



Decolonising education in institutions of higher learning

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Abstract

To date, the South African education is still grounded and dominated by the colonial and apartheid driven epistememes. This resulted from the type of knowledge and textbooks used in learning institutions that are still of Eurocentric origin and created societal hierarchies. In the process, African indigenous languages were excluded while alien languages were promoted in teaching and learning. It necessitates higher education institutions (HEI) to decolonise education in ways that encourage and acknowledge African perspectives and its values in pedagogical practices. Discussions on the decolonisation of HE emanated from protests in 2015-2016 and in the post-apartheid era. However, gaps still exist in the development of content that caters for the African context and the debate about decolonisation of education is still not fully discussed with confidence. Google Scholar database was utilised to source the relevant literature, where substantial content in peer reviewed articles, books, government documents and news were accessed, retrieved and reviewed. Using this method, the authors attempt to discuss what decolonisation entails and how HEI can reform the curriculum in ways that will make it inclusive with the acknowledgement and the use of African languages in teaching and learning. The article also discusses the support and training needed in the implementation of decolonisation and the use of multilingualism in pedagogical practices.

Keywords: Colonialism, decolonisation, education, HEI, African knowledge, multilingualism.

Introduction

Even though discussions on decolonisation are not newly emerging phenomena, their emanation resulted from movements of anti-colonialism in the mid-twentieth century. These discussions intend to undo the European colonialism procedures that were sidelining the experiences and the heritages of Africans (Woldegiorgis, 2021). Decolonisation is a process that tries to recentre the African HEIs education even though Africans are faced with challenges such as the expansion of technology, climate change and inequalities in growth globally (Le Grange, 2020). The colonial and apartheid epistememes that are currently in place include the disciplinary knowledge, which was not changed as it is still rooted in Western knowledge (Senekal and Lenz, 2020). In addition, the African histories were sidelined since most books are written in

languages that are foreign to Africans and do not reflect African cultures (Du Plessis, 2021). Colonialism continues to create an education system that disengages students as social injustice and inequality persists (McMahon and Portelli, 2012). As such, colonialism requires change that embraces the existence of differences, respect and the recognition of those who contributed in shaping history (Lasky, 2005).

The colonial systems exclude African experiences and histories in their design of curriculum. This is due to the perception that African knowledge is old fashioned, it is perceived to originate from remote areas that are not well developed. Additionally, the African experiences were deserted in the development of curriculum while the Western education took over and became dominant (Senegal and Lenz, 2020). As a result, the colonial interests and education is enforced on Africans (Woldegiorgis, 2021). In Woldegiorgis,

(2021) the author highlighted that the colonial actions disengaged Africans from their philosophical and historical pasts. The result of all these inequalities and experiences served as steppingstones for debates on decolonisation. The paper discusses what the process of decolonisation entails and outlines some of the possible ways to undo the injustices and transform curriculum in ways that could make it relevant and inclusive to Africans.

Having said that, movements and calls were made to decolonise the curriculum, where activists and some officials came up with definite requirements for decolonising universities, however, the results were criticisms from HEI (Shain, Yildis, Poku & Gokay, 2021). Hence, even today, decolonisation is still one of the topics that still needs to be discussed by academics and other community members. These movements were triggered by the notion that South African education is still predominantly dominated and grounded by colonial epistemes which are derived from the apartheid era. Many academics and members of the general community still lack the confidence to discuss these kinds of topics because it is still unclear what they entail and why decolonising the curriculum is vital. This result from insufficient knowledge or fear of change and trying new things. This was also highlighted in Pillay (2015), where some academics and community members were in support of the authority of the privileged. In addition, Senekal and Lenz (2020) mentioned that challenges persist in decolonising education since there is insufficient African content that will enable African knowledge to be relevant to the growth of Africans. However, Mheta et al (2018) states that our participation in the creation of world knowledge is driven by our continental location and our historical realities. Furthermore, the authors mentioned that the developed knowledge is driven by the environmental resources around us and the way we respond to the needs that arises and that informs a persistent development of knowledge.

In Van Pinxteren (2022), the author pointed out that Africans were brainwashed to perceive that education that originated from Western countries was a key to their success. Meanwhile, the thought of education as an enabler

for living decently and as an enabler for partaking in societal and economic growth was not prevalent in Africa as it was the case in Europe. However, socialist movements were in place and they were fighting for the working class that was capable of addressing their societal issues.

Conceptual Framework: Inclusivity, recognition of other cultures and a sense of belonging

Colonialism is still problematic in educational systems. It is used as a means to control Africans (Du Plessis, 2021). It continues to create learning environments that are not inclusive by disregarding the experiences, the history and knowledge of Africans. An inclusive education strives to have reduced exclusions by allowing participation from all individuals involved. An inclusive education may be harnessed to further the decolonial project and resist the coloniality of power, knowledge and of being. It becomes necessary for education professionals and students to come up with strategies that will reform the curriculum and include all forms of knowledge, create a sense of belonging and the recognition of indigenous knowledge and heritages of different societies. Hence, the decolonisation process imposes an inclusive and the validation of different cultures with a sense of belonging, where a sense of belonging is connected to students backgrounds. Inclusivity allows partnerships which in turn allows the sharing of information which will lead to a harmonised educational curricula (Nungu, 2013). The result will be the restoration of African voices when indigenous epistemes are recognised. Kahu et al (2020) regards sense of belonging as the interactions that take place among students and their institutions. In some instances, some institutions support inequalities in terms of race, gender and social class which may shape an institution's experiences (Cohen & Viola, 2022). However, there could be other contributing factors that shape an institution such as the relations between the student and the lecturer, institutional policies, the expectations and how students perceive things. All the above-mentioned factors shape students experiences and identities. A radical transformation is required in the pedagogical administration. These transformations are driven by the existence of gaps in the performance of white students against that of historically disadvantaged groups which could

be addressed by implementing active and inclusive strategies that include student's identities and views (Dewsbury, Swanson & Moseman-Valtierra, 2022). This imposes that when students are actively involved and included in learning environments, it could lead to an improved performance if necessary support and resources are provided. This article argues for a decolonised curriculum, that is inclusive and recognises diverse cultural experiences with knowledge that originates from all spheres and the use of multilingualism in learning environments.

Methods

New ideas and information are developed by gathering information through research and by reviewing articles, books, government documents and news. Google Scholar database was utilised to source the relevant literature. Peer-reviewed articles, books, government documents and news with substantial content that focused on decolonisation, HEI and other concepts covered in this article were selected and reviewed. Using this method, the authors attempt to discuss what decolonisation entails and how HEIs can reform the curriculum in ways that will make it inclusive with the acknowledgement and the use of African languages in teaching and learning. So, information gathered is required in decision making process, to advice and update authorities, communities and readers on new developments and findings which could enable enhanced problem solving techniques.

Literature review

Decolonisation and its practices

Decolonisation is the process that undoes the colonial ways by replacing them with the history, language and the culture of those who were previously colonised (du Preez, 2018). Decolonisation in the context of this study aims to address language issues of people who were previously sidelined by the past injustices of colonialism. It also aims to restore the dignity and the values of African people that were devaluated by the colonial agendas (Lebeloane, 2017). It is the destruction of colonialism from those who were colonised, where their expertise in the formulation and the interpretation of knowledge was lost (Lebeloane, 2017). The decolonisation of

education requires HEIs' curricula to be decolonised, so that there is recognition and inclusion of African knowledge amongst all the other forms of knowledge which is derived from various cultural perspectives equally, without having one country's knowledge being dominant over others. Our envisaged decolonisation is that there should be inclusivity, recognition of different cultures and a sense of belonging regardless of people's race, disability, gender and other social constructs.

The process of decolonisation affords the capability to embrace cultural diverseness, with the ability to narrate peoples' own stories and knowledge, where they can use study material that is narrated in their native language and follow values that are a true reflection of their own culture, rather than to follow a Eurocentric approach (Du Plessis, 2021). This necessitates leaders and educators to change without being influenced by Western countries' epistemes. Additionally, the decolonisation of institutions is capable of transforming the country as a whole (Le Grange, 2016). Furthermore, decolonisation interferes with the knowledge and history, which was used to undermine indigenous knowledge and its history (Lopez & Rugano, 2018). This calls for diverse groups of people from different cultures such as education specialists, curriculum planners, academics, student representatives and others to collaborate in the development of knowledge rather than one culture that contributes and dominates in creating knowledge. Decolonisation also tries to disrupt privileges gained by some while others are denied access to education, where others are not given a chance because of their race, gender or any other factor that denies them an opportunity to grow. Consequently, the decolonisation process became more evident from student protests that took place in the whole country between the years 2015-2016 and after the apartheid era. The # Fees Must Fall protests highlighted deficiencies in the allocation of funds for HEIs. Such protests enabled channels of communication, where various issues were tackled. The issues included among others are: decolonising education, transformations needed in the curriculum and name change for universities (Du Plessis, 2021). Du Preez (2018), mentioned that such protests reflected on the need to promptly act on burning issues that were not attended to.

Amongst other issues, is the issue that demanded education to be free for all, since finances created barriers for most students to access HE. Lack of access to HE prompted a lack of transformation as a result of the increased fees required by HEIs (Matthews, 2019). However, our observation is that most of the issues are still left unattended such as the implementation of multilingualism in teaching and learning. Luckett (2016) asserts that theories on decolonisation affords the unheard voices which were oppressed an opportunity to be heard, where people can raise their opinions and those opinions are acknowledged.

There is still a need to decolonise the dominance of male candidates in managerial positions, since most higher education systems are still deficient of women in top management positions. This was due to the cultural traditions that are still in some instances dictating who is capable of ruling or being in top positions in higher education. The focus is shifted to gender, instead of aligning it to the competencies and skills at hand. This causes authority and power contests among colleagues as some still have the notion that male-led institutions are superior to the ones led by females. In the past, patriarchy and stereotype defined the roles of women (Faulkner, 2015). To date, this approach still exists in most institutions of higher education (Faulkner, 2015) where barriers are created for women to occupy leadership positions. However, recently, steps have been taken to include females in top managerial positions in most institutions of higher education as a way to redress the past inequalities that were in existence.

Implications of decolonisation

As stated earlier, the contribution of knowledge in the world is determined by the history and the locality inhabited by individuals (Mheta et al. 2018). The knowledge acquired is determined by the availability of resources, which then determines the kind of knowledge production and its implications at the end. For instance, one institution may have up to date resources. Which will ensure that the kind of knowledge that will be derived from such resources will be of recent and more advanced than those of an institution that is under resourced, and still relies on old material and models to solve problems. This indicates that the

newly resourced institution's perspective may not be relevant to the under-resourced ones. Therefore, this brings us to another aspect of decolonising curriculum. When decolonising curriculum, it is crucial to be cognisant of the three types of curriculum in existence. It includes: the explicit curriculum which encompasses all the module outlines, study material and the type of assessments given to students, with lessons that are derived from a theoretical background (Le Grange, 2016; Mheta et al, 2018). The second and third type of curriculum are hidden and null curricula respectively. The hidden curriculum encompasses an institution's culture and it's produced values while the null curriculum is not taught.

The underpinning factor in decolonising curriculum followed a humanistic method which consists of four pillars. The pillars as highlighted in Mheta et al (2018) and Le Grange (2016) include: the connections that persists among all parts of the curriculum with accountability on all relations that exist among humans and those that are not humans. The second pillar involves the recognition and opportunities afforded by the voices and knowledge from indigenous practices. It is followed by the creation and sharing of information among institutions of higher education and communities. Lastly, there are ethical considerations of information derived from indigenous people. Information gathered from local people should be integrated with that of other countries with the acknowledgement of the existence of that information. Mheta et al (2018) also stressed the need to acknowledge the indigenous knowledge systems (IKS).

The need to include African cultures in the curriculum

Mheta et al (2018) further point out the need to teach African languages as they allow people to comprehend the taught content. As such, HEIs are compelled to step in and research probable solutions that will enable Africans to create curricula that boost African values (Senekal and Lenz, 2020) where such values relate to the experiences and the needs of the country and serve the purpose of filling the gap of knowledge deficiency. However, there is a need to understand that the decolonisation of curriculum does not necessarily mean that all the knowledge that

originated from Western countries needs to be thrown away and be replaced with indigenous knowledge. There is a need for the recognition of the side-lined knowledge that is of African origin (Mheta et al, 2018). Letseka (2012) argues that the policy framework of education in South Africa locates the dignity of humans at an exceptional level and it necessitates the education system to uplift elements of 'ubuntu' which refers to humanness. Ubuntu expresses the idea of "I am, because we are", where communities that lack discrimination, that are non-racial, where the incorporation of the rights and dignity of others are embraced. Thus, the social interdependence shape the humanity of students as they interact with others.

According to Makgoba (1997), the initial debates on decolonisation outlined the issue of Africanisation where calls were made to include the African perspectives and the affirmation of African cultures in communities of the world (Woldegiorgis, 2021), even though the concept of Africanisation was not an academic debate initially. Makgoba (1997) mentioned that Africanisation served as a foundation for debates on decolonisation (Woldegiorgis, 2021). It is for this reason that some infrastructures in many HEIs were changed in a way that enforces the Africanisation and decolonisation by portraying the histories within which some institutions are situated. The decolonisation process became eminent in some institutions where the names of those who fought for freedom were used in the naming of support units, sports grounds and institutional residence names. This kind of naming was done to ensure that generations to come will make enquiries regarding the renaming in these institutions. The naming process enables people to have something to draw attention to and tell the country's history. Additionally, all the eleven languages had to be acknowledged and appreciated as this enables speakers of different languages to be proud of their languages and use those languages in pedagogical practices. It has become evident and of importance to incorporate knowledge from all spheres rather than to have one dominant knowledge. By so doing, knowledge from all spheres will be appreciated and valued rather than acquiring knowledge that originates from certain parts of the world only, in this case, the neglect of the Global South epistemes. This

was also emphasised in Senekal and Lenz (2020), where the authors mentioned that experiences from various countries need to be incorporated, where learning starts from what is known, spreading out to what is unknown. Particularly African experiences and the incorporation of using African languages in pedagogical practices. Again, starting from the easy and local experiences moving to the complicated and international topics.

Having said this, all these transformations compel HEIs to reform their curricula and policies in these institutions of higher learning. Such transformations may change communities and the country as a whole. As previously stated, HEIs play a vital role in the creation of values, the establishment of leaders and in the vigorous training of students so that they are ultimately capable of synthesising knowledge that enables them to change (Cloete, Maassen & Bailey, 2015). Additionally, these institutions should create students who become autonomous in responding to societal needs and those of the country as a whole before attempting to respond to the global need. These HEIs do not have to be accessible only to a minority group, where these education systems focus only on ensuring that employees are at work (van Pinxteren, 2022) and miss their own purpose. The vital roles of HEIs are accomplished by researching, educating people and establishing collaborations with education specialists, communities, industries and government departments. As such, HEIs are compelled to cover all the roles mentioned above without excluding one of them as alluded in Cloete et al (2015), as well as others that are not mentioned. Furthermore, Mbembe (2016) highlighted that HE's aim is to inspire students in their development of logical thinking and the capability to inquire and be knowledgeable. It is therefore necessary to decolonise HEIs rather than to leave them in systems that are subjected to authoritative control, principles and penalties which may discourage students and lecturers to pursue knowledge democratically. Changes in the education system away from the colonial form has to foster change in the medium in which a curriculum is offered (van Pinxteren, 2022). However, in some instances, academics are the ones that resist change as they are not interested in engaging in topics of decolonisation and prefer to stick to their

discipline-based content rather than to face what is unknown to them. It is perceived that those who have an education background and those who are doing law are the right candidates to engage in decolonisation discussions. This was alluded in Prinsloo (2016), where the author suggests that the decolonisation of a curriculum is problematic to academics within the sciences as it is considered to fall outside their disciplinary scope. However, recently, many academics who are specialists in Science are becoming more open-minded and they are broadening their knowledge regarding such discussions. In addition, one of the challenges observed is that when the decolonisation of curriculum is discussed, issues about language are not addressed. Hence, content knowledge and medium of instruction are treated as two different entities, whereas the two should not be treated as such as it was also stated in van Pinxteren (2022), since the inclusion of the medium of instruction in academia could serve as a way to decolonise the curriculum.

However, when education is decolonised, there is the assurance that everyone will access quality education and the type of education received will be relevant to improve personal and professional progress. Nowadays, funding is made available to ensure that students from disadvantaged families have access to tertiary education which will alleviate unemployment, hunger and bring change to their living conditions. A decolonised education affords the use of indigenous languages in teaching and learning which ultimately leads to social justice. Knowledge of an indigenous language has the capability of providing access to the skills and the expertise that are embodied in those languages and this enable the creation of knowledge and the expression of thoughts efficiently (Okal, 2014). A decolonised education ensures that misunderstood concepts that were taught in second and third languages are explained in the native language to improve understanding. However, a challenge of not having sufficient content for science subjects still persists. A possible solution to this challenge could be the publication of books in native languages. Additionally, it is necessary to pay more attention, to foster and exploit pluralistic repertoires (Duarte, 2019). In such instances, our experiences and the research done locally could be documented in accredited articles and books and

be shared globally. This will ensure that knowledge from all spheres is shared and recognised equally. When education is decolonised, it ensures inclusivity, which ultimately ensures that students have a sense of belonging, where the lecturer to student's relationship is good and teaching and learning recognises knowledge from all spheres and it takes place in a conducive setting. Dewsbury, Swanson and Moseman-Valtierra (2022) argues that when the praxis is inclusive, it leads to improved academic productivity. However, Cohen and Viola (2022) highlight that various factors could contribute to students' belonging, such factors include the place where learning takes place, how students relate among themselves as peers, the type of assessment and feedback given to students, content and its relevance and how the lecturer relates to students.

Curriculum restructuring

The South African higher education institutions (HEIs) need to pay more attention on curriculum to make it fit for local societies. The restructuring of curricula may ensure that decolonisation is feasible and that education is relevant and it relates to the African context. A need to decolonise curriculum was also highlighted for South African Institutions of Higher education to provide African solutions when they develop curricula that are centred on best practices in research, beliefs and skills that originated from both African and the European countries (Senekal & Lenz, 2020). Since a decolonised curriculum may relate to the needs of African students, it may serve its purpose. Additionally, it could enable South African graduates to be equipped with competencies that allow them to be employable. Furthermore, the restructuring of curricula could enable graduates to respond to the national needs before proceeding to the global needs. The restructuring of curriculum urges HEIs to amalgamate with other sectors such as government departments and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to figure out the existing gaps. Thus, the process of decolonisation entails proper planning and there is a need to listen to various opinions and reflect on what is doable in the context of higher education as it is a puzzling process (Mheta, Lunga & Govender, 2018). In Le Grange (2016) a

curriculum was defined as the stories told to students now, those from the past and the upcoming ones. According to Mamdani (2016), the production of knowledge in HE is defined by powers from culture, the histories and epistemological geographies of politics that serve as external sources required for the maintenance of HEI (Rangan, 2022). These processes of restructuring curricula necessitate academics to be conscious of the African context and there is a need to re-evaluate the knowledge currently used (Lwande & Yallew, 2020).

Thoughts about multilingualism, how it is understood, its practices and how multilingualism can decolonise education

Multilingualism is the capability to express one's opinions in many different languages. It improves communication skills amongst various cultures where the awareness of various cultures is raised (Okal, 2014). When an institution is decolonised in South Africa, it should be in a position to place African languages as the leading languages in pedagogical practices, where all the other languages will contribute to creating concepts that originated from all spheres of the world (Mbembe, 2015). As such, decolonisation does not abundant knowledge which is of Western origin. However, it ensures that African perspectives form part of the major knowledge while all the other knowledges are also captured (Mheta et al, 2018). It is worth taking note that English, as a lingua franca allows people from all directions of the earth to communicate effectively. However, it may hinder students' progress as it is used as a medium of instruction, which is the second or third language for most of our students. Mheta et al (2018) emphasised the need to use multilingualism in the teaching process as well as in the learning process since it is capable of enhancing the learning of concepts. This then makes multilingualism crucial in the creation of knowledge. When students make sense of terminologies and other concepts in their own African languages, in which meaning is made, they are capable of internalising the concepts and this results in deeper learning. Moreover, when the mother tongue is used during learning, it permits an understanding of concepts (Meyer & Land, 2006). As such, the understood concepts are regarded as threshold concepts. Threshold

concepts are small entities that contribute to making concepts understandable, serving as entries that open ways of thinking (Meyer & Land, 2003). Threshold concepts enable the lecturer's decision in choosing what is significant to be taught in a particular module (Cousin, 2006), where the lecturer goes for lesser content at a time, makes sense of what is taught and is cognizant of the concepts that are difficult for students to grasp. Rather than giving students a large amount of content all at once with an expectation that students should reproduce the given content as it was mentioned by Cousin (2006). The threshold concept is characterized by the transformations that are in existence when the newly understood concepts are integrated into who we are. Secondly, once students understand the troublesome concepts, they will not forget them. Thirdly, once students have mastered these concepts, they are capable of associating them with others that were not visible to them. Lastly, this threshold concept is bounded and it is a discourse (Meyer & Land, 2006; Cousin, 2006). Thus, the use of multilingualism affords students the chance to have a deeper understanding of concepts since the meanings of those concepts are interrogated, as opposed to the use of one language as highlighted in Mheta et al (2018). In the following paragraph, the use of multilingualism in pedagogical practices is discussed.

The use of multilingualism in pedagogical practices

Pedagogy encompasses the learning process, which relies on the teaching methods and how relevant is the taught content in the process of knowledge creation. It also include developments that result from a learning process. It is further regarded as the pedagogical skills employed by lecturers in the preparation process and the development of resources to be used in teaching and learning (Serdyukova & Serdyukov, 2014). Multilingualism support pedagogy when students use their native language. In such instances, concepts are clarified in their small groups, where a switch among languages from small talks to organised presentations creates an autonomous environment for students. The use of multilingualism enable students to have discussions and ask questions in learning environments (Mheta et al, 2018). The use of their

mother tongue and repertoire in smaller group discussions can be a starting point to decolonise the curriculum. Students are allowed to freely engage with their peers, mentors and facilitators and they have a feeling of belonging as they feel included in small group settings. In such instances, students work as members of the team during practicals, tutorials, and quizzes as they critique the information at hand. This allows them to plan, collect, critique and analyse data which is presented to them in a form of tutorial sheets, quizzes, assignments or literature that tests their skills and competencies to use laboratory instruments, or gather data, analyse it and draw conclusions from the observed phenomena or literature at hand. Should the facilitator be able to switch between languages, this will provide students the chance to have a deeper, clearer understanding and make meaning of concepts which were foreign to them. They will be able to express their opinions without fear of miscoding and misinterpreting the concepts at hand. The following paragraph discusses the support needed when employing multilingualism.

Support needed in the implementation of decolonisation

HEIs are obliged to adopt intercultural and international education which will produce graduates that are equipped with skills that meet the requirements of the employment. This compels HEIs to form communities of learning that enhance social justice in intercultural learning environments. Such environments need to be inclusive and accommodate students in ways that recognise student's diverseness, equity and the cultivation of a sense of belonging. The formed communities of learning encompass learning that take place when various groups of people learn together and from each other. However, challenges exist in institutions of higher learning that hinder the intercultural perspectives. These challenges include among others, policies that favour monolingualism and programmes of neoliberalism that are inconsistent with philosophies of social justice and overlook intercultural skills (Jokikokko, 2021). In such instances, Dervin (2015) regards interculturality as those interactions that are in existence between similar groups of people with those that are non-similar to them. Additionally, Ryan (2013), regards

intercultural education as the skills and knowledge gained from the hosting institution. However, one has to be cognisant that in communities of learning, there are privileges and power imbalances that always exist. But, this does not forbid intercultural environments to create safe and equal conditions (Jokikokko, 2021).

Hence, various structures can be used in the implementation of multilingualism in HEIs. However, this paper will focus only on the Centre for Academic Excellence as one of the major support structures that ensure that quality educational practices are offered. The Centre for Academic Excellence at South African HEIs provides various institutional departments with supplemental instructors (SI), tutors and mentors and they provide numerous workshops that enable discussions on how best to improve the teaching and learning practices. Having said that, the centre needs to organise more workshops that are populated with topics such as decolonisation and multilingualisation of the curriculum and many others that will create an improvement in the students' learning process.

The provision of supplemental instructors, tutors and mentors enable the arrangement of additional learning sessions with students after being in consultation with the lecturers concerned. This ensures that they deliver content which was already covered by various lecturers in class. Such additional sessions are done to ensure that meaning is made and there is an improved understanding from the student's side. The SI, tutors and mentors tackle troublesome concepts which are challenging to students. In such sessions, students feel free to express their opinions, where they are allowed to voice their views, be knowledgeable, and make meaning and clear misunderstandings in their native tongues. During such sessions, students who have a better understanding of the taught concepts can be used to explain the concepts at hand to their peers. In moments like this, the diversity that exist amongst students is recognized, appreciated and gives students a sense of belonging as they are able to actively participate. When students participate in small groups, they are comfortable reaching agreements collectively and tend to respond to questions efficiently (Joubert & Sibanda, 2022). This kind of setting, supports the

use of many languages and takes various cultural perspectives into consideration.

What are the benefits of using multilingualism in teaching and learning?

When various languages are used in teaching and learning, there is an acknowledgement of diverse cultures that exist amongst students. This ensures that the hierarchy that existed, that resulted from monolingualism, the use of only one language not familiar to many or where some students are not confident enough to express their views in English, is dispelled in discussions. Canagarajah (2011), concurs when he mentions that the classroom dominance resulting from the use of only one language is gradually being levelled. As such, when multilingualism is used, it ensures that communication becomes easier with creativity enhancement (Okal, 2014). In addition, the use of multilingualism is an additional advantage in the market place. An additional advantage to being multilingual is that it increases a person's chance of being employed. Furthermore, there is improved learning (Hornberger, 2005) and students become motivated and believe in themselves (Lin, 2013). Moreover, there is an enhanced communication in learning environments when translanguaging is used.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging is a flexible way to enhance communication among lecturers and students in learning environments that have the capability to construct knowledge. It was recently adopted as a tool that has access to student's language repertoire and it serves as a coping mechanism in sociolinguistic issues (Duarte, 2019). The use of translanguaging in lessons may improve the recognition of other languages. Home language could be used during participatory interactions that shape the development of cognition. However, it is insufficiently researched and it requires a sociocultural approach for it to be used as a pedagogical tool (Duarte, 2019). It is perceived that it negatively affects learning, by disrupting inter-language friendships and may cause students to deviate from task based discussions (Van Der Wildt, Van Avermaet and Van Houtte, 2015).

Internationalisation of the curricula

Internationalisation of the curriculum can be done by integrating findings from other countries with our African findings through partnerships. The documentation, publication and acknowledgement of sources of African information such as obtaining information on herbs and other plants that are used in the treatment of ailments such as high blood pressure as mentioned in Mheta et al (2018) can be used as a starting point. Additionally, data gathered from local species, the distribution and behaviour of those species can be shared with other countries through publications and exchange programmes of both staff and students. Furthermore, specialists in a particular field can be invited for a public lecture to share their expertise and experiences with the host institution. This will ultimately enhance the acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge and internationalise our local findings. Curricula can be internationalised by collaborating with other countries, where one country can provide raw herbs and material which will be refined by the other country that has more advanced equipment that will process the raw material into the required products. Such collaborations may ensure that there is a transfer of skills amongst different cultures. As such, this compels the restructuring of our curricula to ensure that it becomes more relevant to students and it is marketable. This will ensure that our communities, the country's economy and the world as a whole benefit from such changes. It should address our needs and solve Africa's needs while it positions Africa on a global scale.

When internationalising the curricula, opportunities for student and staff mobility are made available. Even though, there are obstacles in the mobility process that hinder both students and staff mobility, such as the finalisation of immigration documents, permits and tuition fees for immigrants, there is still a need to work in partnerships.

Lastly, another aspect of importance in internationalisation is the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) which was initiated in the United States of America. Its main aim was to provide all suitable producers from the Sub-Saharan countries a chance to access a duty-free

market (South African Government News, 2023, November 06). This initiative can enhance diversified economies within those countries that are participating and it could enable African countries with the exportation of goods that are valued together with their services (South African Government News, 2023, November 06).

Discussion

The discussion below is inspired by arguments generated by different authors in the literature reviewed above. Colonial systems exclude African experiences and histories in the designed HEIs curricula imposing their interests and education on Africans (Woldegiorgis, 2021). To date, the colonial and apartheid epistemes still dominate the disciplinary knowledge (Senekal and Lenz, 2020) in universities. Textbooks used for learning still use western experiences, they do not reflect African cultures and they are used to control Africans (Du Plessis, 2021). The exclusions triggered movements and calls in an attempt to decolonise the curriculum. But, there were criticisms from HEIs (Shain, Yildis, Poku & Gokay, 2021). This could be due to fear of change or being inadequately informed about the concept decolonisation and what it entails. A need to decolonise education became eminent since its intention is the restoration of dignity that was devaluated by agendas of colonialism (Lebeloane, 2017). It necessitates various sectors to become more involved and pay more attention to such issues in order to implement changes and to transform the education system. Abrupt interventions could lead to a decolonised education that is inclusive, with the recognition of knowledge from all spheres. Some of the challenges faced in the process of decolonisation included the insufficiency in the African content. However, such challenges could be overcome by initiating processes to write and publish materials that include African perspectives combined with Western knowledge through partnerships. The enforced implementation of language policy in learning environments could also play a vital role in decolonising the curriculum. Decolonisation enforces the embracement of cultural diverseness, with the ability to narrate peoples' own stories and knowledge rather than following a Eurocentric approach (Du Plessis, 2021). The 2015-2016 protests enabled communications that needed to

transform and decolonise education. Protests echoed a need to abruptly pay more attention on burning issues such as the language policy and the implementation of multilingualism in teaching and learning (Du Preez, 2018).

The predominance of men in managerial roles is another area that required decolonisation. Stereotyping and patriarchy dictated this. Nonetheless, attempts were made to address these disparities. There has been a change in management roles as of late, with more women being granted opportunities based on their leadership skills and competencies. Additionally, unavailability of resources is another aspect that need to be decolonised since the acquired knowledge is determined by the availability of resources. Insufficient resources hinders institutions to come up with advanced research findings which could have assisted in solving problems and ensuring that education becomes relevant. Interventions from HEIs in researching probable solutions could enable Africans to create curricula that boost African values (Senekal and Lenz, 2020) and fill the gap of African knowledge deficiency. However, a decolonised curriculum does not imply that western knowledge should be disregarded, there is a need to integrate all forms of knowledge in the curriculum design. The use of multilingualism in teaching and learning permits the expression of opinions in diverse languages, it also enhances communication skills and awareness of various cultures (Okal, 2014). And a decolonised institution in South Africa should place African languages as the leading languages in pedagogical practices with equal contributions from all spheres of the world (Mbembe, 2015). An obligation for the adoption of intercultural and international education could produce skillful graduates. HEIs are therefore compelled to create learning communities that are inclusive, with the recognition of diverseness and cultivate a sense of belonging. The process of implementing multilingualism requires support from various institutional structures. One of the benefits of using multilingualism include, ensuring that the hierarchy that resulted from the use of monolingualism is dispelled in discussions. Recently, translanguaging can be used as one of the sources to improve the recognition of other languages. Partnerships are required to internationalise the curriculum by integrating

findings from other countries with our African findings.

Conclusion

The present study was designed to discuss decolonisation and how multilingualism can be used as a resource to decolonise education in HEIs by promoting the use of previously marginalised languages in pedagogical practices. This prompts the need to have more discussions on decolonisation until everyone is able to participate liberally on issues of decolonisation without fear. Various sectors need to amalgamate, have workshops and discuss how best education in the HEIs can be decolonised. Several key issues were highlighted in the study to support inclusivity, diversity and bring back a sense of belonging to the students whose languages were excluded in HEIs curriculum. The study stressed that decolonisation supports to undo colonial practices by introducing African people's knowledges thereby restoring their identity and dignity. HEIs need to acknowledge and incorporate African knowledge among all other forms of knowledge that are equally derived from diverse cultural perspectives, without one knowledge being dominant over others as it happens with English in most HEIs.

The study further showed that decolonising the curriculum does not mean discarding everything that is Eurocentric, but allowing African languages to gradually function alongside the Western languages for the reason that multilingualism benefits students in multiple ways: connecting with other students, communication, internalisation, translanguaging, marketability and confidence to engage in conversations in various environments.

HEIs should aim to inspire students in their development of logical thinking and the capability to inquire and be knowledgeable. The study has also proven that the use of multilingualism affords students the chance to have a deeper understanding of concepts. When various languages are used in teaching and learning, there is an acknowledgement of diverse cultures that exist amongst students. The study also regards translanguaging as a way that can transform HEIs in SA. Translanguaging enhances communication among lecturers and students.

Students that are multilingual are given the opportunity to use their linguistic capabilities to comprehend content through translanguaging from their own perspective. Expanding African knowledges to students will improve their sense of identity, belonging, and epistemological access because the use of languages which are not African students' home languages affects students' sense of academic, personal identity as well as their sense of belonging in the higher education sector.

Recommendations

The authors recommends that HEIs should be decolonised and if possible, its implementation needs to be enforced and the use of multilingualism in teaching and learning environments be encouraged. Curricula could be restructured to ensure that it is relevant to students, communities, the economy, the country and the world by solving emerging problems. A review of curricula aligned with our African context and its needs is required before attempting to solve global problems. It must be taken into account that problems of a particular area may not be as much of a serious concern for other parts of the world. Additionally, the Centre for Academic Excellence has a vital role to play in ensuring that it organizes numerous workshops which will ensure that everyone in academia reaches a point where they can confidently engage in discussions about decolonisation and multilingualism without fearing the unknown. If deeper discussions on decolonisation and multilingualism could be held, there would be liberation from the existing barriers of monolingualism in teaching and learning.

Consent for publishing

Not applicable

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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