Knowledge beyond colour lines

Towards repurposing
knowledge generation in
South African Higher Education

EDITORS

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A case of teaching isiXhosa to non-mother-tongue speakers

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Introduction and background

In higher education institutions, the conversation on decolonising the curriculum raises questions regarding knowledge production and its impact on preparing students for the world. What is noticeable in recent debates on decolonisation is the discomfort and uncertainty regarding the inclusion of issues about indigenous African knowledge in the curriculum (Le Grange, 2016; Msila, 2016). Scholarly debates range from questioning African knowledge systems in terms of their market and scientific value to questions concerning their lack of clarity vis-à-vis providing a clear theoretical framework (Mutekwe, 2015). Notably, higher education institutions are supposed to advance knowledge through learning and teaching, research, community engagement and service. However, the literature reveals that knowledge theories at most South African universities remain rooted in colonial, apartheid, Western worldviews and epistemological traditions (Savo, 2016).

Teacher education curricula are no exception to this debate. Learning to become a teacher encompasses preparing teachers who understand learning and teaching contexts (Flores, 2017; Zinn, Geduld, Delport & Jordaan, 2014) and acquiring an in-depth knowledge of subject content and pedagogy (Shulman, 2004). The curriculum is a critical aspect of preparing teachers for the classroom because they implement it (Van Wyk, 2002). Given the multicultural and multilingual nature of classrooms today (Agnihotri, 2014), one wonders how teachers are trained to mediate learning and construct knowledge in such diverse classroom contexts. Kulago (2019:240) has called for teachers who can “critically examine curriculum, instructional methods and forefront indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems”. The desired goal would be a curriculum that would enable student teachers to be critical educators. Such a curriculum, I argue, would empower teachers to critique the epistemological issues that exist in teacher education and enable them to effect change in what, how and why they teach.

However, Waghid and Hibbert (2018:267) argue that existing teacher education curricula do not enable students to “produce new knowledge and have a sense of agency”. To address this challenge, they argue for “defamiliarisation as a transformative strategy” that creates “enabling spaces” where students are no longer bound by the dominant narratives and ideologies on offer but can bring forth alternative arguments and articulations. A critical contributing factor to this challenge is that, although universities introduced some reforms after the #FeesMustFall student movements, the curriculum was not transformed (Baijnath, 2017). Some changes have evidently not been affected, such as positioning Africa at the centre of the curriculum (Lockett, Morreira & Baijnath, 2019), regarding indigenous African knowledge systems as a framework for thinking and knowledge construction and addressing what counts as legitimate curriculum knowledge (Lockett et al., 2019). Initial teacher education programmes are no exception to these desired changes. Research shows that some higher education institutions chose technical compliance when revising their curricula, in line with the *Revised Policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ)* (RSA DHET, 2015a). This approach to curriculum transformation was intended to ensure that the ‘purity’ of disciplinary knowledge is not disrupted (Maistry, 2011).

In contrast, other institutions chose to question radically to what extent their existing curriculum took cognisance of local content and context (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). Sathorar and Geduld (2018) reviewed a BEd curriculum at Nelson Mandela University to ascertain how far it prepares students for teaching practice. Their findings suggest a need to expose students to different schooling contexts and introduce modules that will support students’ in-depth understanding of such alternative contexts. They therefore proposed:

[The] adoption of a teaching practice model that will help students to gain greater understanding into their own dispositions that have often been drenched in colonised philosophies and concepts, which cannot be left unchallenged (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018:10).

However, how their model addresses African knowledge systems’ inclusion in preparing teachers for teaching is not explicit. Although the study expects students to reflect on their experiences in the new contexts, the article does not draw from African philosophies as a critical source of understanding previously unfamiliar classroom contexts, in this case, township and rural schools.

In language curricula, the notion of indigenous knowledge is crucial. It is impossible to learn a language without learning the values, culture and identity of the people who speak that language (Msila, 2016). In South Africa, there is contestation in teaching African languages. During apartheid, white academics taught these languages, many of whom were not conversant (Kaschula, 2008). However, there is evidence of African languages

departments in higher education institutions where indigenous languages' scholarship is advanced in the post-apartheid era.

Recently, one of the goals of the revised MRTEQ policy (RSA DHET, 2015a) is to strengthen the teaching of African languages in teacher preparation programmes for the foundation phase. Even funding in teaching African languages is available and prioritised with a growing number of English- and Afrikaans-speaking teachers who are part of the foundation phase student cohort (Mayaba, 2017). If a transformed education system aims to embed indigenous knowledge in teacher education curricula, then students who speak languages other than indigenous ones should be included in transformation processes. However, one should be mindful that "indigenous knowledge cannot be easily embedded without disrupting Eurocentric hegemony in the content of the curriculum" (Kulago, 2019:240). Hence, teaching and learning spaces are critical for students to question their assumptions and beliefs about knowledge (McLaughlin & Whatman, 2015). Perhaps the starting point should be for students to define what they count as knowledge and how they grapple with locating the concept in their teacher preparation curriculum.

In the next section, I define the term 'indigenous knowledge'.

Defining indigenous knowledge

Literature uses the terms 'indigenous knowledge' and 'indigenous African knowledge' interchangeably. The word 'indigenous' refers to "specific groups of people defined by ancestral territories, collective cultural configuration and historical locations" (Mugo, Lichoru & Ngosu, 2015:134). 'Indigenous knowledge systems' refers to "a body embedded in African philosophical thinking and social practices that have evolved over many years" (Le Grange, 2005:204). Kiggundu (2007:42) defines indigenous knowledge as "local knowledge that exists as a result of interactions with the environment by members of a community within a geographical area". In this chapter, I use the terms 'indigenous knowledge' and 'indigenous knowledge systems' to denote the knowledge that has been in existence in indigenous African societies before colonisers set foot in indigenous communities (Motsa, 2017). However, with the economic domination of the West, Western knowledge has emerged as valid knowledge. As Kerr (2014) pointed out, the marginalisation of African oral knowledge in the modern era is evident. Likewise, Motsa (2017:29) states that European literature fails to acknowledge the "history of Africa's knowledge generation". Instead of a more balanced account of knowledge systems, we have had the skewed narrative of Europe as the mother of knowledge production (Savo, 2016). Therefore, knowledge differs in approach and philosophies. For example, indigenous knowledge is oral through folklore or legends, whereas Western science transmits knowledge through writing (Oguamanam, 2006).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) attributes the epistemological challenges that Africa is experiencing today to the dehumanisation of Africans by colonisers who attempted to exterminate their knowledge by overcrowding thoughts, education and theories with European knowledge. Positioning Europe as ‘the knower’ has been deeply entrenched among Africans to the extent that Ngugi (1981) calls for the decolonisation of the mind of African people. He further warns that unless Africa frees itself from epistemic struggles that continue to exist, African indigenous knowledge systems will continue to be at the periphery of influential knowledge domains. Hence, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018:19) emphasises that the area of contention in the struggle for decolonisation is on the “recognition of various forms of knowledge”. This view was prominent during the #FeesMustFall movements as students called for a “curriculum that is linked to social justice and experiences of black people” (Luckett et al., 2019:28). However, the university curriculum has not transformed (Savo, 2016).

In recent years, it is recognised that society has evolved because of the introduction of technology and social and political reforms and the integration of values, behaviours, governance systems, changes in family structures and the existence of cash-driven markets (Mutekwe, 2015). Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge can co-exist. For instance, the literature on endogenous knowledge reveals that, although there are ontological and epistemological differences between the two, they can still dialogue. For instance, a study conducted by Rist, Boillat, Gerritsen, Schneider, Mathez-Stiefel and Tapia (2011) explores the difference between knowledge systems and concludes that a starting point would be the awareness of these differences and aiming to co-create theories of knowledge systems. This includes the recognition that indigenous knowledge has the potential to contribute to sustainable development. Endogenous knowledge is a “diffusion of knowledge across cultures with no assumption of knowledge as static” (Velthuisen, 2012:74), visible in among other architectural practices, arts, religious forms and intercontinental cuisines (Mutekwe, 2015). Le Grange (2000) calls for exploration and integration of all ways of knowing.

In scrutinising a historical overview of curriculum changes in South Africa, it is interesting that, although there are reforms in curriculum, there is evidence of the importation of Western world ideas.

Historical overview of curriculum changes in South Africa

The current educational and curriculum foundations in South African education curricula are traced back to colonialism and apartheid (Savo, 2016). However, as Jansen (1990:195) acknowledges, initially, the Europeans did not bring education to South Africa. For example, as he points out, when the Dutch arrived in 1652, “traditional African education was led by community elders through an oral tradition based in cultural transmission

and was closely integrated with life experiences". Similarly, Rodney (1972:60) argues that colonisers did not introduce education to Africa:

[As] in Egypt, there was Al-Azhar University, in Morocco, the University of Fez and in Mali, the University of Timbuktu – all giving testimony to the standard of education achieved in Africa before colonial intrusion.

Jansen (1990) describes how the British and Dutch's arrival and the missionaries' activities influenced the South African education system. He further said that they had agendas, not necessarily to advance the black population's interests. For instance, the introduction of Christian education had exclusive overtones because it aimed to strip African converts of their belief systems and languages. Mahoso (2014) reminds us that the Christian education system's philosophy was that there were no existing knowledge systems when Europeans arrived in Africa.

According to the literature, the South African school curriculum recognises that learners are co-constructors of knowledge (Stears, 2009). However, scholars such as Zeleza (2009) assert that the concept of 'constructivism', attributed to Vygotsky (1978), does not consider that 'learner participation' and 'co-construction' are traditionally rooted in African values and pedagogical approaches. Moreover, Paraskeva (2016) perceives this lack of recognition as evidence that Western civilisation's fundamental beliefs are based on African experiences and traditions and have been appropriated and redefined by Western philosophy. Dominguez (2019), for example, enquires whether designing a teacher education curriculum considers questions of privileged knowledge, ways of being, and 'what' is valued as 'success'.

It is common knowledge that teacher education programmes and education systems worldwide are modelled on European views (Mudaly, 2018; Rufai, 2016). Discourses that dominate education research and praxis draw their epistemic frameworks from Eurocentric frameworks (Dominguez, 2019; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Waghid & Hibbert, 2018). Regrettably, in Africa, such models and discourses have not addressed the existing challenges, such as illiteracy rates and unemployment, but have succeeded in eliminating anything African in the education systems (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011). This is of concern because teachers are being prepared through a system that does not consider their diverse worldviews. This system has been in existence despite African leaders such as Nyerere, Toure and Nkrumah's calls for an education system that will serve African purposes (Bangura, 2005). However, there are pockets of research in Europe that have appealed for changes to the education systems that will respect indigenous knowledge and traditional ways of teaching and learning (Kirkness & Barnhard, 1991; Kulago, 2019) and challenge colonial ideologies that are overrepresented in educational systems (St Denise, 2007). Faculties of education have also been criticised for not playing a role in preparing teachers to respond to all students' educational needs (Madden, 2015). Successful implementation

of any curriculum depends on how teachers are prepared, and the models used to prepare them (Rufai, 2016).

The post-apartheid period in South Africa introduced a number of political, social, economic, and educational reforms. As such, significant curriculum changes were also introduced. For instance, public schools for both white and black students now follow the same curriculum. There have been shifts in curriculum approach through the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE) (RSA DoE, 1997), *Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS)* (RSA DoE, 2004), *National Curriculum Statement (NCS)* (RSA DoE, 2007) and, more recently, *Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)* (RSA DoE, 2011). However, it seems that the question of whether or not the reproduction of colonial ideologies is still evident in the school curriculum is not fully addressed. It is known that the ideas to reform the South African curriculum are from the North (Chisholm, 2005; Christie, 1997). However, some research provides evidence that the curriculum recognises indigenous knowledge as critical in science subjects (Mudaly, 2018) and technology (Van Wyk, 2002). *The Language in Education Policy* (RSA DoE, 1997) is critiqued for its lack of implementability. Hence a revised version appeared for comment in 2018.

Oosthuysen (2015) describes how the missionaries created language boundaries in South Africa. Interestingly, after 1994, the Constitution (RSA, 1996) still uses those linguistic units as identity markers throughout the schooling system. Researchers such as Makalela (2018) also note that language curricula in schools and teacher education still use the European concepts of 'first' and 'second' languages. In the changing society and sharing global ideas, an African curriculum based solely on indigenous ideas is not possible. Hence, even after the *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* (RSA DoE, 2008) recommended that all institutions of higher learning should review their curricula, it remains unchanged (Savo, 2016).

In the next section, I reflect on a course, 'IsiXhosa communication in context', that I designed to cultivate the consciousness of student teachers, who do not speak mother-tongue isiXhosa, into aspects of the isiXhosa culture.

Locating indigenous knowledge in a course, 'IsiXhosa communication in context'

The calls made to faculties of education to train more foundation phase teachers who could teach in African languages was a testament to transformation (Msila, 2016). Language is key in the literature on indigenous knowledge systems. There is recognition of a growing

number of English- and Afrikaans-speaking students studying to become foundation phase teachers (Mayaba, 2017). The revised MRTEQ (RSA DHET, 2015a:13) states:

All teachers who successfully complete an initial professional qualification should be proficient in the use of at least one official South African language as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) and partially proficient (i.e. sufficient for purposes of basic conversation) in at least one other official African language, or in South African Sign Language, as language of conversational competence (LoCC). If the LoLT is English or Afrikaans, then the LoCC must be an African Language or South African Sign Language. All new certificates are to be endorsed to indicate the holder's level of competence in specific languages by using appropriate labels, for example: LoLT (English) and LoCC (isiZulu).

It was apparent then that all faculties of education had to ensure that student teachers who speak languages other than indigenous African languages study these languages. Although the policy refers to conversational competence, the question to be explored is how such competence would enable student teachers to support learning in a classroom (Mayaba, 2016).

In South African schools, learners in the foundation phase are taught in their home languages. In private and former white schools, English is the language of learning and teaching, although some young learners have not yet acquired it. During teaching practice, I observed that learners in the foundation phase often responded to teachers' questions in their home language (in this case, isiXhosa). This posed many challenges to English- and Afrikaans-speaking student teachers since most were not competent in African languages, including isiXhosa. As much as universities are expected to formulate a plan that will ensure that indigenous languages are developed to a point where they can be used as languages of learning and teaching (RSA DHET, 2015b), universities are also required to make provisions for the learning of African languages for speakers of other languages (RSA DHET, 2018). In thinking of a classroom as a 'socio-political space' where there is an interplay concerning power, ideologies, and class issues, it is reasonable to question a curriculum that continuously ignores the multilingual nature of today's classrooms.

During the process of recurriculation, one of the major tasks was to ensure that the transformation agenda fuelled the curriculum – language is part of the transformation agenda. Moreover, the study of any African philosophy in higher education institutions will be incomplete if African indigenous languages are not accommodated (Msila, 2016:1). Then, it follows that learning a language also means learning about the culture and identity of the people who speak that language. The course's objective is first, in learning the language, students may also learn about indigenous knowledge systems. Second, as future teachers, they may enact teaching methodologies such as traditional songs, games, and rhymes in their teaching in the foundation phase. Third, they may develop a sense of agency and review a curriculum exclusive of diverse knowledges, particularly indigenous

knowledge systems, so that when excluded knowledges are noted, the revised curriculum is inclusive of those knowledges.

The process of designing the ‘isiXhosa communication in context’ course

The course’s conceptualisation evolved from the conviction that it is important to integrate indigenous knowledge into teacher education curricula. One way of doing this is to ensure that student teachers are exposed to pedagogical pathways that enable them to engage with indigenous knowledge in the ‘isiXhosa communication in content’ course, forming part of the BEd (foundation phase) degree. Based on the findings of the studies conducted before the recurriculation, it then became clear that the course would not compete to be positioned in the curriculum; instead, it was to be a core course offered to students over four years.

Several steps were taken: Firstly, for two weeks, students were exposed to school contexts where isiXhosa was the LoLT in the foundation phase. Their task was to teach English as the first additional language and assist with classroom administration, such as registering and managing discipline. From informal conversations with students, it was clear that, without a base knowledge of isiXhosa, it was challenging to teach in such contexts.

Secondly, I conducted a study with students to determine what they thought was the purpose of learning isiXhosa in their teacher preparation programme for the foundation phase; and whether or not the isiXhosa module they were learning capacitated them to use isiXhosa in their classrooms.¹ The aim of involving students in conceptualising the course was based on the notion of voice. The legitimacy of ‘student voice’ in challenging injustices is not new (Smyth, 2006, Urban & Kujinga, 2017). Giroux (2002:8) argued: “Education is a crucial site where students gain a public voice and come to grips with their own power as individuals and social agents.” In most cases, higher education institutions do not give much attention to the role of students’ voice in transforming the curriculum (Mayaba, Ralarala & Pineteh, 2018). It was evident that English- and Afrikaans-speaking students were not satisfied with the previous isiXhosa conversation module, as it did not enable them to meet the communicative demands of their foundation phase classrooms. Their main concern was that the teaching of the module did not provide opportunities for them to use the language in real contexts; and insufficient time for them to learn the new language. However, they recognised the value of learning isiXhosa for communication purposes; its value as a resource for teaching and learning and as an enabler for functioning successfully in a multilingual society (Mayaba, 2015). There was a need to offer content that

¹ See Mayaba, 2015, 2016, for details of the study.

would enable them to meet a multilingual classroom's communicative demands. One of the changes effected after this research was to provide opportunities for these student teachers to interact with speakers of isiXhosa as part of their language learning process. Hence, the third step was to conduct another study.

In this study (Mayaba, 2016), student teachers were asked to reflect on their experiences of interacting and conversing with isiXhosa-speaking fellow students on campus. This study was based on the premise that language learning and acquisition is a social process, which requires that learners of a second or foreign language participate in meaningful activities that will enable them to communicate in real contexts with the speakers of the target language (Vygotsky, 1978). This implies that speakers of one language can acquire another language when guided by native speakers of that target language (Vygotsky, 1978). This view does not assume that, in multilingual contexts, people can only acquire or learn a language when assisted by a native speaker. In the study context, however, students learning conversational isiXhosa were assisted during interactions and conversations with isiXhosa home language speakers by tutors who also spoke that language. This enabled them to reflect on what they could do and not do during conversational experiences.

Findings indicated a shift in students' communication anxiety before and after their interactions with isiXhosa-speakers. For example, they recognised the supportive role played by tutors during difficult conversational moments. Outcomes provided insights that contributed to the design of a new module. For instance, it was evident that students valued learning isiXhosa in real contexts; moreover, the findings revealed the importance of students' language resources and techniques in learning a new language; and students needed to learn about the culture of the amaXhosa. Kese (2012) highlights the crucial importance of exposing students to cultural differences between isiXhosa and their own languages in terms of non-verbal behaviour, as teaching language also involves teaching the culture of the people speaking that language. Hence, the outcomes of the Mayaba (2016) studies also informed the reconceptualising of the new isiXhosa conversational curriculum for English- and Afrikaans-speaking foundation phase students. Just like Madden (2015:1), I aimed to introduce "pedagogical pathways" that could enable student teachers to engage with indigenous knowledge in their course of study. In the next few sections, I will outline the curriculum for each year level of the 'isiXhosa communication in context' module.

'isiXhosa communication in context' module: First year

The first unit in this module asks:

- What classroom contexts are you prepared for in your teacher preparation programme?
- What are your views on learning an African language as part of your teaching degree?

A guide to literature that supports students' thoughts in answering these questions is made available. In addition, another module introduces aspects of multilingualism, which enables them to reflect on their insights in this regard. At this stage, students have not thought deeply about issues of learning an indigenous language. Hence, they learn about the culture of the amaXhosa as embedded in isiXhosa. This supports Kese's (2012) emphasis of the crucial importance that students are exposed to cultural differences between isiXhosa and their own languages in terms of non-verbal behaviour as teaching language means teaching the culture of the people speaking that language.

In the 'old' module, student teachers learned how to greet (*Molo/Molweni*) and inquire about others' health (*Unjani/ninjani*) in isiXhosa. The focus was language structure and memorisation of phrases, without a theoretical or cultural basis for utterances. In the new module, they learn that the act of greeting and enquiring about another's health is a sign of respect – one of the values embedded in indigenous knowledge systems. This knowledge will help them engage with parents from an isiXhosa background and any other people in the communities they will serve. Although there are philosophical debates on the language-culture relationship, Wardhaugh's (2002) view that people's culture finds reflection in their language informs the module's design.

As soon as students are comfortable with all variations of greetings and understand their importance, they have to investigate some aspects of amaXhosa culture, such as food and traditional clothes. This will introduce them to local names for these aspects. In engaging with their discoveries, they have to reflect on their cultures regarding how the new knowledge complements or contradicts their own. Pedagogical pathways to engaging with indigenous knowledge should open spaces for debate. As part of the course, the language they learn should enable them to support learning during practice teaching. For example, in the foundation phase, learners use colour crayons for drawing; teachers may need to describe the colours of the children's clothes as young children often lose clothing items, so teachers help them in their search.

Indigenous knowledge would teach us that the names of colours are visual representations to which African people relate, such as green as grass (*ingca*) and purple (*umsobo*). Some colours are associated with the night (*ubusuku*). When student teachers learn about different colours in isiXhosa, it is therefore important that they observe that blue (*iluhlaza okwesibhakabhaka*) and green (*iluhlaza okwengca*) share the same word, 'luhlaza' – so, when using such a word in the classroom, they have to differentiate between the two. This does not mean that isiXhosa speakers do not approach colours in the same cognitive way as other languages speakers. However, it is a culture's development that creates differentiation demands (Wardhaugh, 2002). The same argument can apply to the months and seasons

of the year. For example, October is called ‘*eyeDwarha*’ because the plant ‘*idwarha*’ grows around that time.

Student teachers also learn about kinships in isiXhosa via terms like ‘father’ (*utata*) or ‘mother’ (*umama*). They do not learn that studies focussed on kinship systems report that these terms reflect how people behave towards these people (Hudson, 1996). AmaXhosa also recognises a father’s brother (*ubawokazi*) as a father; therefore, the same respect afforded to the father is also given to the father’s brother. The word ‘aunt’ refers to ‘*umakazi*’ (an aunt from the mother’s side), or ‘*udadobawo*’ (aunt from the father’s side); therefore, students need to be able to differentiate between the two so that they have an understanding that, when isiXhosa speakers refer to an ‘aunt’, they may either be referring to ‘*makazi*’ or ‘*dadobawo*’. Hence, understanding the relationship between a language, the culture, and the processes involved in utilising and interpreting communicative experiences is an important facet of acquiring communicative competence in a language (Wardhaugh, 2002). When the language-culture relationship is understood, the focus can shift to simulating different scenarios, using these terms and expressions.

‘IsiXhosa communication in context’ module: Second year

In the second year of study, students learn that indigenous knowledge transmission is oral, and that indigenous knowledge is gained by simulation or participating in real-life experiences (Oguamanam, 2006). Their learning entails designing vocabulary boxes that store a multilingual glossary of terms. In this way, they develop and strengthen their vocabulary development and communication competence in isiXhosa. Pedagogical strategies used in teaching language also include songs, oral stories and games. This is appropriate, as African people’s cultural traditions were passed down from generation to generation through songs, oral stories and games (Mwenda, Wanderi, Andanje & Rintaugu, 2015).

The use of songs in teaching a language is effective because they provide a “rich source of vocabulary and contain authentic language in addition to being a good mechanism of learning to pronounce words” (Makina, 2009:50). Songs are an integral part of African people’s lives, and IsiXhosa songs are the basis of some of the reading texts used in the module. Students will research these songs on the Internet or ask other isiXhosa-speaking students. In this way, students can make meaning of the culture via the songs and develop comprehension skills in isiXhosa.

The foundation phase must be able to scaffold learners’ thinking during learning and teaching through language use. In supporting learners’ numeracy skills, student teachers learn to play traditional games such as ‘*unophuce*’. Drawing on their language repertoire

in isiXhosa might be helpful. *Unophuce* is a game where one either draws a circle or digs a hole in the ground and places about ten little stones therein. One then has to remove the stones one-by-one inside the circle by throwing a bigger stone in the air whilst taking out the other stones. In this game, you have “to take out all ten stones at first and return nine; after that, you take out all and return eight, and so on” (Mayaba, 2015:21). These games can also be very useful for enhancing thinking abilities (Mwenda et al., 2015).

Students will also simulate relevant classroom activities and situations, such as giving instructions, expressing feelings, maintaining discipline and taking an attendance register. Mayaba (2016:138) asserts:

Students’ reflections point to a need to add content that will provide opportunities for turn-taking in a conversation setting (Nomlomo, 2010)... In a conversation, one is not only a listener but a speaker and questioner too; it means students in the conversational class cannot only rely on structured language practices as they are it is currently taught, but need to learn how to convey information that will be comprehensible to the listener.

Therefore, one way of learning isiXhosa could be for students to engage in dialogues and activities to help them use the language.

‘IsiXhosa communication in context module: Third year

By their third year of study, students would have done another multilingualism module that exposes them to supporting learners with, among other, reading and handwriting difficulties. In this module, students learn to design support activities in isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans. Since they are already English and Afrikaans speakers, they learn this module with students who speak isiXhosa. In this third year of study, students learn to implement second-year teachings. For example, they develop and tell short stories written in isiXhosa, write and sing their own isiXhosa songs, and participate in simulations. Since they are doing teaching practice in contexts where most learners are African language speakers, the aim is to enhance indigenous teaching methods and observe students using the same methods in the class. In these schools, they are expected to support learning in the foundation phase classrooms by creating multilingual glossaries to support learning in mathematics, English as a first additional language, and life skills; and assist in classroom management. In this way, the pedagogical realities of student teachers doing their practice teaching in unfamiliar contexts can be addressed.

‘isiXhosa communication in context’ module: Fourth year

This module aims to enable student teachers to reflect on their use of isiXhosa during their school-based learning period. They will examine and explore the effectiveness of their communicative competencies in isiXhosa, and test the usefulness of the strategies they have been learning about and utilising throughout their course. Thus, there will be opportunities for reflecting critically on the multilingual nature of classrooms during their teaching practice by focusing on their successes and challenges in using isiXhosa. This will be interpreted through relevant literature. Moreover, the student teachers are expected to reflect on and provide evidence of how far they have incorporated multilingual strategies and isiXhosa into their lesson plans and how it was used to support learning successfully. Finally, the student teachers will use role-play, collages, and such to express their experiences. Some assessment activities will be oral.

Reflections on the design of the ‘isiXhosa communication in context’ course content

My intention in this course is to conscientise students into indigenous knowledge system aspects as they learn an African language. On reflection, I realise that the course does not provide students with an in-depth understanding of indigenous knowledge and indigenous knowledge systems. By engaging with these concepts, they will have a deeper understanding of why, in the first place, the module argues that for them to learn isiXhosa, they need to understand the culture of amaXhosa and how it is reflected in the language. Moreover, a theoretical basis of indigenous knowledge and indigenous knowledge systems will enable them to reflect on the richness and importance of other unfamiliar knowledges. A deeper understanding of these concepts will require students to investigate some of the aspects. One of their tasks in the first year is to find out about the food, customs, clothing, among other, of amaXhosa. However, if they could have a big project, they will interact with isiXhosa people and use the new language they are learning in a research context. As much as they could write their findings in English, the experience of engaging with the speakers of isiXhosa will enrich their learning. The course introduces indigenous traditional teaching methods, such as telling stories, using games and songs, as both the means of learning isiXhosa and as methods they can enact when teaching in foundation phase classrooms. As much as their study references research articles on these methods, students do not get an opportunity to engage with the African philosophy underpinning these methods. It would be valuable for them to learn more about folktales, proverbs and riddles, why they are used in the African context and how they enrich the language. As they engage with this knowledge, they can also reflect on their knowledges and examine whether or not knowledges can be integrated in order for them to understand the new language they

are learning. They can also reflect on how these teaching methods challenge their existing paradigms; implicate 'knowledge beyond colour lines'.

I designed the two multilingual modules (mentioned earlier); students study their content in the first and second years of study and the 'IsiXhosa in communication context' course. I now realise that the theories underpinning the multilingual modules are more Eurocentric in approach yet aimed at explicating the importance of viewing all languages as learning resources. This means I need to guide students in bringing the theories used in both modules and provide critical discussion spaces where students can better understand that these theories complement each other to bring a wealth of knowledge and prepare them for multilingual classroom contexts. Deeper insights in this regard can be encouraged and enhanced.

Implications of this study for teacher education curricula

I argue that curriculum designers should produce counter-curricular discourses that will reflect integrated knowledges subject to critical scrutiny. However, addressing the following issues is important: First, indifferent attitudes that often persist, even before addressing the critical questions on knowledge(s), must be confronted. When debaters and curriculum designers are unable or unwilling to think beyond the unquestioned assumption that only Western Eurocentric knowledge is valid and valued, that silences the debate on the validity and importance of (an)other knowledge(s). Secondly, during epistemological debates, an Afrocentric (African) position needs to be clarified to address the remnants of discomfort and uncertainty associated with moves to include indigenous ways of knowing in the curriculum. Debaters must be mindful that indigenous African ways of knowing are not measured against Western ways of knowing because, on their own, they are sustainable and relevant to society (Mutekwe, 2015). They are rooted in African people's cultures, languages, values, spiritual lives and ecological practices.

Teacher training curricula need to consider a multidisciplinary approach in the design of the curriculum. The Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and other undergraduate studies focus on courses' content in service faculties such as humanities and sciences. Students are introduced to theories that may be different from education theories in their approach. For example, students may learn about second language acquisition theories in one faculty without the benefit of any critical stance; and then they learn that second language acquisition in the context of multilingualism means something else in another faculty. Moreover, the critical issues and challenges in education need to be addressed using a multidisciplinary approach. It would be interesting to learn how different faculties

think about locating indigenous knowledge in the curriculum and how they address the decolonisation of the curriculum issues as a student project area in the course.

Teacher education preparation programmes should take into consideration the philosophies that underpin their curriculum. It is common knowledge that African philosophy is barely used to raise consciousness about issues of identity, culture, thought and civilisations (Moyo & Hadebe, 2018). It is questionable whether teaching and learning approaches used in teacher education make it explicit that skills and values, such as respect and work ethic, are bolstered by African philosophy. Studies such as the one conducted by Mudaly (2018) should be encouraged and shared with students. In his study, “pre-service teachers planted a vegetable garden using indigenous methods and cultivated indigenous and non-indigenous plants” (Mudaly, 2018:47). The author mentions that, through the process of this study, consciousness-raising about the value of indigenous knowledge systems occurred.

Conclusion

This chapter’s central thesis is that there is a need to include indigenous knowledge in the teacher education curriculum to conscientise student teachers about indigenous perspectives and other knowledge systems. In that process, teacher educators and curriculum designers must be mindful of the complexities and tensions generated by embedding indigenous knowledge in teaching and learning. Therefore, prescribed texts, pedagogies, language usage and the academic theories, philosophies and values that underpin the curriculum need to recognise, in dialogue with other forms of knowledge, the importance of indigenous knowledge in teacher education preparation. If knowledge refers to how individuals and societies construct and interpret realities based on their lived experiences, histories, belief systems and ways of knowing, a new curriculum underpinned by multiple knowledges will have to be collectively constructed. This chapter provides a framework to explore the role of ‘teacher voice’ in negotiating the complexities and tensions that the design of a curriculum presents. The chapter also contributes to knowledge about indigenous pedagogical strategies when introducing an African language to student teachers speaking other languages.

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