Developing Teaching & Learning in Africa

Decolonising Perspectives

EDITOR
Vuyisile Msila

Foreword

Steve Sharra

Decolonising Teacher Education in the New Decade

At one minute before 8pm on the evening of 22 May in 2018, I got a WhatsApp message from Professor Alfred Matiki, then based in Gaborone where he was teaching at the University of Botswana. He said he had just heard that Gregory Kamwendo, a mutual friend, had been shot dead in South Africa. I had not heard anything. Matiki had received a phone call from a relative in Durban, but there were no further details.

In the subsequent days, it was confirmed that Professor Kamwendo, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Zululand, had been shot dead in his car in front of his home in Empangeni. It was a crime that was to shake his university, leaving everyone aghast.

Prior to becoming Dean at the University of Zululand, Kamwendo had been Dean of the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). He went to UKZN from the University of Botswana where he taught for many years and headed the Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education. He left the University of Botswana just as I arrived there for a sabbaticant position in December 2014. He reassured me of an environment that would be intellectually fulfilling – it was.

Hankoni Gregory Kamwendo was a Malawian sociolinguist and language educator, and was a leading scholar in language education, on and on the decolonisation of African education. He researched and published extensively on how to bring African languages into African education systems. This book is dedicated to Professor Kamwendo's memory is a befitting honour and testimony to his scholarship and academic leadership on the continent.

Developing Teaching and Learning in Africa: Decolonising Perspectives continues the legacy of the work of Kamwendo. It is a particularly important book because it tackles the question of decolonisation from the perspective of the education

of African teachers. Much of the decolonisation debate has focused on higher education in Africa, but this book argues that the debate is important for teacher education as well, starting with basic education.

As Msila persuasively contends in the preface, the decolonisation agenda will not achieve its transformative purpose unless it pervades the whole education system. This means transforming the curriculum in the schools as well as the curriculum in institutions that educate teachers. Teacher educators in universities and colleges will need to be at the forefront of this agenda. It will be meaningless, Msila points out, to transform the curriculum but leave out teacher educators. Worse still, bring that curriculum to student teachers who are unprepared for transformation.

The book provides both depth and breadth on the most important topics in decolonising education. The authors are committed to bringing Pan-Africanism, the African Renaissance and *Ubuntu* philosophy into the classroom. They demonstrate that it is possible to explore indigenous mathematics with both student teachers and learners. They also show how and why we must be inclusive in our approach, and ensure that both teachers as well as students with disabilities are empowered to contribute to their own education. We must challenge perspectives that see students with disabilities from a medicalised and economic liability perspective. Rather, human rights and local resources must inform inclusive education.

Teachers must be equipped to address the place of indigenous African languages in the classroom and in the education system. Teachers must have a broader view of knowledge production and the historical, political, and social contexts in which this process is mediated. Indigenous knowledges have a place in a globalised world and are key to reclaiming African identities pushed to the margins by colonialism and neo-colonialism, imperialism and neoliberalism. Teacher educators need to tackle negative attitudes towards indigenous knowledge from teachers, curriculum specialists and education policymakers.

Developing Teaching and Learning in Africa: Decolonising Perspectives uses case studies from across Africa, making it a resource that should be used in various parts of the continent. The authors take on topics surrounding issues such as high university fees (#FeesMustFall), colonial symbols on campuses (#RhodesMustFall), indigenous languages in African education, indigenous knowledge, inclusive education among others. In this way, the book provides a thorough overview of debates that dominated education discourse in the decade that started in 2010 and ended in 2019. In the coming decade, the imperative will be to embed these debates in the education of teachers in Africa, and in curriculum reforms.

For the continent to progress towards the African Union's *Agenda 2063*, national educational systems will need to play a central role. It will be impossible to propel the aspirations of the Africa we want without teachers who are well educated and intellectually equipped. The Continental Education Strategy for Africa, the first ten-year strategy for revitalising education in Africa, puts teachers and teacher education at the top of its strategic objectives. Revitalising teachers and teacher education on the continent will require intellectual, financial and material resources, and this collection offers itself as one such resource.

With this volume, Vuyisile Msila continues with his leadership on research and knowledge production in Africa's education systems. His 2016 book *Africanising the Curriculum*, co-edited with Professor Mishack Gumbo, introduced indigenous perspectives and theories into the discourse. Msila and Gumbo followed up with *African Voices on Indigenisation of the Curriculum*, published in 2017. In the same year, Msila came out with *Decolonising Knowledge for Africa's Renewal*, placing him firmly on the frontiers of intellectual leadership on matters to do with reshaping African knowledge production for emancipation.

This book continues the legacy of the late Gregory Kamwendo, who envisioned an Africa in which indigenous knowledge and African languages played a vital role in educating the continent's young people. In this new decade, African scholars, policymakers and teacher educators are called upon to fulfil the promise of the Africa envisioned by Kamwendo and other African thinkers who believed in the power of knowledge to change society.

Steve Sharra, PhD
Lilongwe
Malawi