Developing Teaching & Learning in Africa

Decolonising Perspectives

EDITOR
Vuyisile Msila

Chapter One

Basic Education and Decolonisation in South Africa: Preparing Schools for New Challenges

Vuyisile Msila

Introduction: The Flight from Barbarism

In 1980, the educator I.B. Tabata wrote at length about a system of education in South Africa whose main objective was to indoctrinate and short-change learners; this was Bantu Education for blacks, a system Tabata referred to as *Education for Barbarism*. This system was devoid of epistemic freedom and laden with indoctrinating policies that separated the white child from the black child. The Bantu Education Act was based on segregation, legitimised apartheid policies, and extended the audacious objective of colonised education whilst breeding a system of education meant to demean the black child through knowledge that made the black community inferior. Apartheid education assumed that “whites should be separated from blacks (as a ‘nation’) and that Afrikaans-speaking children should be separated from English-speaking children (by mother-tongue schooling)” (Christie, 1988:165).

In fact, Peter Kallaway (1988) points out that education for blacks under apartheid was a means of restricting the development of the learners by distorting school knowledge to ensure control over the intellect of both the learners and their teachers. Furthermore, Kallaway opines that apartheid education not only domesticated but indoctrinated learners as well in order to entrench the master-servant relationship between whites and blacks. Based on the Christian National Education (CNE) ideology, knowledge taught in apartheid classrooms, legitimated white supremacy and subjects like history displayed white supremacy and black inferiority (Carrim, 2007). “White learners were taught subjects that led towards higher education and

superior skilled and leadership roles in society. Their educational opportunities had unlimited horizons” (Karlsson, 2004). Furthermore, schools serving white learners had more funding per learner than schools serving black learners (Fiske & Ladd, 2005). Unfortunately, decades later, the apartheid legacy still looms large and the poor families still get poor education. Many black parents are still stuck in under resourced schools with unqualified and underqualified teachers (Van Der Berg, 2005; Fleisch, 2008; Msila, 2011; Spaul, 2015; Villette, 2016).

All these inequalities were part of the huge apartheid policy plan to uphold what Hendrik Verwoerd, apartheid architect and the then Minister of Native Affairs, declared in 1953, “There is no space for him (the Native child) in the European community above certain forms of labour”.

The Afrikaner leaders of the National Party (NP) (which won the elections in 1948), continued the agenda of the British Colonial Government. Pam Christie (1988:37) quotes George Grey the British Governor of the Cape in 1855 who pointed out:

If we leave the natives beyond our border ignorant barbarians, they will remain a race of troublesome marauders. We should try to make them a part of ourselves, with a common faith and common interests, useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue. Therefore, I propose that we make unremitting efforts to raise the natives in Christianity and civilisation...

The colonial intent was clear in this postulation. The British sought to colonise the mind of the indigenous people hence “make them a part of ourselves” through education and religion. Later, the Bantu Education Act was to spill over to universities in the 1950s as a Bill was introduced to produce segregated universities that would not only separate Black from White but the African from Indian and Coloured. The universities for Africans were further divided into Xhosa, Sotho and Zulu universities (Tabata, 1980).

Schools and universities’ curricula taught the formal curriculum but what was more critical was the hidden curriculum, which among others, demonstrated that people are not and should not be equal in society. Sexism, superiority of Western knowledges, language policies, and dominant Western cultures are some of the examples that entrenched supremacy in the hidden curriculum. Currently, the attempts to Africanise and decolonise the university curricula are endeavours to address the barbaric attempts from apartheid and Western-oriented curricula at universities. This academic barbarism results from the consequences of the curriculum that has led to epistemicides, culturecides, linguicides and historicides

amongst others (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). The unequal curriculum at institutions of higher learning has entrenched inequality and academic barbarism that stunts the development of Africans.

The challenge to decolonialism today is that zombie ideas are perpetuated through zombie leadership. Smyth (2017) states that zombie leadership is a set of dead debunked ideas supreme in universities, and have been accompanied by weird rituals and practices for so long; and he says that this bizarre behaviour is a version of witchcraft. Western hegemonies have been shown to be dangerous and misleading. Based on colonial notions of domination, they marginalise other knowledges and debar Africans from expressing their own knowledges as central. For this reason, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) expresses the need to deprovincialise Europe, as Africa is decolonised. This is a need to dispel the myth and the witchcraft of colonialism as Africa's knowledge is brought to the centre as well. Some knowledges in the curricula of education institutions in Africa are spurious, nebulous and segregating in nature and these are based on zombie ideas that form the essence of academic barbarism.

O'Sullivan (2016) writes about ways in which institutions of learning continue with barbaric academic practices. The role of post-apartheid education institutions is to ensure a system of education that not only humanises but that which champions social justice principles. Schools should not be based on competition that upholds the ideology of barbarism. Academic barbarism brutalises people as it alienates them from their cultures. It entrenches dehumanisation and renders the institutions of learning irrelevant. The South African education ministry's calls to refocus on languages of education, humanising instruction and introducing history curricula in all grades are all commendable in that they seek to address the barbarism entrenched in our system over decades of apartheid domination (DBE, 2018).

This chapter focuses on a few aspects that look at the decolonisation of education in schools:

- o Contexts of Post-apartheid Education
- o Why Decolonisation?
- o Pedagogy Fit for Purpose: Mphahlele on Humanism in Education
- o Ecologies of Knowledge: Eschewing the Dominant Culture
- o Preparing Teachers for Liberatory Teaching
- o Conclusion

Contexts of Post-apartheid Education

We should never minimise the triumph of post-apartheid education over the draconian apartheid system, which as seen above, offered several systems of education including white education system and Bantu Education. However, later, this brought several paradoxes, which include parents moving away from historically black schools in the townships. Many have argued that this exodus has left many historically black schools with a decrepit system of education with underperforming learners and failing schools (Msila, 2004). The apartheid legacy still pervades decades after the fall of apartheid. Numerous learners from historically black schools are unlikely to reach matric and when they do, they are more likely to have lower grades (Spaull, 2015). Therefore, schools have a huge role in pushing for equity as they close the achievement gaps among all schools. Whilst access might have improved in South Africa, schools must strive for quality, socially just and relevant education. Several arguments have highlighted how South African education is characterised by two systems of education. Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafson, Spaull and Armstrong (2011) posit:

Within South Africa, the quality of education varies widely. Several authors characterise the South African school system as effectively consisting of two differently functioning sub-systems (Fleisch, 2008; Van der Berg, 2008; Taylor & Yu, 2009). The majority of children are located in the historically disadvantaged system, which still serves mainly black and coloured children. Learners in these schools typically demonstrate low proficiency in reading, writing and numeracy. The second sub-system consists mostly of schools that historically served white children and produces educational achievement closer to norms of developed countries.

Education success appears to be determined by wealth or socio-economic status of the families where the learners come from. This system is still undergirded by epistemic violence and vestiges of colonial principles and beliefs. The South African education system needs the decolonisation to engender equality, relevance and to affirm the identity of the African children. Arguably, various features of the present education still reflect the vestiges of the epistemic violence that characterised mission and apartheid education. Supporting learning materials used such as textbooks, the curricula, teaching methodology are some of the aspects that signify the need for a decolonised system of education.

The debates of decolonising education in South Africa have largely been concentrated on higher education institutions. Yet, it is in primary schools and high schools where the journey for a decolonised curriculum should begin. The struggles of the Fallists Movements in 2015 should have opened up the debates

for schools as well. The curriculum in South African schools has remained largely Western with inadequate traces of a decolonised curriculum that varies from school to school and from educator to educator. The calls to decolonise basic education is a call to free and meaningful African education ensuring that it instils knowledges that would compete equally with other (Western) knowledges.

The present contexts seek us to reframe and reinvent the practice and roles of the school. Decolonisation needs to move us from barbarity to freedom, from brainwashing classrooms to enriching critical thinking sites, from stunted growth to intellectual freedom and expression. The gift of decolonised education is immense for our learners and the future in that it will ensure that the learners move beyond the realm of bondage of history to liberatory education that ensure the magnification but not the romanticisation of the African continent.

Why Decolonisation?

There are usually practical questions posed as to how institutions (including schools) can decolonise – where do they start? Who should be involved? What if institutions do not decolonise? What will they benefit if they do? Others even argue for a common understanding of terms. Decolonising and decolonisation are terms that have been explicated and defined by various education role-players and experts. Writing about the state of the First nations people in Canada McGregor (2012) describes the concept decolonising as:

A critical response to imperialism and colonialism:

- o Working to advance the interests of indigenous peoples by transforming what is important in settler societies.
- o Involving more than changes to formal political power, requires long-term changes to all structures in society (i.e. Education)

Decolonising the schooling system refers to the dismantling of colonial and apartheid systems, systems that were responsible for the oppressive and marginalising divisions discussed above. The colonial and apartheid legacies still loom large in society. Despicable conditions evident in historically black schools reflect decades of marginalising and alienating education. The calls for decolonisation of schools are calls to empower learners, teachers and parents to enable them to resuscitate the school system to serve all equally. Role-players should negate the coloniality of power as they give voice to learners and teachers who might otherwise be alienated by their schools and the inflexible education system. Apartheid education regarded learners as *tabula rasas* (blank slates).

Furthermore, on the one hand Fundamental Pedagogics literature portrayed the child in and out of school as a pardoned sinner, immature, helpless and dependent (Viljoen & Pienaar, 1972; Killian & Viljoen, 1974; Engelbrecht & Lubbe, 1979; Steyn et al., 1988). On the other hand, the teacher was regarded as an adult and a responsible person who was supposed to impart knowledge on the blank slate personified by the learner.

Yet, decolonisation demonstrates that learners always bring knowledge to the classroom for learners bring values, experiences and histories. Ruddock (2018) argues that when we decolonise education we promote the idea that what is in the centre is changing, “We compel learners to consider other potential centres; we require those who have benefitted from having their own paradigms centralised to occupy the marginal spaces too” (Ruddock, 2018). In decolonial classrooms learners expand their knowledge as the spaces give them an opportunity to experience the ecologies of knowledge.

The ongoing debates on decolonisation of education in South Africa have enabled the society to pose new questions about the role of education. The decolonial debates have enabled communities to rethink what education stands for as they search for education that is fit for purpose. Furthermore, decolonisation has made it possible for all education’s role-players to examine education within the context of transformation. Learners and teachers have now legitimised their right to struggle and negotiate for social justice and equity within a system that appears hostile to equality. The society is also gradually learning about the need to apply a culturally relevant pedagogy. Over decades, we have witnessed pedagogical violence that excluded learner involvement. Numerous challenges that public schools face are historical and they include poverty, families’ socio-economic factors, language, literacy and technology issues, weak school governance and non-existent parental involvement. In addition to these, schools continue to present curricula that are irrelevant and pedagogy that marginalises learners. It has also been apparent that we cannot decolonise the curriculum without Africanising it first. Africanising education transforms Western models as it injects the rules of Africa conscious pedagogy. Africanisation is the antidote to a curriculum of stupidification for it opposes epithets of oppression and what Macedo (1993) refers to as pedagogy of lies.

Decolonised classrooms accommodate the Freirean agenda in teacher education. Among these are critical literacy and situated pedagogy. Relevant, Africanised curricula will ensure that through critical literacy, all learning areas will develop

reading, thinking and writing. Shor (1987:24) argues, “Critical literacy invites teachers and students to problematize all subjects of study that is to understand existing knowledge as a historical product deeply invested with the values of those who developed such knowledge.”

A decolonised programme would seek to use situated pedagogy whose goal is to make certain that teachers situate learning in the learners’ cultures. Shor (1987:24) contends that these cultures include “their literacy, their themes, their present cognitive and affective levels, their aspirations, their daily lives” (Shor, 1987:24). Mignolo (2007) points out that the decolonial project opposes colonialism and delinks from Eurocentrism as it seeks to reclaim the expression of non-Western cosmologies. It is in this context that decolonised classrooms should enable learners and their teachers to be able to examine the prescribed reading materials’ subliminal messages of bias. The learners’ engagement with the learning material (texts) should also enable them to be perceptive so that they can contest social injustice and oppression of the marginalised communities.

Mendoza and Garza (2010:40) posit:

Critical literacy goes beyond critically analysing and understanding texts. It is a process that works with the written language in order to bring to light social injustices and inequities that take place in the world. Besides reading the written word, this approach to literacy focuses on leading

Pedagogy Fit for Purpose: Mphahlele on Humanism in Education

The need for an African identity in universities in Africa was a vision for many prominent African intellectuals. The South African illustrious academic Ezekiel Mphahlele, wrote about the need for an African Humanism. Mphahlele established the Funda Centre in Soweto on his return from exile. The curriculum he drew up for Funda Centre can teach our current experts ways in which they can decolonise the curriculum. Mphahlele spoke of this concept, African Humanism that refers to communality and the concepts conjured traditional African philosophy. To emphasise this concept Mphahlele (2002) contended:

The African begins with the community and then determined what the individual’s place and role should be in relation to the community [...] Man finds fulfilment not as a separate individual but within a family and community.

Perhaps Mphahlele was the first academic in South Africa to draw a practical curriculum for Africans, his attention was on African Consciousness and emphasised the need for a curriculum that revives consciousness. Naidoo (1984) says about Mphahlele and African Consciousness:

Es'kia Mphahlele believed that the regeneration of African consciousness is essential to real African development and progress. African consciousness arises from the norms and values inherent in the traditional way of life. These values were marginalised under colonialism and apartheid when African people were forced to adopt Western norms and values. As a result, they developed a divided consciousness and became spiritually and psychologically weak. In order to regain the pride, dignity, strength, and independence of the African spirits, it is necessary to return to the traditional values. As African people have lost the context that gave rise to these values, regeneration of the African consciousness now depends on the formal articulation of traditional values. And this is what Es'kia Mphahlele has provided in his philosophy of African Humanism. In his articles he sets out the tenets of African Humanism and in his stories and novels, he illustrates the struggle to maintain African values. A study of his writings, therefore, will lead to an understanding of humanism that is essentially African.

Funda Centre offered what Mphahlele termed 'integrated studies' that cut across disciplinary boundaries. The themes of the lectures included the following:

- o Know Your Country: South Africa
- o Know Your Continent: Africa
- o Know Your Environment
- o Family Life
- o Black Consciousness
- o Know Your Civics
- o Growing Up in South Africa
- o The Arts and Their Social Environment
- o The Ascent of Man

Mphahlele understood the anomalies of Bantu Education and worked hard to theorise what needed to be done to retain the dignity of the black learner. His themes of education above are in sync with the ideals of decolonisation. The idea of infusing Black Consciousness philosophy is important in bringing back the dignity of the black learner who was traumatised by Bantu Education. Black Consciousness is necessary to sensitise both black and white learners of the need to see the potential of a free society where black learners and white learners experience equality. There can be no social justice, no African Renaissance if black learners suffer the inferiority complex planted by Bantu Education whose

objectives still loom large in African societies today. Black Consciousness should also be reflected in subjects such as history because history as portrayed in today's literature reflects blacks in a past that is barbaric and backward. History needs to demonstrate the existence of black heroes as well (Rodney, 1973; Biko, 1987; Asante, 1995). Asante (1995) argues that hegemonic Eurocentric education stifles what should be taught in schools and this can exist as long as whites maintain that blacks have never contributed to world civilisation.

On history and education, Biko (1987:29) writes:

[...] the colonialists were not satisfied merely with holding a people in their grip and emptying the Native's brain of all form and content, they turned to the past of the oppressed people and distorted, disfigured and destroyed it. No longer was reference made to African culture, it became barbarism [...] The history of African society was reduced to tribal battles and internecine wars [...] No wonder the African child learns to hate his heritage in his days at school. So negative is the image presented to him that he tends to find solace only in close identification with the white society.

Several cases such as this one alienated the black child from education because they were represented in bad light, hence many might have desired the positive portrayal and privilege of whiteness.

In his plan, Mphahlele was more concerned with a system that would encompass various disciplines and involving human issues rather than disciplinary questions. Mphahlele had a conception of education that spelled out the purpose of education and can be seen to be in line with the ideals of decolonisation of education. He wrote at length about the concept of African Humanism, which is a philosophy to edify Africans. This needs to be part of education where Africans are taught to create bonds "where national political life is torn and poisoned by the manipulation of language and ethnic interests" (Mphahlele, 1974:36). The themes he set about for a decolonial African education were an endeavour to infuse this humanism into education. He perceived education as critical in changing people's lives – which humanism should be revolutionary and deal with the challenges of power, education and poverty. He also argues that humanism needs to bring a productive revolution where African values should translate into educational and economic planning. He also perceived education as a process critical in building identities. Through family, community, societal values the learner would be able to rid herself of alienation and embrace 'a vision of life'. Furthermore, Mphahlele sees life as a dialogue of two selves; the indigenous consciousness and the consciousness derived from the West. All those who have been colonised have these two selves. Education ought to harmonise the two

and these should be harmonised through their 'organic vision of life'. The two selves are apt to fight, quarrel, despise each other, hug each other, concede each other's roles (Mphahlele, 1974:281).

Under the themes of understanding one's country and continent, family life and growing up in South Africa, Mphahlele was tackling a number of issues, what decolonised education in schools need today is strong communities with empowered parents. Empowered parents would uphold the teaching of culture as it enhances the school curriculum. Parents are also critical in creating learners' resilience and success. When empowered parents are involved, they will be able to make their children take charge of their learning. Learners will also glean much from family in building their country and continent. It is from strong families that children can learn about subjects such as gender-based violence and how to avert it. The violence witnessed in schools can be addressed constructively if parents and communities worked closely with schools to nurture the learners. The tenets of Mphahlele's African Humanism have the potential to liberate all role players in education as they reinforce the ideals of decolonisation.

African Humanism also embraces the ideals that seek to oppose ills such as patriarchy. Teaching and learning in schools should reflect feminist values as well for when these are present, they would lead to progressive democratic teaching. Feminist education in this sense means, "We enter into a dialogue with our students, meeting them as human beings, and learning with them in community" (Schniedewind, 1987:179). Various other Mphahlele-themes are critical, such as race and culture, the building of a single nation in South Africa and the question of national consciousness.

Higher education institutions cannot change society without the consciously thinking of a curriculum that would free the society from epistemic bondage and academic barbarism. Epistemic bondage means that the people cannot think because they do not have culture, they do not have history, no language and no knowledge. The curriculum reflects Western epistemologies, thus marginalising African knowledges. Curriculum under epistemic bondage also supports barbarism, which undervalues African knowledges and undermines the project of Pan-Africanism. As a result, irrelevant curricula continue to produce students who are disoriented and alienated from their ontological base. The example of language in South Africa currently is one example that shows how indigenous languages have been marginalised and students made to believe that it is the colonial languages such as French, English, Portuguese and English that dominate

the education landscape in Africa. Epistemic bondage paralyses thinking, hence we talk of rethinking the curriculum, which is the fundamental issue when it comes to curriculum reforms at higher education institutions. The transformation of curriculum requires leadership that understands transformation otherwise the transformation of curriculum can be stalled. Leadership that does not understand the new paths of change will be just immersed in zombie leadership where leaders support outmoded ideas and by implication academic barbarism.

Ecologies of Knowledge: Eschewing the Dominant Culture

Transformed curricula require people who understand the need for epistemic freedom, which means that knowledge should be open in what is referred to as ecologies of knowledge. The Europeanisation of curriculum was intent on sidelining Africa's knowledges and disregard indigenisation. Curriculum that does not take this into cognisance will be missing the mandate of the university under decolonisation of universities in Africa. When leaders lead curriculum transformation, they cannot divorce it from pedagogy. Usually in institutions of higher learning faculty tends to recycle old study materials and as such one will still find material that was prepared years before still in use albeit so irrelevant especially now, in times of transformation. Again, this is the unfairness, the academic barbarity of institutions of higher learning. There are several aspects that we need to look at as we address the episteme of learning in our institutions of higher learning especially in the attempt to build African institutions. The curriculum should respond to the debates on language, a debate that has become almost a taboo in higher education institutions seeking to transform. Throughout Africa, conscientious academics have been posing questions on how to bring indigenous languages to the fore. Some African philosophers have argued that without language African thinkers cannot be able to accurately move for their case thinking in exoglossic languages outside their own cultures. Linked to languages is culture; when Western or European knowledges were introduced, they destroyed the cultures of Africans through the domination of non-indigenous languages. It is difficult to think of a transformed curriculum without thinking about language. However, it should be clear that translating higher education's materials is not addressing the language dilemma. Simply replacing languages is also not addressing the language dilemma. Decolonisation is not about retaliation, but it is about consciously bringing Africa to the fore, it is about changing the consciousness, enriching the people with skills of reclaiming the education institutions.

The calls to use indigenous languages in education is a critical call towards decolonisation and African Renaissance. Cheik Anta Diop argued decades ago that it would be the African languages that should lead in the bringing of a rebirth in Africa. Mboup (2010) posits that, for Diop, history and language represent two among the three key components of cultural identity. Therefore, the Department of Basic Education acted in line with decolonisation principles when history was announced that it would be taught in various grades. Mboup (2010:2) explains:

Historical conscience is crucial for the consolidation of national conscience and nation building, particularly in the case of a pluri-cultural and multi-lingual nation in the making. Among others, historical conscience refers to the feeling of belonging to the same community from a historical and socio-political point of view, and above all, from the consciousness of commonly shared aspirations, interests and value systems: in Diop's words (ibid.:212), it is about that which distinguishes a cohesive *people* from the heterogeneous, inorganic *population* of a market.

Language, like history, will instil a sense of identity and national consciousness. McGregor (2012) argues that history is vital in a decolonised system because it allows learners to:

- o resist images and portrayals they see in the media, museums and other sources or stereotypes;
- o identify ways indigenous peoples demonstrate agency; and
- o questions myths and oversimplified narratives about colonisation ... and Eurocentric powers.

Preparing Teachers for Liberatory Teaching

The decolonisation and conscientisation of teachers is critical for decolonised pedagogies. "Educators today are tasked with developing lifelong learners who can survive and thrive in a global knowledge economy" (Blaschke, 2012). Yet what South Africa needs to avoid in the eve of a decolonised education system is a 1998-*de ja vu* where numerous teachers felt left out when the outcomes-based education was introduced in South African schools. Many found themselves deskilled, having been trained under a teacher training programmes that emphasised the banking model where the teacher was always a superior. Decolonised system will also be a huge leap from Western-oriented teacher training programmes. Decolonised classrooms will demand educators who are free to and knowledgeable to teach indigenous knowledges alongside other knowledges.

Liberatory teaching within the ambit of decolonised education means teaching for a purpose; it is a means to make meaning out of education as one teases out elements relevant for the learners' environment and it is critical teachers who employ critical consciousness who will be able to embrace ideals of liberatory teaching. It will be difficult for untransformed teachers to teach in liberatory ways. Decolonised classrooms will endeavor to use critical consciousness to combat ills of society. It should teach learners about ways of sharing power, critical nature of relevance and ways of shedding oppression. Johnson-Hunter and Risku (2003:101) point out:

The application of a liberatory theory provides other rationale for critical consciousness. In *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks (1994) asserted that critical consciousness can help to combat the White supremacist, capitalist patriarchy (p. 48). In *The Peaceable Classroom*, O'Reilly (1993) stated that if students gain critical consciousness, they will rethink their preconceived ideas about war and violence. Thus, critical consciousness fosters the reduction of the oppression of ethnicity, gender, class, and violence.

In the calls for transformed, meaningful and relevant curricula all over the world is the expectation of teaching that would prepare learners for a changing society that requires a set of new different skills. In his work, Paulo Freire describes critical pedagogy, which is a system of education that changes the world learners live in, and critical pedagogy ensures that education does not alienate. Decolonisation, as explored in this presentation is one method that strives to enhance the social transformation as well as teacher and learner experience and problem posing, and dialogue are critical in this regard. Analysing Paulo Freire's work, Shor (1987:23) captures the role of dialogue teaching concisely:

A dialogic class begins with problem posing discussion and sends powerful signals to learners that their participation is expected and needed. It will not be easy to learn the arts of dialogue because education now offers so little critical discussion and so few constructive peer exchanges. Dialogue calls for a teacher's art of intervention and art of restraint, so that the verbal density of a trained intellectual does not silence the verbal styles of unscholastic learners.

All learners need an education system that would help bring changes in society. Cappy (2016) describes the need for education to transform society and create a more socially just world. In fact, the calls for a decolonised system of education in South Africa seek to respond to this call for education for transformation.

The decolonial debates have unmasked a number of aspects that were concealed. As we discuss new curricula, transformative pedagogies and novel methods in a decolonial milieu, we all need to think about the need to rethink the

university into the future. The transformative pedagogies can never be realised if we cannot focus on how we perceive thinking itself. In fact, decolonisation will be unreachable without thinking about thinking and how we examine systems that would rehumanise and bring life and social justice to education. Ronald Barnett and Soren Bengtsen (2017) discuss of a need for universities to refocus on epistemologies as they adjust their emphasis on pathways from a dissolution of knowledge to the emergence of new thinking. In addition, as demonstrated above in this presentation Barnett and Bengtsen highlight that there is a relationship between the university and knowledge. These authors also offer the idea of an ecological university, which they present as an optimistic university, which might offer a different way of thinking. This ecological optimistic university responds to at least seven ecosystems; knowledge, the economy, social institutions, learning, individual persons, culture, and the natural environment (Barnett & Bengtsen, 2017). The learning institutions that have undergone rethinking exist not only for local ontologies, but they seek inclusion of various epistemologies; it seeks to reflect the ecosystems of the world. The “new university has to be different from its entrepreneur counterparts”. Furthermore, Barnett and Bengtsen (2017:10) contend:

[...] knowledge can only be retained for the university – as a defining concept – if it is rethought. Accordingly, thinking itself and a new way of thinking the university at that has itself to come forward for consideration; and a thinking into the future and for the future.

It may just be that the idea of the ecological university both furnishes a new way of understanding the university and of calling forth a new epistemology for the university that can serve it through the 21st century.

In Africa, the rethinking of the universities can be traced back to the colonial legacy. The university in Africa continues to rethink its role that has long been diluted by colonial and apartheid hegemonies. This has huge implications for basic education. Rethinking thinking in Africa means dismantling epistemic violence and Eurocentrism (Heleta, 2016). Furthermore, Heleta points out that, although direct colonial rule might have disappeared, colonialism pervades in various guises. Furthermore, universities need to completely reframe the curriculum and the pedagogy discussed above. Thus leading to the reconstruction of the curriculum. “This in no way means that decolonisation will lead to localization, isolation or only Africanisation of the curriculum. Africa will not be the only ‘focus of the curriculum in the ethnocentric-particularist manner of [*the current*] Eurocentric approaches’” (Heleta, 2016:5). Rethinking of the curriculum means thinking broadly about the planetary nature of the curriculum. It means rethinking ways in which African knowledges can compete equally with the knowledges of the world.

Transforming the curriculum does not mean tinkering with the current curricula; it does not mean microwaving what we already have. Decolonisation of the curriculum means an overhaul of the curriculum as we have it today. Decolonisation should overhaul the education system and this means changing how we teach and how we learn. The present curricula as it tend to emphasise elitism as well as examinations, frequently disregarding knowledge. The learners have internalised this as well. Understanding decolonised curricula requires people who are able to grasp knowledge of their disciplines. Decolonised curricula are more rigorous and more determined to liberate the learner and the teacher. The classes need to be more liberating and more critical and conscientious. We need to understand the role of the teacher and the role of the learner, teaching strategies utilised. There is a difference between the traditional approaches and the new decolonial or transformative approaches. Reading the texts should be investigated as the learner and the teacher's experiences are enhanced. In South Africa's context, decolonisation will redeem the learners as they take charge of their learning.

Concluding Comments: Confronting Barbarism

The decolonisation of education debates in South African basic education is long overdue for learners and their educators, and South African schools should have long started to interrogate the dominant Western epistemologies. A decolonised system of education will be able to address the epistemic violence of the past engendered by colonial and apartheid education systems. A decolonised system of education implies a humanising education system espoused by Mphahlele above, a system that would liberate individual learners and edify groups of learners to depend on one another for knowledge generation as well as sustainable living. It is only through a compelling foundation of a decolonised basic education system that would produce learners who are ready for engaging liberatory higher education institutions.

However, South Africa has a burden of history, and without addressing the teacher consciousness and learner commitment, the initiatives to introduce a decolonised system will easily falter. Communities should play a critical role in transforming the system of education from closed colonised systems to a dismantled system of Western-oriented education. The re-education of educators will be central to the attainment of a decolonised system for if teachers do not meaningfully embrace transformation initiatives, the plan to decolonise will only be a pipe dream. Universities, community-based structures and political organisations should be among the institutions that take a lead in the fruition for a just, decolonised system of basic education.

Finally, we should know that decolonial pedagogy means the real renaissance to African schools. The application of African philosophies should magnify access to education and open more opportunities for indigent families. South Africa continues to need an education system that would bring unity and a magnified future. A decolonised system of education should also bring epistemological freedom that would see South Africa working in unity with other African states. African intellectuals like Nyerere (1970) perceive education as a keyword to development and is more important than anything else (Vilby, 2007). The importance of education should continue in South Africa's basic education as we introduce Information and Communication Technology (ICT). But ICT should also be used within the decolonisation agenda and social justice principles. Zembylas (2009:23) contends that critical theory of ICT in education is needed and that is "a theorization that, on the one hand, develops 'criticality' about the uses of ICT as tools of social injustice and domination, and on the other hand, rejects the simplistic assumptions of digital divide. Implements that are used in a decolonised system of education should lead to true interdependence, intellectual freedom and applicability in our society". Julius Nyerere (1970) refers to the latter as education for self-reliance, and it should be this mammoth prize of self-reliance that a decolonised education system should move towards.

This chapter is adapted from a paper delivered as a keynote address at the Third Annual Basic Education Sector Lekgotla, 21 January 2019. Birchwood Hotel, Benoni, South Africa.

References

- Asante, M.K. 1995. *The Afrocentric Idea in Education*. In: F.L. Hord & J.S. Lee (eds.), *I Am Because We Are*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Barnett, R. & Bengtson, S. 2017. Universities and Epistemology: From a Dissolution of Knowledge to the Emergence of a New Thinking. *Education Sciences*, 7(1):38. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci7010038>
- Biko, S. 1987. *I Write What I like*. London: Heinemann.
- Blaschke, L.M. 2012. *Heutagogy and Lifelong Learning: A Review of Heutagogical Practice*.
- Cappy, C.L. 2016. Shifting the Future? Teachers as Agents of Social Change in South African Secondary Schools. *Education as Change*, 20(3):119-140. <https://doi.org/10.17159/1947-9417/2016/1314>
- Carrim, N.H. 2007. *Human Rights and the Construction of Identities in South African Education*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Johannesburg: Wits University.
- Christie, P. 1988. *The Right to Learn: The Struggle for Education in South Africa*. Braamfontein: Sached/Ravan.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). 2018. *Basic Education*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.education.gov.za>
- Engelbrecht, S.W.B. & Lubbe, A.N.P. 1979. *History of Education and Theory of Education*. Goodwood: Via Africa.
- Fiske, E.B. & Ladd, H.F. 2005. *Racial Equality in Education: How far Has South Africa Come?* Working Paper Series SAN05-03. January 2005, Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy.
- Fleisch, B. 2008. *Primary Education in Crisis: South African Schoolchildren Underachieve in Reading and Mathematics*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Heleta, S. 2016. Decolonisation of Higher Education: Dismantling Epistemic Violence and Eurocentrism in South Africa. *Transformation in Higher Education*, 1(1):1-8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/the.v1i1.9>
- Johnson-Hunter, P. & Risku, M.T. 2003. Paulo Freire's Liberatory Education and the Problem of Service Learning. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 2(1):98-108.
- Kallaway, P. 1988. *From Bantu Education to People's Education in South Africa*. Cape Town: UCT.
- Karlsson, J. 2004. Schooling Space: Where South Africans Learnt to Position Themselves Within the Hierarchy of Apartheid Society. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 12(3):327-346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681360400200206>
- Kilian, C.J.G. & Viljoen, T. A. 1974. *Fundamental Pedagogics and Fundamental Structures*. Durban: Butterworths.
- Landman W.A. 1981. *An Introductory Reader in Fundamental Pedagogics for the Teacher and the Student*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Macedo, D. 1993. *Literacy for Stupidification: The Pedagogy of Big Lies*. Harvard Educational Review, 63(2):183-207.
- Mazrui, A. 1996. *The African Renaissance: A Triple Legacy of Skills, Values and gender*. Keynote Address at the 5th General Conference of the African Academy of Sciences, held in Hammamet, Tunisia, 22-27 April 1996

- Mboup, S.B. 2010. *An African Cultural Renaissance Perspective on Constitutionalism, Democracy, Peace, Justice and Shared Values: Challenges & Stakes for Statehood and Nation-building*. African Union: Study on Constitutionalism & Shared Values. pp. 1-32.
- McGregor, H.E. 2012. *Decolonizing Pedagogies Teacher Reference Booklet for the Aboriginal Focus Schools*. Vancouver School Board.
- Mendoza, M.S. & Garza, A. 2010. Critical Literacy: Changing the World through the Word. *McNair Scholars Research Journal*, 6(1): 39-44.
- Mignolo, W. 2007. Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, The Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of Decoloniality. *Cultural Studies*, 21(3):449-514.
- Mphahlele, E. 1974. *The African Image*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Mphahlele, E. 2002. The Fabric of African Culture and Religious beliefs. In: E. Mphahlele (ed.), *Es'kia: Education, African Humanism & Culture, Social Consciousness, Literary Appreciation*. Cape Town: Kwela.
- Msila, V. 2005. The Education Exodus: The Flight from Township Schools. *Africa Education Review*, 2(2):173-188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18146620508566299>
- Msila, V. 2011. School Choice – As if Black African Learners matter: Black African Learners' Views on Choosing Schools in South Africa. *Mevlana International Journal of Education*, 1(1):1-14.
- Naidoo, M. 1984. *Eskia Mphahlele: Father Come Home*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press. [Online]. Available: <https://bit.ly/2PAcFdm>
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. 2018. *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialisation and Decolonisation*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429492204>
- Nyerere, J.K. 1970. *Nyerere: Freedom and Unity/Uhuru na Umoja*. Dar es Salaam: Oxford.
- O'Sullivan, M. 2016. *Academic barbarism, Universities and Inequality*. London: Palgrave. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137547613>
- Rodney, W. 1973. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications.
- Ruddock, P. 2018. *Decolonising Education in South Africa*. [Online]. Available: <https://bit.ly/30DVOg6>
- Schniedewind, N. 1987. Feminist Values: Guidelines for Teaching Methodology in Women's Studies. In: I. Shor (ed.), *Freire for the Classroom: A Sourcebook for Liberatory Teaching*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Shor, I. 1987. Educating the Educators: A Freirean Approach to the crisis in Teacher Education. In: I. Shor (ed.), *Freire for the Classroom: A Sourcebook for Liberatory Teaching*. Portsmouth: Boyton/Cook.
- Shor, I. 1999. What is Critical Literacy? *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice*, 1(4). Article 2. [Online]. Available: <https://bit.ly/3a3kbXD>
- Smyth, J. 2017. *The Toxic University: Zombie Leadership, Academic Rock Stars and Neoliberal ideology*. London: Palgrave. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54968-6>
- Spaull, N. 2015. Schooling in South Africa: How Low-Quality Education Becomes a Poverty Trap. *South African Child Gauge 2015*. pp. 34-41.
- Steyn, P.D.G., Bisschoff, T.C., Behr, A.L. & Vos, A. J. 1988. *Education 3: The Philosophical Foundations of Education*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

- Tabata, I.B. 1980. *Education for Barbarism*. London: Unity Movement of South Africa.
- This is Africa. 2017. *Ngugi Wa Thiongo Calls for Preservation and Inclusion of African Languages In Learning Institutions*. [Online]. Available: <https://bit.ly/33lkg1P>
- Van der Berg, S. 2005. *Apartheid's Eduring Legacy: Inequalities in Education*. Paper to Oxford University? University of Stellenbosch Conference on The South African Economic Policy Under Democracy: A 10-Year Review, Stellenbosch, 27-28 October 2005.
- Van der Berg, S., Taylor, S., Gustafson, M., Spaull, N. & Armstrong, P. 2011. *Improving Education Quality in South Africa. Report for the National Planning Commission*. Department of Economics, Stellenbosch University. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.
- Vilby, K. 2007. *Independent? Tanzania's Challenges since Uhuru: A Second Generation Nation in a Globalised World*. Dar es Salaam: E & D Vision Publishing Ltd.
- Villette, F. 2016. The Effects of Apartheid's Unequal Education System Can Still be Felt Today. *Cape Times*, 15 June.
- Viljoen, T.A. & Pienaar, J.J. 1972. *Fundamental Pedagogics*. Durban: Butterworths.
- Wa Thiongo, N. 1993. *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*. New York: James Currey.
- Zembylas, M. 2009. ICT for Education, Development and Social Justice: Some Theoretical Issues. In: C. Vrasidas, M. Zembylas & G.V. Glass (eds.), *ICT for Education, Development, and Social Justice*. Arizona: IAP.