (Mashiyi *et al.*, 2020). This could assist in the holistic development of students to link the curriculum to personal and societal concerns in an African way.

The curriculum transformation process in the psychosocial theory brings solutions to individual conflicts as the internal capacity is used in familiar environments (Mendy & Madiope, 2020). There is integration between the internal capacity to deal with challenges and external social demand. Therefore, the external demands can be met by decolonizing the curriculum to permeate methodologies and epistemologies in African perspective (Shava, 2016; Ngoepe & Saurombe, 2021). In fact, there are several transformations practices such as pedagogy, scholarship, epistemologies, student-centeredness, monitoring and evaluation. These can demonstrate the creation of a new post-colonial and post-apartheid South African social identity (Mashiyi *et al.*, 2020). In addition, the psychosocial theory includes societal cultural influence that involves aspects of equality and equity in education. The strength of the psychosocial theory focusses on how curriculum transformation affects factors like transitions, career development changes and maintaining interpersonal relationship in an African context but fall short on local identity issues that cultural interference could evoke (Mendy & Madiope, 2020).

To address the shortfalls of the psychosocial theory, the paper adopts the cognitive-structural theory in the curriculum transformation process. This theory entails curricula that allow a critical thinking process for students to describe changes experienced at the individual level (Mendy & Madiope, 2020; Ngoepe & Saurombe, 2021). Intellectual growth has effects on heredity and environmental factors. This implies the curricula consider the innate capability of students to relate the curriculum with problem-solving skills in their environments. Hence, the cognitive-structural theory complements the psychosocial theory's lack of explicit emphasis on individual competence. Applying these two theories can bring about inclusivity in the curriculum transformation process where

students can reshape their living conditions and be competent to solve their societal challenges in a decolonized African way (Mendy & Madiope, 2020). The paper is interested to explore how curriculum transformation in the context of African universities can include decolonization and Africanisation. To contribute to the literature, the following themes are discussed to better understand the process of implementing curriculum transformation in a local African context.

3. Processes in Curriculum Transformation

The process of curriculum transformation entails universities setting goals and activities in line with the national plan for higher education crafted by the Department of Education in 2001 (Ramrathan, 2016; Banegas, 2019). The goals set on the plan are as follows:

- To increase access and to produce graduates with the skills and competencies necessary to meet the human resource needs of the country.
- To promote equity of access and outcomes and to redress past inequalities by ensuring that student and staff profiles reflect the demographic composition of South African society.
- To ensure diversity in the institutional landscape of the higher education system through mission and program differentiation to meet national and regional skills and knowledge needs.
- To build high-level research capacity, including sustaining current research strength, and to promote research linked to national development needs.
- To restructure and consolidate the institutional landscape of the higher education system to transcend the fragmentation, inequalities, and inefficiencies of the apartheid past and to enable the establishment of South African institutions consistent with the vision and values of a non-racial, non-sexist, and democratic society (Ramrathan, 2016).

The first phase of curriculum transformation, for instance, in South Africa was to change year courses into modules offered in a semester for comprehensible units of learning. In modulation, there was

the standardization of module credits within the National Qualification Framework (NQF) (Motala & Pampallis, 2020). In this development, one credit point was deemed equivalent to 10 notional hours of study, meaning that a module that is allocated 15 credit points would require an average student to spend approximately 150 notional hours of module engagement, which includes attending lectures, tutorials, and seminars; self-study; assessments; and additional reading. The modular system and its associated credit values formed the basis of qualification construction, recognition of learning, and qualification certification.

The second phase implemented a regulatory framework controlled by statutory bodies for qualification registration on the NQF, accreditation of qualification, and institutions need to get approval of accreditation for recognition and subsidy purposes (Motala & Pampallis, 2020). The accreditation is regulated by the Council for Higher Education. The curriculum transformation guidelines employ an outcomes-based ideology with credit points and level descriptors forming the structure of a program within the NQF (Banegas, 2019). There are exit-level outcomes linked to the assessment criteria and program credits. A qualification is awarded based on total credits obtained in a program.

All universities in South Africa are undergoing the third phase of curriculum and program reviews in a cycle indicated by the regulatory bodies (Motala & Pampallis, 2020). This phase follows the NQF guidelines with 10 levels, with the doctoral qualification occupying the uppermost level of the NQF. Transformation involves pegging academic and professional qualifications at different levels while changing program study periods. For instance, for undergraduate and honours programs the study periods remained 30 weeks per academic year and constituted a minimum of 120 credit points per annum, whereas research degrees (master's and doctoral degrees) were extended over 45 weeks per academic year and constituted a minimum of 180 credit points per annum. Further developments in curriculum changes were in relation to generic and professional bachelor's degrees, with professional bachelor's degrees being pegged at level 8 of the NQF and generic bachelor's degrees at level 7. Post-graduate qualifications from the honours level upwards were required to include research training with varying scopes of research capacity development (Motala & Pampallis, 2020).

The above transformation processes give knowledge on credit points, level descriptors, and rules of the combination that formed the basis of curriculum reforms. Then, there is a need for deep curriculum transformation associated with epistemology and ontology for exploring indigenous knowledge systems (Lotz-Sisitka & Lupele, 2015). The contemporary issues in deep curriculum transformation need that knowledge to be socially constructed, and the methodologies implemented for studying the curriculum to be real and practical according to societal needs. Most universities start by piloting the methodologies to be transformed by choosing certain programs. Then, based on the outcomes of the chosen programs, where transformation is done, the whole university is engaged on how curriculums can be transformed to include aspects of decolonization and Africanization. This can be based on methodologies, content, community-based projects, or linguistics as chosen by academics offering the courses (Banegas, 2019; Motala & Pampallis, 2020).

4. Decolonization and Africanization of the Curriculum

There have been various debates around the term colony and numerous terms are used to describe various facets of decoloniality. Though South Africa is no longer a colony of Britain and of the apartheid system, this may be regarded as internal colonialism as it subjugated one group by another group within the same country. In this paper, coloniality focuses on the perpetual processes of control, domination, and exploitation which may also be disguised in the language of salvation, that is, Christianity, progress, modernization, and being good to everyone (Ndlovu- Gatsheni, 2015).

As Harns-Smith and Nathane (2017) comment that the chronological termination of geopolitical arrangements may have occurred, but the epistemological, psychological, cultural, and linguistics imperatives may have been adopted. Due to these factors, it has become apparent and a mandate for a decolonized epistemic turn that will require transformative pedagogies that will develop a scholarship of learning and teaching. This enables one to question, and critically think about the theory, writings, and communication of a new epistemology that caters to bilingualism, translanguaging, and versioning, and others to language articulations that can empower people. These may include the facilitation of social justice by removing structural

discriminatory and structural injustices and facilitating indigenous knowledge systems, and newly co-constructed identities in persons, families, and communities (Dominelli, 2010).

This is, therefore, a call for people to develop an awakening consciousness that seeks for them to become aware of their problems and have a will to bring about change (Gumede & Biyase, 2016). This will enable local actions to meet immediate means and be documented. There is also a need to reform consciousness and people's developments should inculcate a desire for self-determination and sharing power (Hungwe & Ndofirepi, 2022). People will need to question inequalities and injustices from micro to macro levels. This implies the development of deep consciousness, the highest level of thoughts, and a view of problems within the structured context; meaning, making connections between socio-economic contradictions and injustices in societies. People need to start questioning cultural practices and old values and develop new values. This may be achievable through democratic, participatory, and empowering ways of working with people and enabling them to evoke critical thinking and deliberations that could contribute to the body of knowledge in pedagogy (Etieyibo, 2021).

Through decolonization, people should be wary that Africanism is intertwined, and the philosophy of Ubuntu has long immemorial been embedded in African systems of existence (Omodan & Diko, 2021). In addition, Plaatjie (2013) views Ubuntu as a word that means positive attributes of being human, such as a sense of belonging, selflessness, hospitality, sharing, humility, and respect. In essence, Ubuntu is a code of ethics deeply embedded in African culture, 'umntu ngumntu ngabantu'. The word Ubuntu is Xhosa and Zulu, is known as Botho in Sesotho, Tswana and Sepedi; whereas it's known as Vhutu in Tshivenda, Bunhu in Xitsonga, and Mensheid/Medemensilikheid in Afrikaans. This implies that all cultures in South Africa confirm the African origin of this value. This also may imply recovery of African values curricula should take cognizance of African values and these should form part of the syllabi that commence from early childhood development to adulthood. Therefore, the curriculum in Africanism should be guided by African values that highlight:

- Importance of a family unit that sticks together.

- Mutual coexistence of a person to a group.
- Respect for elders.
- Fear of God.
- Deep commitment to sustaining meaningful community life through shared produce, problems, and sorrow (Mathebane, 2017).
- Consultation on all issues.
- Desire for consensus on major problems.
- Fair, honest and humane.
- Compassion politeness and dignity.
- Generosity and helpfulness.
- Self-respect, sincerity, goodwill, and tolerance (Shonhiwa, 2016).

Considering the aforementioned values, it then becomes apparent Africanism is regarded as group cohesiveness that is based on respect and mutual coexistence and sharing of resources among community members and the impoverished.

5. Curriculum Transformation Framework Guidelines

Eurocentric content and pedagogies dominate the curriculum of most African countries (Motala & Pampallis, 2020). This result is the African child not thinking and innovating in ways that promote the African identity (Namubiru, 2022). In calling for curriculum transformation, driven through the lens of decolonization and Africanisation there is a need for us to rethink the position of Africa in the knowledge economy in terms of Africa we want through curriculum transformation. This paper posits that the decolonization and Africanisation of our curriculum as a transformative process must be underpinned by a desire to refocus our teaching curriculum in the African context. Context matters as students will be able to draw their knowledge from their own experiences resulting in indigenous knowledge being infused into the curriculum content (Namubiru, 2020). Such knowledge will enable society to solve African problems in African ways as already alluded to in Mendy and Madiope (2020). Mendy & Madiope (2020) point out that there is a huge framework lag in

the way our curriculum is designed and implemented as it remains widely Westernised and Eurocentric.

Adopting an Afrocentric curriculum framework must start with the curriculum design process. There must be a clear intention to decolonize and Africanise the curriculum in the design process. Such a framework must aim at infusing an African culture, customs, practices, and languages as pillars of the education system. These are glaringly missing in the current westernized and European epistemologies that are inherited from the former colonial masters (Kariya, 2015). There is a serious need to rid the system of aspects of the western curriculum that dehumanizes black students and the neo-colonial educational practices do not serve the African interests culturally, socially, and economically (Evans, 2016). The neo-colonial and imperialist attributes that perpetuate colonialism need to be guarded against in the curriculum transformation process.

In a quest to fight neo-colonialism in the higher education space, especially after the #Fees Must Fall and #Rhodes Must Fall in 2015 and 2016, universities have tried to infuse notions of Africanisation at the center of knowledge production. Questions around "who are we?", "whose knowledge?" became louder (Heleta, 2016). Calls for knowledge that empowers and liberates, rather than domesticates became louder. Central to the curriculum transformation framework and guidelines must be the reconstruction of knowledge that includes the appreciation and development of indigenous knowledge systems, around Ubuntu (Omodan & Diko, 2021), Afrocentric theories and practices (Davies & Wa Ngugi, 2020).

A decolonized and Africanised curriculum must, in the recontextualization fields select knowledge from the production fields, select it, rearrange, and transform it into a pedagogic discourse that recognized African knowledge, and values (Badat, 2017; LeGrange, 2016). Transformative curriculum design hence must be guided by the extent to which African knowledge systems of Ubuntu and humanization are drawn from the periphery to the center of the academic discourse. In calling for social justice, there is a need to humanize the pedagogy through Ubuntu values being infused into practice. A transforming curriculum should be viewed as responding to the local and global contexts, histories, realities, and problems (UP, 2016). Decolonising and Africanising the curriculum need to be driven by a desire of changing the narratives and knowledge

creation imposed by Western epistemologies taught for years in South African universities (Ripero-Muniz *et al.*, 2021). Tied with Ubuntu is an African pedagogy, which must show the intentions to shift towards caring for the students who in the main hail from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The issue of language parity plays a critical discussion point in the quest for an Africanised and decolonized curriculum. The continued practice of teaching in English (a second language) does not seem to work well in a context where students as well as lecturers are multi-lingual, diverse, and have different pedagogical needs (Ripero-Muniz *et al.*, 2021). Language parity (equality of languages) hence allows the pedagogy to address the specific contexts in cognizance of the lived experiences of teachers and students. The African languages have to be legitimated as it is at the center of human existence that affects culture and history (Ngugi wa Thio'o, 1992, in Ripero *et al.*, 2021). The learning approaches could be aligned to allow for the co-creation of knowledge with students in more student-centered ways allowing for the integration of critical thinking and problem-solving skills as part of the teaching and learning process (Nisancioglu & Gebral, 2018). An inclusive curriculum thus allows for students to be involved in how to Africanise their responses when given tasks thus using the South African contexts. This is one of the ways that control of knowledge can culminate in control over the economy, control of authority, and control of the public sphere (LeGrange, 2018). Thus, Africanisation brings pride, dignity, and respect to Africans that develop African education (Mashabela, 2017).

Tied to language parity is the desire to Africanise and decolonize textbooks and other reading resources. Soto-Molina and Mendez (2020:14) argue that prescribed textbooks assume a "one-language-one-culture relation to an idealized self and lifestyle close to the native linguistic model that teaches how to speak and what type of social and normalized rules and rituals must be respected and repeated". Hence, local resources that center on African ways of doing and being must be encouraged as their thinking is drawn from an African context. The focus should then be on the production and promotion of literary productions from the African continent that is currently being ignored given their conspicuous absence and underrepresentation from the university libraries.

6. An Integrative Approach to Curriculum Transformation

An integrative approach to curriculum transformation entails several aspects that include decolonization and Africanisation in the teaching and learning process (Taylor & Cameron, 2016). The decolonized curriculum is about integrating the western models with what is happening in South Africa and Africa in general. This can permit students to be knowledgeable about their African cultures and ideologies like Ubuntu (Omodan & Diko, 2021). The integration between the western and African curricula has an expression of identity as supported by the psychosocial theory (Shava, 2016). The curriculum is made relevant to students when attention is paid to African writers, their theories and discoveries, and philosophical ideas. There are studies that focus on the integration of African epistemologies into existing curricula and are viewed as intersecting domains instead of separate domains of knowledge (Taylor & Cameron, 2016; Shava, 2016). The African values and cultures dominate the teaching and learning process. This integration does not take away the western knowledge but encourages infusing the African indigenous knowledge into the western curriculum that the African students are studying. This can inter-weave indigenous, national, and international knowledge, in appropriate and meaningful ways (Gumede & Biyase, 2016; Ngoepe & Saurombe, 2021).

There are huge disadvantages that transpired from the colonized system. Students do not respect their cultures and their historical practices (Blignaut, 2017; Mendy & Madiope, 2020). This is evident to the youth that values and looks forward to the western type of Africa that does not exist. Today's youth place value, high expectations, beliefs, and trust on the colonized curriculum (Taylor & Cameron, 2016). This curriculum favors the interest of the already rich people and drives the youth to one way of looking for employment, hence, this high rate of unemployment among the South African youth (Pasara & Garidzirai, 2020). Adopting a decolonized curriculum could allow the youth to acknowledge the power in their environments, and what works in their surroundings in a practical way. For instance, when teaching about how economies grow, western books inform about the economic growth model that includes production functions (Pasara & Garidzirai, 2020). The decolonized and African way can include a curriculum teaching about

the production of indigenous plants that grow in South Africa and how they can be commercialized. This allows beneficiation to the active participants in the economy and can alleviate employment and lower inequality as stated in the psychosocial theory (Mashiya *et al.*, 2020).

Integrating decolonization and Africanisation into the university curriculum can follow several processes and strategies. It should be noted that for instance in South Africa, there are diverse universities and therefore the strategies can vary to suit the individual institutions (Vandeyar, 2020). For instance, Swart, Meda and Mashiya (2020) alluded that the strategies can include collaborations with local and international research partners to encourage research on curriculum transformation, workshops on decolonization and Africanisation of curriculums, and application of critical theory on curriculum reforms. These place academics in universities at the center of this process, as they are key in integrating the western curriculum with African knowledge (Vandeyar, 2020). Academics know how to integrate indigenous ways into curricula. For example, when academics plan the curriculum, learning outcomes and learning activities should be based on the African context that involves students' societal issues, and prescribed books chosen should be those written from an African perspective, though international books can be recommended. However, some African writers experience gatekeeping in publishing their books, but this should not discourage placing in the public domain real African knowledge (Mendonça, Pereira & Ferreira, 2018).

Academics can engage students in integrating indigenous knowledge into the curriculum in their teaching and learning activities (Vandeyar, 2020). This can be done by integrating African knowledge with western theories. A practical example is when teaching inclusivity in education using "Ubuntology" as alluded to by Omodan and Diko (2021). Students are allowed to critique articles written by African writers and compare knowledge against the western writers. In addition, students should be allowed to relate what is learnt with how to solve their societal problems, to communicate the importance of social justice with regard to issues of poverty, to make teaching and learning relevant and meaningful. For instance, teaching monetary policy of South Africa using a textbook written in western context will differ here and there, and students should be able to critique and check reality in the

South African context to see what works. Where possible, universities should have policies to allow the integration, for instance in multilingual pedagogy in classes to clarify certain issues in the content being taught (Mendonca *et al.*, 2018).

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The paper explored the prospects of integrating decolonization and Africanization into universities through curriculum transformation activities. The paper employed a qualitative conceptual approach, where themes were discussed based on reviewed literature. The thematic analysis is based on the processes in curriculum transformation, decolonization, and Africanization of the curriculum, curriculum transformation framework guidelines, and an integrative approach to curriculum transformation. This resonates well with a people-centred approach that is participatory, inclusive, and enhances increased freedoms and capabilities.

It can be recommended that there should be pedagogies that facilitate empowerment, recognition of strengths and resilience with opportunities, and also investigate, question, analyse and reconstruct power relations and hierarchies that exist in all spheres of life. Curricula should be developed to unveil and conscientize levels of awareness aimed at awakening the oppressed knowledge, creativity, and constant critical reflexive capabilities. Through these processes, there would be demystification and understanding of the power relations responsible for student marginalization. There must be a creation of knowledge that is spiritual and culturally sensitive to Africanization. This implies that there should be a creation of enabling environment that provides empowering theories and languages based on the knowledge of the people and on what they are familiar with. The curriculum should be transformed through the construction of knowledge and should include the appreciation and development of indigenous knowledge systems that embrace Ubuntu, and Afrocentrism theories and practices. The struggle of oppression is also located in SELF, self-discovery is key, and this needs a psychological approach to self-reflection, reconstructing and re-appreciate oneself, and regaining self-pride. Curriculum transformation through dialogues that cater to student voices, external and internal stakeholders, and potential employers is key to the process. It is through these efforts that participation and collective action can be achieved.

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