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Decoloniality as a Viable Response to Educational Transformation in Africa

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Introduction

There are a myriad of challenges and obstacles towards the realisation of a just education for Africa. Resolving one obstacle for just education in Africa does not necessarily entail resolution of the problem of education justice on the continent. However, it is worth recognising that there are some barriers to just education in Africa that are more profound and wide-reaching in their influence than others so that addressing them would be a huge milestone in opening up further opportunities to achieve just education. The need for transformation of education in Africa is one

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C. H. Manthalu, Y. Waghid (eds.), *Education for Decoloniality and Decolonisation in Africa*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15689-3_2

such endeavour that would enable achievement of just education. However, at the centre of transformation of education in Africa is the need for decolonising education. Decolonisation of education is not just a matter of political ideological motivation where the curriculum is propped up to achieve some sort of balance of knowledge content. Rather than be reducible to mere representation in the curriculum of another knowledge body and pedagogical experiences, decoloniality ought to be regarded as a necessary result of educational justice that demands reimagining and reconstituting epistemological frameworks.

Given this point of departure, decolonisation of education is not a matter of achieving some ideal balance between forms of knowledge content, nor is it about emphasising whatever was marginalised previously. Decolonisation is not reducible to doing away with all aspects of the dominant position and making a reactionary ethnocentric elevation of the local situation at whatever cost. Decolonisation is not an exercise of restoring an ostensibly pristine past. Rather, decolonisation is about a democratic open-endedness to knowledge and otherness without being restricted and governed by surreptitious categorisations of what constitutes an epistemological regulative benchmark epistemology that serves as the basis for marginalising all otherness.

This chapter argues that the hegemony of Eurocentric epistemologies in African education in principle undermines the concrete being of African communities and individuals. As such achievement of transformation in African education necessarily demands decolonising African education. Decolonisation in this context means breaking the undue hegemony of Eurocentric epistemology in education. It also entails centring indigenous epistemologies to make (hybridised) African concreteness the object of academic inquiry in African education without qualification.

The Epistemic Status in Africa

By and large, the decolonisation Africa has achieved so far largely pertains to political independence only (Ramosé 2016, 548). Africa regarded attainment of political independence as the final moment of

self-reclamation; yet, it ought to have been the starting point for more meaningful self-reclamation (Mungwini 2016, 526). After independence, the most significant endeavours of “cultural, economic, and political restructuring and rethinking of the character and substance of independence” were strangely not undertaken (Mungwini 2016, 526). In education, much of what constitutes African epistemology has been unduly marginalised on the basis of mere prejudice against its credibility other than the quality and veracity of the knowledge claims (Mungwini 2017, 6).

The colonial experience was founded on “the metaphysical denial of African existence and therefore, on the myth of emptiness” (Mungwini 2017, 8). Epistemologically, Africa was regarded as empty of intellectual creativity ostensibly attributed to a lack of rationality in African world views (Mungwini 2017, 8). According to Mungwini (2017, 8), the effects of such marginalisation of African experiences are still riling Africa today such that transformation must necessarily demand an African “re-writing and re-righting” of its history.

There is a need to revisit and revise legitimate African knowledge that modernity “discarded and disparaged in the quest of building its own self-image” (Mungwini 2017, 9). The necessity of doing so becomes more forceful once we critically scrutinise the internationalist education, treaties, conventions and declarations of the modern global order that aspire to realise a borderless world of radical Eurocentric cosmopolitanism that regards subjective particularism as inherently inhibitive of cosmopolitan universalism (Zezeza 2009, 130). The formalising of the prevalent framework of human rights, for instance, privileges Eurocentric framing of human rights while leading to the discounting and subjugation of alternative human rights conceptions (Zembylas 2017, 398). The framing of human rights today is largely historically grounded in Eurocentric modernity’s liberal understanding of the human as an essentially “autonomous rational and sovereign ‘individual’” (Zembylas 2017, 398). As such, human rights education systematically de-emphasises the value of being in a community with others, who are caregivers that support and facilitate development of the self-determination capacity, in such a way that responsibility to others is conceived as obstructive and inhibitive of individual agency (Mkabela 2014, 288–289).

The epistemology underlying the law in South Africa leads to alienation of justice and contestation by the people of the conventional legal institutions, especially the constitution, which in principle have subordinated the law of the indigenous people into a Eurocentric one (Ramose 2016, 554; Thomas 2008, 53). In South Africa, the type and content of philosophy topics and what constitutes the core of problems of philosophy in university curriculums are essentially Eurocentric in nature (Ramose 2016, 554).

In African education, the systematic marginalisation of African indigenous epistemologies is almost the precondition for the hegemonic modernity that dominates education. The nature of the modern global order, according to Mungwini (2017, 9–10), is such that there are structures by which the powerful groups exclude individuals and/or groups of people from “the province of knowledge” motivated by prejudice that discredits the claims of some other knower. Denial of credibility to alternative epistemologies is not based on the veracity of the knowledge claims but rather on the basis of how the excluded are perceived by the dominant in society (Mungwini 2017, 10). For Mungwini (2017), the adverse implication is that undermining the other’s capacity as a knower in principle also fundamentally undermines such person as a human being (Mungwini 2017, 10). Disqualification of African experiences and knowledge claims from the philosophical domain were based not on the substance of the claims but rather on the identity of the indigenous and racial identity of the knowledge originators (Mungwini 2017, 12). Given the extent of internationalisation of education today, epistemic injustice is so entrenched across the world that prevailing social structures create and perpetuate the marginalisation of indigeneity and prevent it from contributing its experiences in shared meaning creation (Mungwini 2017, 10).

Due to colonisation, African sovereignty is still generally defective and weak due to the prevalence of epistemological colonisation. The global economy that is at the core of global interconnectedness is founded on the “ego-centred” rationality of the fundamentalism of the market that now shapes global and African public institutions (Ramose 2016, 548). However, there are and have been alternative modes of individual and collective being across the world and indeed in Africa.

Since colonisation, “the conceptual and epistemic terrain of Africa has been significantly reshaped” (Mungwini 2017, 12) by the conceptual categories of the dominant of the global society requiring that all knowledge be couched in the dominant frameworks, ultimately marginalising, misrepresenting and distorting the experiences of indigenous people. Global interconnectedness today necessitates cultivation of globally minded cosmopolitan citizens. Being cosmopolitan is no longer debatable nor is it a choice. However, what is problematic is the notion that cosmopolitan impartiality should necessarily strip partiality of normativity. In other words, the assumption that the universal and ostensibly higher ideals, epistemologies and skills of cosmopolitanism have a superior primary moral worth, and that localness can be dispensed with, without adverse normative consequences because localness is ostensibly secondary and morally inferior, is problematic.

Pursuit of exclusively impartial epistemologies in the name of cosmopolitanism is problematic on two grounds. Firstly, in the strictest sense, the context for knowledge construction that the knowledge embeds and presupposes is hardly impartial or neutral. There are a multiplicity of factors that contextualise and motivate the knowledge constructor, including prejudices, assumptions, cultural and gender perspectives that embed sometimes even the impartial knowledge (Code 2012, 92). Secondly, such exclusively elevated ‘impartial’ epistemologies as the epitome of knowledge are undermined by the concreteness of being for the less powerful people of the world whose way of life and languages lack global economic power as are the dominant philosophies of the developed nations.

Before independent Africa had adequately dealt with the heritage of colonialism, a new challenge in the form of globalisation emerged in the name of neo-liberalism (Canagarajah 2005, 196). For instance, as a decolonisation project, language of instruction policies in education was yet to be redesigned. So, to reconstitute the status of official language to be consistent with local concreteness by developing local languages and assigning them functional value, globalisation and neo-liberalism—which have overcome state sovereignty—are making demands that are in contrast with the decolonisation project, in principle recentring English and major foreign languages as the languages of education, science and

official communication (Canagarajah 2005, 195–196). The convenience of integrating into the global order at whatever cost has regrettably damaged endeavours of recognising and affirming the value of locality that was yet to be recognised. The imperativeness of globalising has in principle suppressed and retained the hegemony of some major languages and epistemologies across the world—and perpetuates it.

One immediate and profound expression of a lack of epistemic independence in Africa is reflected in Africa's language policies. Today, African languages are generally kept out of the education domain, entrenching the stigma brought against them by colonisation. The result is that modern-day Africans themselves find local languages to be of inferior value as far as climbing the social and global ladders is concerned (Kamwendo 2010, 279). As foreign languages assumed formal status, the indigenous ones were assigned informal if not inferior status ultimately excluding the majority of local people from actively participating in knowledge creation processes and activities (Mungwini 2017, 14).

Claiming that African education needs transformation because it is in principle colonised is not outlawing Western knowledge as being inherently dominating and incompatible with African interests. Ideal decolonisation is cognisant of the indispensable value of the inadequacy of any cultural perspective to resolve the modern challenges of the human condition single-handedly. Ideal decoloniality therefore allows for hybridity where a people respectfully and volitionally appropriate elements of other people. The absence of African languages in higher education as mediums of instruction and of conducting and disseminating research undermines the possibility of meaningful African appropriation of knowledge. Knowledge appropriation is achievable when problems, concepts and frameworks of thought are vernacularised. Vernacularisation refers to linguistic processes through which universalist claims are “contested and contextualised, invoked and revoked, posted and positioned” where concepts ultimately “never simply produce a replica of the first intended usage or its original meaning” but where the vernacularisation rather creates a “form of variation” that “transforms meaning, adds to it, enriches it in ever so subtle ways” (Benhabib 2011, 129). Mungwini (2017, 14) gives an example of missionaries who had the Bible translated into vernacular languages of indigenous peoples of Africa. The result was that the

peoples appropriated Christianity on their own terms at times, which were different from the expectations of the missionaries (Mungwini 2017, 14). Mungwini (2017, 14) therefore argues that if such interpretation were to apply in the other domains and disciplines such as science, similar knowledge appropriation would be achieved.

Understanding Decoloniality

Transformation generally is about enacting changes aimed at having representation of unduly marginalised interests and perspectives that resulted from systematic privileging of other entities such as “topics, concepts, voices, worldviews, perspectives, cultures” (Etieyibo 2016, 404). In other words, transforming the educational curriculum is about incorporating “insights, ideas, information, experiences, practices, worldviews and perspectives into programmes of studies” (Etieyibo 2016, 404). In the education and curriculum domains in Africa, transformation is about reformulating epistemic structures to rid them of the intellectual hegemony that inherently and unduly undermines indigenous epistemic paradigms and systems in academic inquiry (Etieyibo 2016, 404).

The undermining and marginalisation of indigenous epistemologies result in epistemic injustice that is rooted in prejudice against another epistemology on the basis of assumptions about the social identity of the people owning the epistemology (Anderson 2012, 165). Epistemic injustice occurs as long as the education curriculum is not meaningfully representative of the perspectives and experiences of a certain group (Etieyibo 2016, 405).

In the modern interconnected world, achievement of global and social justice is inextricably bound to achievement of cognitive justice (Zembylas 2017, 398). Meaningful education is education that is connected to the lived experiences of the learners where meaningfulness of words and knowledge is contextualised in the concreteness of the situatedness of the people (Freire 2014, 71). Much of the epistemology in African education systems today is regarded as impartial, and hence universal, ideal for the modern cosmopolitan citizen. However, the modern globalist tradition is rooted in Eurocentric scientific essentialism “which is inherently com-

parative and universalistic in its intellectual gaze and ambitions” (Zezeza 2009, 130). Since colonialism, aspects of African concreteness, as expressed through education, metaphysics and epistemology, have been marginalised as being particularistic and inhibitive of realisation of perfect impartial, objective knowledge. As Benhabib (1992, 167) observes, inasmuch as human beings share general similarities upon which the predominant traditional contractarian theories have grounded human equality and human rights, the ultimate recognition of the equal humanity in an individual does not reside only in such similarities at the exclusion of differences. Rather, individuals are recognised as equals when what constitutes their individuation has been taken into consideration as constitutive of their being human, because denying the difference and otherness that individuates a person as a peculiar person in principle denies such person being human (Benhabib 1992, 153).

An acknowledgement of the normativity of individual and collective concreteness across the world in the conceptualisations of being an individual problematises the exclusiveness and hegemony of internationalist education, international treaties, covenants and declarations that presuppose a Eurocentric essentialist conception of human nature. As Zembylas (2017, 398) holds, the prevailing conceptions of global institutions of human rights are grounded in Eurocentric conceptions of human nature that conceive an individual as a rational autonomous and sovereign being for whom the social order is relevant only with respect to strategic extrinsic value towards self-interest. One observes that such a conception of the individual excludes the role of affectivity in being human. Furthermore, this conception of the individual views being a person as only constituted in transcending the relations with others in a community. In other words, being an individual is epitomised by the ability to be detached from one’s social context that is ostensibly particularistic; hence, devoid of normativity (Mkabela 2014, 288). However, such exclusivist foundations of ostensibly universal and global knowledge fail to recognise that particularism has a central place in the constitution of being human. Such perspectives of being marginalise and undermine alternative forms of being not on the grounds of others’ normative validity, but only on the basis of their otherness.

Without necessarily being essentialist, it is worth noting that the individual-centric conception of human nature that informs modern epistemologies globally and indeed in much of the education in Africa does not adequately account for the communalistic conception of the individual that dominates much of African philosophy (Cornell and Muvangua 2012, 3). In the *ubuntu* conception of human nature, being an individual is not comprehended in detachment from others in the social order (Murithi 2007, 84). The concreteness of being human is inextricably linked with an interconnectedness with others, such that individual autonomy is as cardinal as responsibility to the well-being of other members of the human community (Radebe and Phooko 2017, 241). Self-actualisation must occur in concert with the flourishing of other human beings.

In African education, the relational rationality of *ubuntu* has been marginalised by the individual-centric one in educational epistemologies. This is despite the fact that, arguably, the concrete social arrangement, culture and languages of most African communities revolve around the communalistic conception of being a person (Cornell and Muvangua 2012, 3). As a result, the evolution of modern education—which de-emphasises collective well-being and collective virtues, and emphasises individual being—has led to education in Africa creating a chasm between the people’s communalistic concreteness on the one hand, and the exclusively individualistic demands of education on the educated person on the other. While modern education overemphasises self-development, self-actualisation and competition, education in African indigenous thought, besides these virtues, also emphasised responsibility towards community, togetherness and care for the other (Metz 2015, 1178). The Eurocentric conceptualisation of being human as being translatable into a transcendent self, which is detached from ostensibly oppressive communal obligations, informs education in Africa and almost the world over. For this conceptualisation of being human, communal obligations are at best discretionary to the free individual and antithetical to individual freedom at worst. There is therefore an ostensibly inherent incompatibility and exclusivity between individual freedom and responsibility to those others with whom one is in community, except when it is of strategic value to self-interest.

The ostensibly impartial education of the modern global world must be reconsidered because it embeds epistemic particularism, which is advanced as universal and non-particularistic knowledge. It is worth noting that in human beings, cognitive bias is deeply rooted in the minds of people and tends to operate more automatically and more consciously than conscious thought (Anderson 2012, 167). As such, cognitive bias is quite difficult to “control even by the most conscientious and well-intentioned agents” (Anderson 2012, 167). Epistemic or cognitive bias is not always just based on active prejudices against the other. Rather, with passage of time and transmission of knowledge from a generation to another, even those who have consciously taken active positions against exclusion and marginalisation of the other still inherit the epistemic structures and substance that are inherited by prejudice against alternative epistemology. Alternatively, the ‘default’ foundationalism of an epistemology that has for long been hegemonic is ultimately not sanitised and de-problematised owing to entrenched-ness of the foundationalism. In other words, one can hold that epistemic or cognitive marginalisation may not be internal to the moral agent but rather that it is strongly internal to the ‘impartial’ knowledge one receives as exclusively impartial and representative of all humanity across the world.

The idea of ‘impartial’ objective knowledge in education prevalent in Africa, which necessarily excludes particularity, ignores the reality of knowledge construction processes. Knowledge constructors are explicitly or implicitly motivated by particular gender, historical, social and cultural perspectives in their endeavours (Code 2012, 92). The knowledge embeds within it such concrete aspects of being human (Code 2012, 92). Legitimation of which knowledge passes for academic inquiry is informed, among others, by a particular social vision because the curriculum and pedagogy are grounded in dreams of a people that are characterised by culture politics (Giroux 2004, 33). With respect to the exclusively Eurocentric globalist curriculum, such knowledge imposes on learners not only acquisition of the dominant epistemologies and their accompanying cultures, but it also ultimately translates into othering and de-emphasis of locality. For example, to excel in the school in much of Africa, owing to their monolingual curriculums, teachers have to actively

discourage the use of vernacular languages in the school domain, at times with punitive sanctions, to foster acquisition of English (Bunyi 2005, 133).

It should be emphasised that demanding decoloniality as an attempt at transformation of education in Africa does not necessarily entail an essentialist return to a pristine African past and marginalising everything 'non-African'. Decoloniality also need not be conceived as centring on education whatever is called 'African epistemology' insulating it from critical examination. Rather, given the subtlety of cognitive bias, it is imperative that overcoming epistemic coloniality should be about making even and accessible the academic spaces by ridding them of inherent repulsion of any other epistemology that does not conform to Eurocentrism. Decoloniality will break the undue privilege and embedded marginalisation of Eurocentric epistemology in African education. Decoloniality would lead to transformation not only because it would allow the inclusion of African epistemologies into academic spaces. Much more, transformation will be guaranteed because, by breaking the hegemonic hold of Eurocentrism, education will be open-ended, giving room for other valid African and non-African epistemologies as well as Eurocentric ones. This will open possibilities for a more meaningful globality devoid of epistemic hegemony that is rooted in prejudice.

Decoloniality is about recognising that there is epistemic hegemony when some forms of knowledge have been unduly advanced as the exclusive universal standard of knowledge; yet, they are in significant measures particularistic and in principle only one of many other valid alternatives of realising universality. Decoloniality is about acknowledging that some hegemonic epistemologies at best marginalise and at worst deny the legitimacy of some other epistemologies of other peoples of the world. The implication therefore is that in the diverse yet immensely interconnected global world today, achieving epistemic justice is not only an inward-looking endeavour only but also one that is outward-looking (Papastephanou 2013, 170).

Decolonising education in Africa is a normative matter other than one of political ideology. It is imperative for African agency to assert itself in reclaiming and repositioning its epistemology and knowledge. Given the entrenched-ness, domination and embedded nature of cognitive bias, there is often the temptation to rationalise the prevailing cognitive bias as

being hard to overcome, as being past the time and that instead, it is Africa that must adapt and conform to the 'new world order' (Eze 2014, 238; Matolino and Kwindingwi 2013, 202). The rationale for such positions is ultimately reducible to the financial cost of developing and implementing epistemologies grounded in African experiences. Confronted with the (false) dilemma of choosing either a normative obligation that is presented as secondary in value or merely choosing to integrate into the mainstream due to the financial cost of transformation, Africa needs to manage this choice of ostensible contraries as the false dilemma that it is. Each of the two has distinct incomparable worth, and complements the other in such a way that having one without the other undermines being human.

Here it is also worth commenting briefly on the reluctance to embark on transformation on the ostensible basis of a lack of consensus among Africans over what constitutes Africanness. Two brief responses. Firstly, not everything about what constitutes African and that ought to be included in African education today is contentious. Take the instance of language. While conceding that African communities are multi-linguistic, there are however shared dominant languages in and across nations that could effectively be employed and developed as languages of research and instruction in education. This however does not deny the existence of local debates about which language over competing others should be employed. However, such questions pertain to political policymaking and not to an inherent lack of capacity of an African language to serve effectively as a language of education. Secondly, even where there are contentions about what is African, the curriculum could accommodate the key contested positions polarised, as they may be, as competing theories about what is African. In any case, whatever each side would claim is African, would reasonably be expected to be part of the concrete experiences of African life. The question of whether one agrees with it or not would be secondary, as long as it would be an experience prevalent in Africa. In short, asserting Africanness together with its loaded contestations is paramount and indispensable in achieving transformation.

Potential adherents of the prevalent 'impartial' education would hold that emphasising particularism in the curriculum is counterproductive given how plural and diverse the modern world is. Rather, the critic

would further argue that the modern learner must be equipped only with knowledge and skills that transcend locality to manage global diversity effectively. Such positions, while conceding the existence and worth of diversity elsewhere, ironically deny the same to Africa. One cannot embrace global diversity, which is a recognition of the articulation of the concreteness of other peoples, while restraining oneself from recognising one's own concreteness. Such a position also presupposes that globality is culturally neutral. However, globality is inherited and governed by Eurocentric values and ideologies (Zezeza 2009, 130).

By holding that transformation must necessarily involve emphasising Africa at least initially, we need not conflate decolonisation with substitution of everything non-local with the local. Ideal transformation and decoloniality would necessarily have to consider the other non-local as part of the elements of the meaning-making endeavour for individuals as well as for collectives. This entails that other epistemic paradigms are not antagonistic with being assertive about one's inclusive concreteness. Rather, decoloniality demands that such other epistemic paradigms be recognised as the equal and mutual collaborators in understanding the world and devising modes of improving the human condition that they are. In other words, decoloniality is against the undue inherent exclusivity and ostensible absoluteness of one epistemic paradigm over any valid other, ultimately undermining the human dignity of the people under that paradigm. Decoloniality should not be conflated with an unconditional embracing of any other 'particularities' of human communities as constitutive of respecting concrete being, neither does it entail insulation of concreteness of otherness from external assessment.

Decoloniality should not be understood as a one-time event. Rather, it is an incessant regulative process that constantly guards against any undue dominance of one epistemic tradition over another. Understood this way, decoloniality is expected to be the act of ensuring openness of spaces of academic inquiry to include as diverse objects of inquiry as there can be. The other perspectives, world views and objects of inquiry must be understood on their own terms and not be forced to fit into the 'intelligible' Eurocentric frameworks of thought. Seen this way, it is the academy (not the other) that must first adjust by not predetermining what kind of knowledge is accorded legitimacy for academic inquiry.

Colonialism across the globe by few dominant nations paraded particularistic epistemologies that still dominate today as the impartial perfect universal epistemologies for a global world (Canagarajah 2005, 196; Masemula 2015, 176). However, as has been shown in this section, such ostensibly impartial epistemologies are inherited by particularism. Ultimately, one would reasonably contend that promotion of such epistemologies in their current form and contexts encourages the marginalisation of indigenous epistemologies, ultimately encouraging assimilation into the dominant mainstream. Put differently, the universal or impartial epistemologies that are ostensible pillars for building an equitable global human community, in principle, inherently counteract the existence and development of indigenous epistemologies. Ultimately, the ostensibly impartial epistemologies undermine the expectation of the diverse peoples of the world to have their concreteness recognised, which is an articulation of their being human (societies) in this world.

The hegemonic prevalence of modern impartial education exists in the context of global inequalities. Much of Africa is largely on the passive receiving end of modern education. Few developed nations orchestrate the constitution of education globally. The emergence of neo-liberalism exacerbates the situation in that it leaves very little room for developing nations to invest in that which makes them concrete societies. Usually, this is because what is epistemically concrete about them is found to be of no relevant value according to the market benchmarks of value of the neo-liberal order. Indigenous knowledge and skills are in other words deemed irrelevant and incompatible with the dominant global impartial epistemologies. This implies that going by the modern neo-liberal global order economically, less powerful nations can scarcely have their epistemologies become a meaningful part of the education process because the epistemologies will apparently devalue their learners rendering them non-competitive in the global arena. It is therefore evident that decolonising the global order would realise democratic transformation that yields global equity.

It is tempting to regard demands of asserting indigenous epistemologies as tantamount to being reactionary and resistant to global oneness. However, it is worth bearing in mind that impartialist epistemology positions ignore that boundaries of epistemic marginalisation coincide with

those of global inequalities such that an exclusive commitment to the Eurocentric impartial positivistic epistemologies undermines the indigenous philosophies of those disempowered by the inequalities of the global order (Anderson 2012, 170). This is because the concrete indigenous experiences of the globally disadvantaged of Africa may scarcely be intelligible to the perspectives of the advantaged because the available interpretive tools of the dominant epistemologies lack the capacity to comprehend experiences different from those of the advantaged (Anderson 2012, 170). Marginalisation of the reality conceptualisation of the globally disadvantaged is therefore regarded as trivial, not out of conscious prejudice, but out of sheer incomprehension of the meaningfulness of one epistemology to another (Anderson 2012, 170).

On Reconceptualising Global Universalism

It is arguably apparent that the challenge of transforming and decolonising education in Africa is grounded in the challenges generated by globalisation. As such, achieving decolonisation must necessarily challenge the hegemony that also involves globalisation and neo-liberalism, which in principle are mutations of the epistemic domination of colonialism. The endeavour of Africanising the educational curriculum in Africa is in principle engagement in an ethical revolution that pursues achievement of social and global justice (Ramosé 2016, 554).

Ideally, education ought to be about desiring the good for every individual or people without initially expecting this desire to further the achievement of some ostensibly grand purpose (Ramosé 2016, 552). Since decolonising the curriculum is a matter of (social and global) justice, the process therefore ultimately raises the question of what does or should constitute educational justice in Africa. An answer to this question cannot be given in abstract terms only. The answer ought to pertain particularly to the concreteness of the people. It is what happens or does not happen to the situatedness of a people that determines justice. Being a virtue of institutions (Rawls 1999, 6), justice cannot be detached from the people's lived experiences. Inasmuch as there are universal abstract principles of justice, how such principles get concretised greatly varies

and sometimes even contrasts across human societies without necessarily undermining consistency with the abstract ideal equality. For instance, in the curriculum, positions regarding questions of what should be the aim of education with respect to the individual versus the community may not be uniform. Different concrete societies will vary and even contrast in their (de-)emphasis of communal interests in education while not necessarily undermining individual autonomy (Mkabela 2014, 288–289). Indeed for some communities, individual autonomy is as cardinal as communal responsibility and the two cannot be decoupled without losing both (Cornell and Muvangua 2012, 3; Metz 2007, 335).

Implications of Decoloniality

Achieving decoloniality in education in Africa is not about substitution of the non-indigenous by the indigenous. On the contrary, among others, ideal decolonised education must be holistic and counter-dogmatic, and the ends of the education must be a means towards a concrete achievement of social justice (Ramosé 2016, 553). Holding that education must be connected with a people's lived experiences is conceding that education today must necessarily have universal and particular epistemic dimensions. This is because human existence today cannot be absolutely reduced to either local or trans-local. The human being today is at the same time local and global (Alexander 2016, 173). Decoloniality is essentially an aspiration to correct enduring reproduction of historical epistemic marginalisation of indigeneity. In other words, in the absence of a history and prevalence of marginalisation, the concept of decoloniality becomes logically and normatively empty. This means that decoloniality is not synonymous with an unconditional elevation of whatever form of indigeneity to achieve the same level of dominance as Eurocentrism currently does.

Decoloniality is an ideal that is rooted in human equality and dignity as it is against undue privileging and prejudiced undermining of one philosophical perspective in preference of another. Being human partly includes having capacity for agency, while respecting human dignity

entails respecting the free will of an individual in making choices. Respecting human dignity and equality therefore conversely demands that decoloniality ought to be against promotion of dogmatic knowledge that is immune against criticality. It is easy for decoloniality to slip easily into indoctrination or essentialism. Therefore, decolonisation must necessarily demand centrality of openness and criticality in the enactment of decoloniality to avoid replacing an Eurocentric cognitive bias with an ethnocentric one.

There is little presence and development of African philosophy in African universities (Zezeza 2009, 131). Decoloniality in Africa is about restoring and emphasising African existence making the African experience the springboard for understanding and interpreting African politics, history, education and philosophy (Mungwini 2017, 7). Decoloniality calls for an inclusion of a critical study of local perspectives that have long been marginalised. Cultural situatedness gives the individual a context for expression or a range of concrete options by and through which the individual realises his or her autonomy (Etieyibo 2016, 411). The capacity for self-expression is undermined when among others there is sustenance of a context that explicitly or implicitly assigns an inferior estimation of another culture (Etieyibo 2016, 411).

Decoloniality highlights and emphasises the responsibility for Africa to recognise the limitedness and concreteness-undermining nature of the prevalent ostensibly impartial education. Decoloniality also emphasises the need for Africa to make efforts out of normative necessity to assert and develop its epistemologies and concreteness.

Enacting Decoloniality

Since “education is for, by and through human beings”, education is in principle an ethical enterprise (Ramosé 2016, 552). Therefore, recentring African indigeneity is not tantamount to rejecting Western epistemology. Rather it is an endeavour to challenge the enduring subordination of indigenous knowledge by dominant knowledge paradigms, with the ultimate aim of promoting dialogue and mutual collaboration between ostensibly non-coexistent traditions of knowledge (Mungwini 2016, 529).

Among others, Africa needs to develop its conceptual resources, such as a local language through which to establish more immediately accessible and meaningful procedures and standards to comprehend and articulate situated experiences (Mungwini 2017, 13) as concrete beings. Language is therefore among the central pillars for achieving epistemic liberation and justice (Moyo 2003, 129; Mungwini 2017, 13; Nkuna 2013, 71). It is incumbent upon Africa to develop the capacity for its local languages to have functional roles in research and pedagogy. This is an African enterprise that requires African initiative and support. Africa must avoid the easy way of blaming outside forces for its lack of attaining epistemic liberation (Mungwini 2016, 526; Probyn 2005, 165).

It is also imperative that research in African higher education must centre on concrete African challenges and experiences. Inclusion of Africanness in the curriculum should not be merely tokenistic. Rather, there should be both intellectual and financial investment in making attempts to comprehend African indigeneity in whatever contested and hybridised forms. Achieving this, in part, demands confronting and challenging the education marketisation ideology of neo-liberalism. It is apparent that research in African universities is motivated by global interests that are essentially market-oriented and at the expense of under-researched local indigeneity owing to African indigeneity's lack of financial returns in the global arena (Divala 2016). Achieving the normative goal of decoloniality is therefore neither easy nor financially costless. Its normative cost however far outweighs its financial cost.

Conclusion

African education is an indispensable tool for the realisation of a developed Africa with equitable opportunities for a fulfilling and dignified life for its people. However, the nature of the prevailing education in Africa is in need of transformation. African education is structured in such a way that it involves, reproduces and sustains social equality.

One of the distinctive features of African education is its decentring and pushing to the relevant peripherals of African epistemologies and indigeneity. African education has in principle embraced Eurocentrism as

the default standard frame of thought. Such an education lacks dissonance with concrete African experiences and challenges to transform society.

It is worth emphasising that decoloniality is not necessarily making educational curriculums ethnocentric to get rid of Eurocentrism. At the same time, it is apparent that African indigeneity has been systematically and particularly marginalised by both the colonial experience as well as independent African education that is neo-colonial in character. Ultimately, part of meaningful decolonisation must result in the centring of African indigenous epistemologies, not as the end of decoloniality, but as part of the process of decoloniality.

Demanding decolonisation as transformation is not about dogmatic inclusion of whatever is deemed African. Rather, decolonisation is about connecting the experiences and challenges of society. It is about the university reflecting on the philosophical paradigms of society and recommending restructuring and reconstitution that will make such paradigms more responsive to equity and global justice.

Decolonisation is also about ensuring social transformation through a hybridity of cultural and intellectual perspectives that are grounded in mutual respect. The current structure of global interaction is skewed in terms of an equitable exchange of ideas across cultures. The dominance of the neo-liberal conception of personhood and the dominance of Eurocentric positivistic outlooks of reality characteristically trivialise alternative perspectives of reality. Decolonisation of education is the major indispensable step towards achieving social transformation in Africa and globally.

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