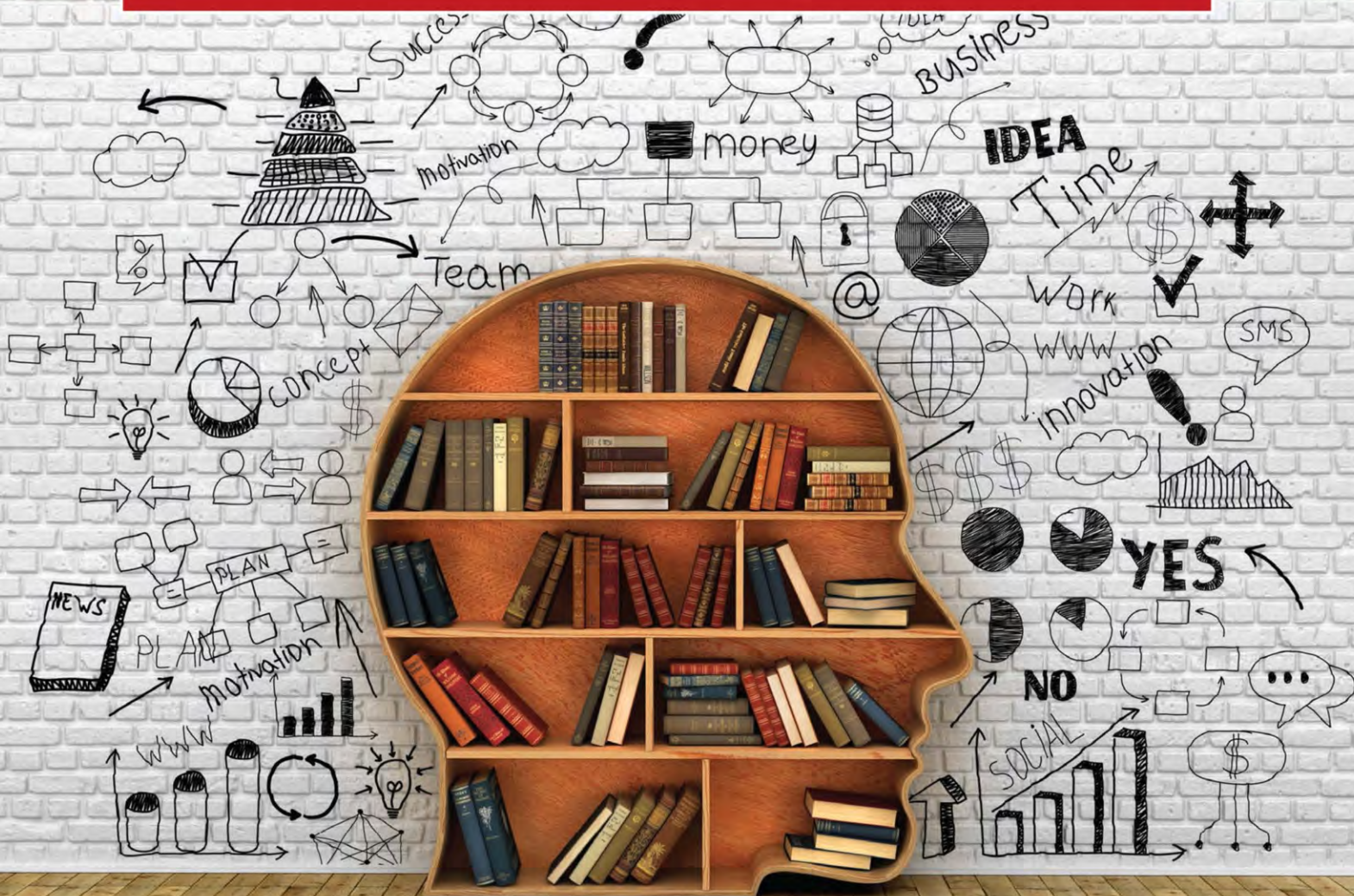


# Knowledge and Change in African Universities

## Volume 1 – Current Debates

Michael Cross and Amasa Ndofirepi (Eds.)



## **Knowledge and Change in African Universities**

## AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION: DEVELOPMENTS AND PERSPECTIVES

Volume 1

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This book series focuses on the historical foundations and current transformations of African higher education. It is aimed at scholars, students, academic leaders, policy makers and key stakeholders both in Africa and around the world, who have a strong interest in the progress, challenges and opportunities facing African higher education.

A diversity of higher education themes and issues related to African higher education at institutional, national, regional and international levels are addressed. These include, but are not limited to, new developments and perspectives related to knowledge production and dissemination; the teaching/learning process; all forms of academic mobility – student, scholar, staff, program, provider and policy; funding mechanisms; pan-Africa regionalization; alternate models of higher education provision; university leadership, governance and management; gender issues; use of new technologies; equitable access; student success; Africanization of the curriculum- to name only a few critical issues.

A diversity of approaches to scholarship is welcomed including theoretical, conceptual, applied, policy orientations. The notions of internationalization and harmonization of African higher education complements the cosmopolitan outlook of the series project through its comparative approach as critical imperatives. Finally, the book series is intended to attract both authors and readers, internal and external to Africa, all of whom are focused on African higher education including those doing comparative work on Africa with other regions of the world and the global South in particular.

# **Knowledge and Change in African Universities**

*Volume 1 – Current Debates*

*Edited by*

**Michael Cross and Amasa Ndofirepi**

*University of Johannesburg, South Africa*



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IMANOL ORDORIK

## FOREWORD

### *Knowledge and Change in Contemporary Postcolonial Universities*

In *Knowledge and Change in African Universities* a noteworthy group of scholars have addressed some of the most relevant issues and challenges faced by higher education institutions (HEIs) in Africa today. In these two volumes, the authors have reviewed current debates and imagined possibilities for change, across a broad set of topics. These include the role of universities in promoting development and social justice; the production of public and private goods; educational and philosophical foundations of higher learning; Africanisation, decolonisation and global integration; institutional discourses and cultures; as well as scholarship, epistemologies and knowledge creation.

In most of the contributions, it is possible to trace the authors' underlying explicit or implicit reflections about existing tensions between the need to comply with global demands and views about scholarship, knowledge and the university, as opposed to local and national historical contexts, university traditions, and societal expectations. In my view, the attention to this divergence constitutes a backbone and an integrating concept throughout the chapters.

It could not be any different. Serious approaches to the understanding of contemporary African universities and their transformation, such as those included in this book, cannot escape the dilemmas that the vast majority of higher education systems and institutions all over the world are facing today. *Knowledge and Change in African Universities* is a significant contribution to current international debates about higher education, as it brings to our attention observations, analyses and theoretical perspectives that stem from rich and diverse experiences of university developments and conflicts in postcolonial and post-apartheid historical settings.

#### THE UNIVERSITY: A EUROPEAN AND COLONIAL INSTITUTION

There is evidence of higher learning arrangements in medicine, astronomy and mathematics, among other knowledges, before 500 BC in India, China, Egypt, Greece and other cultures (Cowdrey, 1998; Fulton, 1953). The University as we know it today, however, was originally a western creation, emerging as an institution in twelfth-century Europe. The first universities were founded in Bologna (in 1088), Salamanca (in 1134), Paris (around 1150), and Oxford (in 1167) (Le Goff, 1980; Rashdall, 1936). These universities were later chartered by the Church and



respective monarchies, at the beginning of the thirteenth century. The student-centered Bologna model had a strong influence in the foundation of universities in Vicenza (in 1204), and Padua (in 1220) (Perkin, 1984). A new group of universities emerged after the 1229 conflict at the University of Paris (Le Goff, 1993; Luna Díaz, 1987), through what has been called the “great dispersion” of scholars (Brunner, 1990). The University of Paris became very influential in Salamanca and Oxford, and inspired the creation of Cambridge (in 1209), as well as universities in Spain and Portugal, including Alcalá (in 1293) and Lisbon (in 1290), among others (Brunner, 1990).

Universities spread throughout the continent of Europe, becoming increasingly interconnected with political, economic and social changes. With the advent of modern European colonialism, starting in the sixteenth century, the university became an integral part of the cultural domination in most of the colonies. During three centuries of colonialism in the Americas, universities were established and chartered by the Catholic Church and the Crown in Spanish America and by provincial governments and religious denominations in British colonies.

By the mid nineteenth century, almost every country in the Americas had become independent. Distinct university traditions developed in the former British and Spanish colonies during the wars of liberation, and as they emerged as new nations (González & Hsu, 2014). Colleges and universities in the United States had been sites of political contestation and revolt against England, the majority of them remaining private after the end of the American War of Independence (Tucker, 1979). In Latin America most of the universities were conservative and stagnant; in spite of being public institutions, they had participated little in independence struggles and thus remained close to the church and traditional scholastic thought until the end of the nineteenth century (Lanning & Valle, 1946; Wences Reza, 1984). It was not until the 1918 University of Córdoba revolt in Argentina that Latin American universities moved away from church control and adopted an orientation towards autonomy, shared governance, social commitment and national development.

A new wave of European colonisation spread to India and the East Indies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During British rule in India, HEIs were created from 1781 onwards. Following the ‘Orientalist versus Anglicist’ debate (Zastoupil & Moir, 1999), the so-called ‘Indian Universities’ were established in 1857 and reoriented towards an English model. They were based on the University of London organisation, as Oxford and Cambridge models were considered to be too expensive (González & Hsu, 2014)—nevertheless, upper class Indian men traveled to Britain to obtain their higher education. Even though these two strategies were promoted in order to Anglicise Indian elites, European and Indian university education played a major role in the struggles for independence (Ellis, 2009). During Dutch colonisation in Indonesia, three higher learning institutions were founded in Batavia between 1898 and 1924. Originally designed to promote Dutch culture and language, these institutions also became very important in the national struggle for independence (Vickers, 2005). French occupation of Indochina lasted until 1954.

Along the lines of ‘assimilation’ of local elites through education, France established the University of Indochina in Hanoi in 1906 (Vu, 2012).

European powers participated in the ‘scramble for Africa’ between 1881 and 1914. Coastal territories occupied by the Portuguese and British grew into large colonial holdings with the pretext of putting an end to slavery through “Commerce, Christianity and Civilization” (Packenham, 1992, p. xxii). While the French, Belgian, German and Portuguese powers exercised “direct rule”, and a “highly centralised type of administration”, the British “sought to rule by identifying local power holders and encouraging or forcing these to administer for the British Empire” (Khapoya, 1994, p. 126f). For Britain, the purpose of colonial higher education was to create a local elite, required to carry out colonial administration. Even though France and Portugal used higher education to implement their direct rule and ‘assimilation policies’, very few universities were created, and elite Africans were educated in Europe (Bandeira Jerónimo, 2015).

A few African countries gained independence between 1910 and 1942, while the majority succeeded only later, in the national liberation struggles during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, and two more in the 80’s and 90’s. On the verge of, and in the midst of independence struggles more universities were created. A particular case is that of South Africa, where disputes between Afrikaners and the British, and a long history of apartheid, engendered a differentiated and stratified system of universities. These included historically white Afrikaans-medium universities, historically white English universities, historically black universities in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) and historically black universities in the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei (TBVC) countries (Bunting, 2006). In the transition towards a post-apartheid society, South Africa has undergone a continuing and conflictual process of decolonisation and recreation of new university identities, traditions, policies and practices.

Colonial powers formulated various policies for the provision of higher education and the creation of colleges and universities in their colonies. In spite of their distinct ruling strategies and governing philosophies, they shared ideas about the role of education—and particularly of this essentially European institution, the University—for the dissemination or maintenance of western Christian culture, social organisation and economic interests. As a result, they were able to maintain their hegemony over colonised nations and peoples.

There is historical proof that universities, during different historical periods, contributed to the reproduction of colonialism in the Americas, India, the East Indies and Africa. There is also evidence, however, from the nineteenth century onwards, of intense conflicts between Church and State, and between distinct European colonial powers. These included battles over the nature of the universities and confrontations within them. In this context, many universities made significant contributions to the creation of, and participation in, national liberation movements. So, although the University has been an instrument of colonialism, in many cases, it has also served as a site of contestation, organisation and struggle for national liberation.

In the transition from the European core to the colonial peripheries, universities in different nations and regions developed new identities, assumed diverse social roles, shaped their scholarship cultures, and created distinct historical traditions. During the second half of the twentieth century, this distinctiveness was connected to the mass expansion of higher education all over the world. This, in turn, introduced innovative ways to think about colleges and universities, and alternative views for the creation of new institutions and the expansion of national systems.

#### A NEW COLONISATION OF THE UNIVERSITY?

Universities have always been global, in many ways. True to their common origins, they have inherited customs and traditions, retained scholarly practices and standards, and adhered, at least in some measure, to one or other of the European models. In spite of this, the national and regional differences previously referred to, have enriched and expanded notions and practices about the University.

At the end of the twentieth century, however, a new dominant view about the University began to emerge (Marginson & Ordorika, 2010). With the demise of the welfare states and the end of east-west world polarisation, a new era of structural adjustment, globalisation and neoliberalism became apparent. New public discourses and policies proclaimed the pre-eminence of the private over the public, stressed the overarching importance of competition practices and productivity, and promoted a reified view of markets as efficient regulators in every aspect of social interaction, politics, economics and even culture (Wolin, 1981).

Education, and particularly colleges and universities, did not escape the push towards privatisation, marketisation and the commodification of education goods and products (Marginson, 1997). Increased productivity, connection to markets, innovation, accountability, competition and new managerialism have become hallmarks in higher education policy all over the world (Ordorika, 2007) under the guise of the all-encompassing but vaguely defined concept of 'excellence' (Readings, 1996).

With the advent of globalisation and neoliberalism, the United States strengthened its worldwide ascendancy. A relatively small set of HEIs in that country have been portrayed as 'exceptional'. An idealised model of the US elite research university has become hegemonic globally, and has directly or indirectly impacted higher education policies and institutions in almost every country (Marginson & Ordorika, 2011).

Among the most salient features of this hegemonic model of the University are the centrality of research and the international circulation of scientific publications; an emphasis on graduate studies over undergraduate teaching; attracting international students and faculty; establishing strong links with business; producing marketable private goods; the adoption of 'new managerialism'; and large endowments that provide financial security (Ordorika & Pusser, 2007).

Many postcolonial and other countries in the periphery have faced difficult transitions and development processes stemming from economic catastrophes,

starting with the debt crises in the 1980s and continuing with the financial collapse of 2008. In this context, contemporary colleges and universities face confrontation between local expectations—for example, responsiveness to their own historical traditions, social commitments, accomplishments and liabilities—and those posed by global competitiveness and dominant perceptions about the characteristics of so-called world-class universities. These conflicting demands have taken place in the midst of, and have also deepened, existing crises of identity in higher education systems and institutions.

#### IDENTITY AND CONFLICT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In order to advance the reconstruction of university identities and higher education projects, it is necessary to acknowledge some of the most important tensions and challenges faced by HEIs today. Historically, colleges and universities have been both the object and the site of conflict over societal demands and expectations for democratisation, equality and inclusion, versus attempts to emphasise their role in increasing their contribution to capital accumulation (Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Ordorika, 2003). Confrontations over access, resource allocation and uses of knowledge have been salient expressions of this structural tension within higher education (Slaughter, 1990).

Battles over race, gender, socio-economic status and affirmative action policies for student admissions have taken place in various countries, including the United States (Pusser, 2004), South Africa (Hall, 2016) and Brazil (Lloyd, 2015). Students have struggled against tuition increases and fought for free higher education in Britain (Coughlan, 2015), Mexico (Ordorika, 2006; Rosas, 2001), Colombia and Chile (Observatorio Social de América Latina, 2012). In recent times, students opposing student loan and debt increases occupied Wall Street (Vara, 2014). Students demanding increased public investment in higher education have been paired against governments and policy makers that promote the authorisation and establishment of for-profit universities in the US, Chile and Colombia (Ordorika & Lloyd, 2014).

For many decades, the allocation of resources within universities has veered away from the humanities and the social sciences, into engineering, technology and some of the ‘hard’ sciences (Bérubé & Nelson, 1995). Global trends in university expenditures have become part of a larger ongoing debate about the production of public and private goods in higher education (Marginson, 2007), and more broadly about the nature of the University as a public good in itself (UNESCO, 2009).

These discussions are strongly linked to contemporary dilemmas over local and regional responsiveness, versus international orientation and worldwide competition. The arguments encompass the orientation of the University regarding the uses of knowledge, more precisely, existing contradictions between social commitment and community engagement, on the one hand, and market orientation, the production of private goods (commodities) and patenting, and university-business partnerships, on the other (Ordorika & Lloyd, 2014).

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In many ways, these quandaries summarise the clash between historical and nationally grounded university traditions, and the hegemonic global model. They involve questions surrounding knowledge perspectives and the politics of knowledge, as well as issues regarding the preservation of indigenous languages against the domination of English as the language of knowledge and science. Attempts to promote internationalisation through foreign student enrolments and faculty hiring, have placed enormous strain on universities, as higher education systems and institutions fail to ensure proper coverage for local youth within the tertiary education age group.

There are also many contradictions involving the publication of academic work and research. Among these are the focus on local and national, vis-à-vis international cutting-edge research topics; the importance of local audiences against that of international circulation; as well as the complex interactions with multinational corporations like Thomson Reuters, Elsevier, Springer, Sage and others (Larivière, Haustein, & Mongeon, 2015; Ordorika Sacristán et al., 2009). These dilemmas also relate to international flows of knowledge; human resources (students and faculty); financial assets in peripheral countries and their universities; and the established centres of economic and knowledge concentration.

Starting in 2003, international university rankings became an overarching expression of the existing global competition among higher education systems and individual institutions, and the dominance of elite research universities, primarily in the US and the UK (Pusser & Marginson, 2013). International classification systems reproduce the hegemonic model that these institutions represent, as colleges and universities all over the globe, voluntarily or forcibly, attempt to comply with international standards. Rankings have become a symbol and instrument of the contemporary colonisation of universities intent on becoming world-class institutions (Ordorika & Lloyd, 2015).

## KNOWLEDGE AND CHANGE IN UNIVERSITIES TODAY

Attempts at recreating identities in peripheral universities take place in this context of intense contradictions, alternatives, trade-offs and conflicts. Contemporary divergences have enlivened and reshaped existing tensions in exercising institutional autonomy in the face of increasing external intrusion and regulations (Enders, de Boer, & Weyer, 2013). Furthermore, internal contradictions have emerged between academic collegiality and new managerialism (Deem, 1998), with the latter's emphasis on productivity, efficiency, evaluation, assessment and measurement (Ordorika, 2007).

Attempts at decolonisation of colleges and universities today need to be strongly connected to a thorough understanding of the conditions in which these conflicts and contradictions are played out within national higher education systems and institutions. In our search for understanding, it is very important to acknowledge historical differences and commonalities in postcolonial and peripheral countries.

One of the most relevant topics for the transformation of higher education in the periphery is the re-politicisation of colleges and universities. We need to acknowledge that the recreation of alternative university traditions and identities is a political process in which many actors—within and beyond university campuses—will become participants; and that democratic participation in public debate and decision making is crucial in order to build favourable correlation of forces for students and faculty within universities.

This work, *Knowledge and Change in African Universities*, is an example of how to think about the decolonisation and regionalisation of universities, in the context of worldwide competition and the global hegemony of elite research institutions. Throughout the chapters of this book, alternatives to old and new colonialisms are imagined and framed on the solid ground of practice and experience, of academic research and intellectual thought, and of political theory and praxis.

The two volumes in *Knowledge and Change in African Universities* constitute a thoughtful aggregation of historical knowledge and the work of contemporary scholars. More significantly, they take an insightful step—a much-advanced, work-in-progress for the construction of new identities and transformation of universities in Africa. But this is not all—in generating knowledge and understanding about African universities, while setting the stage for the development of an alternative idea of the University, this group of scholars have also contributed to our understanding of the present and future of universities in other regions, in other nations, in other hemispheres.

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AMASA NDOFIREPI AND MICHAEL CROSS

## 1. UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE FOR SOCIETAL CHANGE IN AFRICA

### *Unpacking Critical Debates*

#### INTRODUCTION

The centrality of the role of university education in the future of society is indubitable as institutions of higher learning are, in practice, prime springs of new knowledge and skills—crucial and indispensable drivers of the economy. The university is charged with the responsibility of creating rich learning conditions that prepare learners for their place in society by providing access to scientific knowledge of high quality—an environment that bridges knowledge generation and the application of such knowledge in society. Knowledge is the common denominator on which the three traditional missions of academic teaching, research and social engagement are built (Abrahams, Burke, Gray, & Rens, 2008), and is the nucleus of the academic enterprise. Higher education systems and universities the world over are under immense pressure to reform by adjusting to the local and global demands for change in order to remain relevant.

The publication of the World Bank Report (1994) *Higher Education: Lessons of Experience* signalled the advent of a critical policy framework foregrounding the primacy of knowledge as a leading factor of production ahead of labour, capital and land, throughout the world economy. Contemporary global prosperity and power, characterised by more diffuse and benevolent expression to the world, continues to exhibit how knowledge has steadily gained significance as a critical influence for social change, including the manner in which ideas are generated, distributed and utilised. In line with the British Council Conference (2014) theme on *Universities as agents of social change: How do universities create economic and social equity*, this book speaks to the key question of how universities in Africa can contribute to the growth of local communities through knowledge production and skills generation. The primary concern is of an epistemological nature, namely: What is knowledge and what forms can and should it take in African universities?

Universities in Africa have often been accused of being semblances of western epistemologies propelling an encumbering and debilitating Eurocentric education, characterised by an attendant tenacity to exclude and marginalise an indigenous presence and ‘ways of knowing’ in higher education (see Hauser, Howlett, & Matthews, 2009; Nyamnjoh, 2004). After attaining political independence, new African states



inherited a western-educated elite who have continued to lead postcolonial African universities that perpetuate and espouse Eurocentric ‘development’ models (see Nabudere, 2003) by aping and replicating western hegemonic epistemologies on all fronts. This persuaded the editors of this two-volume book to invite critical scholarly contributions from academics and analysts of all persuasions, to engage in discourse about justifiable knowledge relevant for the 21st century citizen in Africa.

The literature is awash with generalisations on the role and function of the university, from Newman’s ([1873]1982) idea of the university, to the Humboldtian model of higher education, through to the Castellan university as a system (see Castells, 2001). Nevertheless, there is a dearth of contributions by scholars on Africa and the role of knowledge as a change agent to address the African predicament in the globalising world. This book aims to fill the void in the postcolonial literature on knowledge production, research and dissemination in the African university. It foregrounds perspectives emerging from a continent that has traditionally been silenced and given insufficient consideration in the Anglo-American dominated epistemologies. Knowing what, knowing that, and knowing how, in order to change the African situation, have thus become topical concerns for policy makers, academic leaders and scholars on Africa, hence the focus of this book.

In their chapter in this book, *Knowledge, globalisation and the African university: The change agenda*, Kingston Nyamapfene and Amasa Ndofirepi discuss the extent to which the African university remains faithful and relevant to the African development process; including its efforts to carve out a place for itself as a key player in the global marketplace, while striving for visibility, recognition and acknowledgement. While conceding that their treatment of the subject is not exhaustive, given that there are nuances not captured in a broad, Africa-wide assessment, they posit that the need for change is no longer a matter for debate—it is in a general sense that the African university is in need of re-thinking. Starting with knowledge production and dissemination, their presentation proffers an opportunity for the African university to rethink and reinvent itself. They argue that the African university must, of necessity, work on the basis of priorities, rather than pursue an unrealistic agenda intended to address both past gaps and the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

#### KNOWING WHAT, THAT, AND HOW

Knowledge or knowing occurs in three ways, namely *knowledge of what*, *knowledge of that*, and *knowledge of how*. In its relational form, *knowing that* (knowledge by acquaintance) entails the knower’s awareness of relationships between concepts, shapes, or people. *Knowledge of what* is the site of inquiry, permitting the knower access to definitions, meanings, and special characteristics of some content. *Knowledge of how* (*know-how*) refers to having the practical and theoretical instruments that are necessary to perform a particular activity with a certain level of skill. These three constructions of knowledge are at the heart of any real discourse on

the nature and role of universities. Given the currency of the knowledge economy or society, universities have become progressively more politically and economically critical institutions for the production and dissemination of knowledge. But as Bourdieu (2004) rightly avers, the production, positioning and consumption of knowledge are far from a neutral, objective and disinterested process. It is socially and politically mediated by hierarchies of humanity and human agency imposed by particular relations of power (pp. 18–21).

In support of the foregoing, the World Bank Report 1998/1999 reaffirms that economies are built not merely through the accumulation of physical capital and human skill, but on a foundation of information, learning, and adaptation. Because knowledge matters, understanding how people and societies acquire and use knowledge—and why they sometimes fail to do so is essential to improving people's lives, especially the lives of the poorest (World Bank, 1999). In his chapter *Africanisation and diverse epistemologies in higher education discourses: Limitations and possibilities*, Kai Horsthemke argues that the Africanisation of higher education is, by and large, assumed to involve institutional transformation, and more overtly the 'decolonisation' of higher education. He identifies the demand for the transformation of syllabus and content as a key component; as well as transformation of the curriculum (changing the whole way teaching and learning are organised). This includes the need to change the criteria that determine what counts as excellent research, acceptable throughput rates, etc., on the basis of acknowledging and respecting diverse and subaltern epistemologies.

Horsthemke's chapter concerns itself fundamentally with the question of whether the ideas of diverse and subaltern epistemologies, and 'indigenous/African knowledge' in particular, make any sense he provides not only conceptual clarification, but also a critical examination of existing debates within higher education discourses. Horsthemke posits that, given the tentativeness of these debates, discourses about Africanisation and epistemological diversity (in higher education, as elsewhere) need to continue. While acknowledging the centre–periphery binary (Altbach, 2007) between universities in the North and those in the South in terms of the control and management of knowledge research, production and dissemination, contributors to this book provide a justification for mutual existence in a shared academic milieu. In such a scenario, universities from all sides of the globe would develop research capacity for equitable participation in the global knowledge system in order to collectively change the world.

The chapter explains how knowledge has continued unabated to sustain economic growth and improve living standards of societies in which it is generated, and beyond. However, in the knowledge and power dynamic, certain elite institutions have used their powerful position to determine and reinforce the centre – periphery state of affairs in the global society. The result is a situation where certain knowledges have been allocated pole positions, in order to legitimate the power of selected races, gender or classes. But what kind of knowledges and knowledge ecologies are required?

Post-independence African states and their celebratory independence anniversaries have often been rhetorical about measurable achievements and shortcomings in their endeavours to invent and maintain a better society, especially through research in universities. This book follows up on Metz's (2009, p. 517) question as to whether "...publicly funded higher education ought to aim intrinsically to promote certain kinds of 'blue-sky' knowledge, knowledge that is unlikely to result in 'tangible' or 'concrete' social benefits such as health, wealth and liberty" (p. 517). Despite the normativity of the social change agenda as promulgated in national and regional policy statements, the majority of citizens in Africa are still living in abject poverty—they are poorly housed, unemployed, uneducated, and society is riddled with the increasing casualties of the killer HIV/Aids pandemic. This has earned the postcolonial African condition descriptors such as "the world's tragedy" (Oke, 2006, p. 332), "Africa in a precarious state" (Oguejiofor, 2001, p. 7), the "most humiliated, most dehumanised continent in the world", whose past is "a tale of dispossession and impoverishment" (Osundare, 1998, p. 231).

In the wake of the contemporary overall incapacity to expand the material conditions of life of the majority of Africa's citizens, we are confident in challenging the status quo by reconsidering the hierarchisation of social policies and the strategies adopted to implement them. This book goes beyond the previous choices made, by applying the change agenda for social advancement to knowledge processes in the university. Close, reflective attention is paid to the topic by offering a critical review of the course, trends and implications of contemporary change in civic society. The book proffers a detailed theoretical analysis of how the bond between knowledge research, its production and dissemination in the university in Africa is an important factor for societal change, not only at local, regional and regional levels, but also at the global level. In particular, the contributors enter the discourse by challenging how change in the socio-economic environment is impacting on the epistemic dimension of university knowledge processes in Africa, given the fact that "...institutions whose character is profoundly ethno-provincial keep masquerading as replicas of Oxford and Cambridge without demonstrating the same productivity as the original places they are mimicking" (Mbembe, 2015, n.p.).

In response to the foregoing, the chapter by Thaddeus Metz calls for *Africanising institutional culture*. He proffers five rationales, namely relativism, democracy, redress, civilisation and identity, which inform the central dimensions of curriculum research, language aesthetics and governance through which universities in Africa can Africanise their functioning. Using the case of South Africa, Metz concludes that the above rationales, in combination, constitute a convincing case for moderate Africanisation of the institutional culture of public universities. Starting from the notion of *ubuntu* as an African philosophy of human interdependence and humaneness, Yusef Waghid goes a step further in his chapter, *Ubuntu: African philosophy of education and pedagogical encounters*. He invites the entry of the concept of *ubuntu* into university cultures in order to develop a humane and just

society, enable a locally relevant education, and promote democratic pedagogical encounters at African universities.

In *Pan-African curriculum in higher education: A reflection*, Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo explores the prospects of integrating the concept and politics of *Pax Africana* in the curriculum of university systems. He advances the view that there is a lot to learn from pan-Africanism in our efforts to redefine knowledge and change education systems in Africa. He posits that through the exploration of a pan-African curriculum, a reinvigorated national foundation of African development can be engendered. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence about the imposition and valorisation of western scientific knowledge and its rationalistic origins on the indigenous 'ways of knowing' in former colonial states in Africa (see Kaphagawani & Malherbe, 2003; Ngugi, 1986; Ramose, 2004). This has resulted in epistemological imperialism in established educational institutions, including universities. This draws us to the question of whose and what knowledge is worthwhile in the university in Africa? We begin with the establishment of the colonial university; move to the postcolonial university, and then to contemporary times. This allows us to identify a typology of four categories of universities over time, in terms of the nature of knowledge and the characterisation of *knowing*.

#### UNIVERSITIES IN AFRICA OVER TIME: A TYPOLOGY

The establishment of university colleges by colonial administrations in colonised African territories culminated in what we can call today *universities in Africa*. By their character, they were designed to be satellites of host universities located in the home country of the colonial power, for example the Ivy League universities such as Harvard, Yale and Cornell (in the United States of America) and Oxford, London and Cambridge (in the United Kingdom). Of epistemological interest was the importation of disciplines and faculty from the home universities, with their associated content and pedagogy. This practice was designed to train a crop of elite locals, suitable for service in the colonial governments. The newly established institutions were close replicas of their Eurocentric host universities; they aspired to become "local instantiations of a dominant academic model based on a Eurocentric epistemic canon" (Mbembe, 2015, n.p.).

The same sort of appropriation is experienced today, when universities in the North, by partnering with research centres they have funded in universities in Africa, continue to manipulate untapped local knowledges for the benefit of their home countries, and then trade such intellectual property products back to Africa. Such a situation locates Africa in the position of an object of study and as a centre for knowledge production, leaving it in a precarious state in the international division of intellectual labour. What remains is: how much of the Eurocentric epistemologies remain in 21st century universities in Africa in the five decades after political liberation from erstwhile colonisers? If the above explanation is plausible, then

epistemological practices in such institutions warrant them bearing the label *universities in Africa*.

The acquisition of power by early post-independence governments in the early 1960s and 1970s marked the emergence of nationalist scholars, including Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor, Kofi Busia, Jomo Kenyatta, to mention a few. These scholars and statesmen held a common view of the role of the African university, including its critical agency for the socio-political and economic development of their countries. This era is discernible by a deliberate attempt to deviate from the colonial university in Africa to a *development African university*. At the now famous Accra Declaration of 1972, all universities were deemed to be *development universities* (Yesufu, 1973), with national governments being tasked to contribute a large share in driving universities in the direction of development. But how different was this ideal from the colonial university in Africa?

Contemporary Africanist higher education scholars have transcended the above two idealised universities to refer to what is, in our view and by implication, a globalised African university. The current globalisation agenda which has flooded the world has captivated Africans to reconsider their place in the world (Cossa, 2009, p. 1)—we are rethinking and redefining ourselves: “who we are and where we are going in the global community, through the reformulation of practical strategies and solutions for the future benefit of the Africans” (p. 1). In the context of university education, this movement is coupled with the emergence of descriptors of vision and mission statements, such as *world class African university*, *research university anchored in Africa*, *flagship university in Africa*, and *African university in the service of humanity*, among others. The common element among these different statements of universities on the African continent is the question of *identity*, revolving around *Africanness* as circumscribed in the global sphere. The issue is: What is African about the university? Do universities domiciled in Africa authentically deserve to be African? Are all university thus labelled homogeneous?

Felix Maringe enters the debate in his chapter: *Transforming knowledge production systems in the new African university*, by introducing the reader to the complexities of the notion of a new African university’s resonance with the imperatives of transformation in postcolonial states. Using Ngugi wa Thiongo’s *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) as a frame of reference, Maringe discusses how the epistemological decolonisation of African universities will remain in its infancy, unless efforts to emancipate the academy are accelerated. The chapter draws the reader to three critical issues, namely: the imperatives behind knowledge production transformation in postcolonial Africa; how knowledge research, curriculum, teaching and learning, and the training of postgraduates have remained unchanged; and lastly how the challenges therein can be confronted to serve not only the universities as institutions, but also the societies they are expected to change.

The difficulty that we continue to grapple with is agreeing on a settled definition of an *African university* in an environment typified by the perpetuation of the dominating ideas and practices of North America and Europe in the academy.

What does the future hold for the African university if Africans as a people claim legitimate entitlement to the use of the term *African* to refer to something exclusively and uniquely belonging to their local and indigenous experiences, just as their counterparts in Europe, America and Australasia would do? Given the impact of globalisation and the ongoing epistemological hegemony, Africans need to affirm their identity and autonomy as a communocratic—rooted in a common oppressive background due to colonisation by the west—as part of the contemporary decolonial discourses project, otherwise the African intellectual space will become extinct.

#### DECOLONISING THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

There have been recent diversified and intensified demands to decolonise universities (see Blumbergai, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014; Ndofirepi, 2014) by creating a radically changed curriculum from the one inherited from the colonial era, and producing a genuinely plural academic population. The act of knowing and the knowledge so produced, continue to this day, to exhibit the hegemonic tradition of the erstwhile colonisers. The call for Africanisation of the university and subsequent epistemological emancipation is a demand by African voices to reimagine the place of African contextual realities as the centre of the university and its knowledges. This is one way of making universities in Africa true African universities. ‘Decolonisation’ is a buzzword in contemporary academic and public fora, although it transcends merely replacing white with black in the academy. Rather, it foregrounds the need to make knowledge in the university relevant and responsive to the priorities, challenges and realities of the African people. Such a mindset should take care to avoid falling into the trap of nostalgia, overglorification and reification of Africanness in a tremendously globalising world.

Engaging in a comparative debate of African and South American experiences, Julia Suárez-Krabbe’s chapter, *The conditions that make a difference: Decolonial historical realism and the decolonisation of knowledge and education*, employs decolonial historical materialism to explain how coloniality, as a globalised system of oppression, informs our realities and identities differently. Most critical in her question of identity is: How do we articulate the conditions that make us who and what we are, in a world where epistemicide and imposition have been intrinsic to the colonial endeavour, and where the frameworks of understanding that legitimated that colonial endeavour are still presented as true, scientific, universal, and objective? Neo Lekgotla laga Ramoupi and Roland Ndille Ntongwe use their South African and Cameroonian experiences respectively to critique the *Africanisation of humanities knowledges in the universities in Africa*. They agree with the view that for university knowledge to be referred to as African “it must be done the African way, by African authors in Africa, on African issues within the African context of time and space, to generate African doctrines” (Ndofirepi, 2014, p. 157). Ramoupi and Ntongwe present their case as a social justice case that prioritises African values in determining worthwhile knowledges to be pursued by universities in Africa.



Birgit Brock-Utne's chapter, *Decolonisation of knowledge in the African university*, enters the decolonisation discourse by offering the possibility of limiting the meaning of globalising learning to the incorporation of African elites into the culture of erstwhile colonisers. For her, Africanist scholars and academic leaders are the epitome of fronting the study of Eurocentric texts—hence the difficulty of de-yoking knowledge change in the African universities from epistemic imperialism. This chapter draws on the language question by arguing for the restoration of African languages and cultures in the academy. To this end, Brock-Utne concludes that advances in science and technology in African universities, and the accompanying knowledge creation, are best realised through mutual cooperation between local people and researchers. However, she acknowledges the presence of the challenges that circumscribe the decolonisation project. Brock-Utne's chapter is complemented by the one by Bheki Mngomezulu and Marshall Maposa, *The challenges facing academic scholarship in Africa: A critical analysis*. These authors explore how the types of leadership and governance in African universities contribute to the decay of academic scholarship; although they accept that change in university knowledges cannot be left in the hands of leadership alone, but should be equally the responsibility of society at large.

In pursuance of the above opinions, Thaddeus Metz's chapter on *Managerialism as anti-social: Some implications of ubuntu for knowledge production*, acknowledges the impediments of managerialism in South African higher education, in relation to knowledge production in universities in Africa. He argues that in its varied dimensions, and especially in research, managerialism is indefensible if measured against the salient ideas of human relationships that are enshrined in the ubuntu philosophy. Metz employs the moral-theoretic interpretation from this traditional African philosophy, to invoke some practical compass points for navigating research in the university, which he refers to as "the first comprehensive critique to be informed by salient sub-Saharan values". Following this thread, in her chapter *Performance management in the African university as panopticism: Embedding prison-like conditions*, Sadi Sayema corroborates the fact that performance management in higher education has become steadily an oppressive panoptic tower in its pursuit for institutional accountability, 'efficiency' and rankings. She views managerialism as a neoliberal project in university education, immersed in western hegemony and characterised by oppressive tendencies that hinder and monitor the transformative agenda of universities as institutions of societal change.

Higher education institutions have no choice but to re-invent themselves in order to respond to specific local and global conditions (Wilson-Tagoe, 2007). Universities worldwide are faced with pressure to deliver successful graduates and bridge the gap between higher education and society (Waghid, 2002); there is a need for graduates with applied knowledge to serve communities in ameliorating societal problems. But how can African universities develop revitalised curricula, among other changes, to address African developmental problems and reply to the demands of a new global economy, while simultaneously maintaining the traditional

occupation of a university as a place of objective and critical reflection? How can an African university transform knowledge, change knowledge relations, and vouch for epistemic openness (Augusto, 2007)? To what extent can we reinvent knowledge production and dissemination in the African university in order to enhance their relevance to the spaces and contexts in which they are located?

Envisioned as a ‘new university’ in the 21st century, the African university has to play the vital role of freeing knowledge production from narrow class, technical, and instrumentalist dominance by a few specialists, to a broader theatre of recognition of producers of knowledge (Nabudere, 2003). From an epistemological viewpoint, such a university provides prospects not only for the acquisition, but also the construction of new knowledge that speaks to the context of the African condition first, before the global environment in which we exist, rather than being a mirror image of western epistemology. But how can such epistemological change survive the test of the lived and dependent Eurocentric knowledge that is so pervasive in, and characteristic of universities in Africa? How can these satellite universities be transformed to assist the African people instead of serving external interests and agendas? Contributors to this book have put forward debates that view African universities as “...new forms of assemblies that become points of convergence of and platforms for the redistribution of different kinds of knowledges” (Mbembe, 2015 n.p.). Sipho Seepe’s chapter, *Higher Education transformation in South Africa*, challenges the perpetuation of white supremacy in the academy, which dates back to the colonial times even prior to the apartheid era in South Africa. He argues that despite the universally-held view that university knowledge is a critical medium for social change, there has been a failure to defy white supremacy and the associated epistemological imports in South African higher education. Seepe calls on progressive Africanist scholars to stand up to the occasion, to counter the retrogressive character of segregatory knowledge tendencies inherent in white supremacy, and steer towards discrete intellectual and research cultures that address African challenges.

There have been repeated calls for the “...endogenisation of the curriculum, including mother-tongue instruction; local, alternative or African knowledges and philosophy; and non-western technologies of development” (see Cloete & Muller, 1998, p. 3). An important question is: Do African scholars and academic leaders in the university need to wait for students to protest in favour of the decolonisation of knowledge, as was the case of the 2015–2016 student uprising in South African universities, starting with the *Fees Must Fall campaign*? What key ideas can be drawn from such student activism to steer a nuanced framework for a transformed African university in the 21st century?

This book underscores the key role of the symbiosis between knowledge processes and systemic change in society, by pursuing knowledge that epitomises social justice and equality. This imperative enables partnerships between universities as institutions, and the communities in which they are located, whilst endeavouring to build egalitarian institutional structures that are necessary to elevate Africanist

critical consciousness to the global platform, without compromising the advancement of African excellence. Nevertheless, scholars and academics in higher education need to acknowledge the innate complexities at the cultural interface of western knowledge and skills with indigenous ones. What then is the role of curriculum and programme designers in evaluating content biases and distortions which adversely frame African cultures and deleteriously fail to integrate content that reflects other cultural centres?.

Michael Cross and Amasa Ndofirepi, in their chapter *Critical scholarship in South Africa: Considerations on epistemology, theory and method*, provide theoretical insights by recapitulating the discourse of researching the ‘other’ in South Africa. They expand the horizons while traversing the domain of the cognitive and political fields of knowledge production. Taking the debate to the area of social science research in higher education, these authors provide theoretical evidence of how epistemological and the social domains interface with individual action in research. In this chapter the authors make the case that, given the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, relationships between the subjects and objects of study in social science research are intentionally (or unintentionally) conditioned by the constructed boundaries of race, class and gender, and other forms of social difference. This, in turn, has profound implications for knowledge conception, formulation and validation.

Epistemic communities do not operate in a vacuum—the problems faced by higher education institutions and the prescriptions to solve them are highly influenced by international bureaucracies, particularly the Breton Woods institutions and other powerful business groups evincing power dynamics and the associated politics of knowledge. Consequently, any examination of the process of epistemological change in the African university cannot overlook the dynamics of defensively justify the relocation of epistemologies from the North for the sake of maintaining western universalised academic standards. Examples of such practices include sending doctoral theses and other examination materials to overseas universities, especially in Europe and North America, for assessment in the name of ‘quality assurance. Added to such practices is the uncritical dependence on standards and ratings driven by the west through global university rankings as a form of legitimisation of knowledge hierarchies. Such tendencies are tantamount to the “singularisation of human diversity by being forced onto a singular track of historical ‘progress’ grounded on an emulation and/or mimicry of European historicity” (Serequeberhan, 2002, p. 92). The demand for knowledge change in the African university refers to the “re-narration of the African existence” (Okeke, 2008, p. 61) and the need for constructive “...discourse that mainstreams local relevance and vocalises the silent voices” (Lebakeng, Phalane, & Dalindjebo, 2006, p. 70) of African experiences.

It is unjustified and inexplicable that even basic research in the ideal African university minimally addresses the key issues afflicting African people and African society, despite the large number of universities that mushroomed after gaining

political independence from the west (see Ndofirepi, 2014). In Mamdani's (1993) words, these universities are "triumphantly universalistic and uncompromisingly foreign" to local cultures, populations and predicaments (Mamdani, 1993, pp. 11–15). Such a position is located in (Weiler, 2003)'s (2003) notion of the "politics of knowledge", in which the hegemonic power of western epistemologies makes it "...very difficult for universities modeled on these western precepts to break their paradigmatic umbilicus (Odora-Hoppers, 2005, p. 13).

This book brings to the fore debates on how we need to deliberately turn our gaze and expose how knowledge is controlled in universities in Africa, in ways that witness African people being further marginalised, denigrated and exploited. The debates question the problematic nature of the dominant western epistemological export to university education in Africa (Nyamnjoh, 2011), thereby unmasking the systemic marginalisation of dominated local knowledges in higher education. The book calls for African universities to relocate from this position of object to subject, in order to expose a liberated epistemological voice (Hook, 1989), by responding to Devon Mihesuah's challenge: "If we do not take charge and create strategies for empowerment, who will?" (Mihesuah, 2003).

Knowledge systems in the African university should be a reflection of African ownership and participation that "...contextualizes standards and set[s] parameters of excellence based on the needs of African society and people" (Odora-Hoppers, 2005, p. 12). The construction of such a new African epistemology and methodology in the university would be an instrument to emasculate existing dominant interests, while also challenging the fortress of Eurocentric paradigms and western 'scientific' epistemologies of knowledge (Nabudere, 2003). It is hoped that this movement will go some way to fulfilling the African Union Commission's (2014) Agenda 2063: The Africa we want. Their call for action declares: "We are deeply conscious that Africa in 2015 stands at a crossroads and we are determined to transform the continent and ensure irreversible and universal change of the African condition" (African Union Commission, 2014, p. 14). This call avows the quest for a major and genuine change of paradigm, asserting the right of African people to be human—African in their own entity, and legitimate citizens of the world.

In *Reinventing greatness: Responding to urgent global-level responsibilities and critical university-level priorities*, Ihron Rensburg reflects on the contemporary significance of knowledge institutions, particularly research universities. His discussion includes both emerging and established economies, and the world as a whole, with particular reference to Africa and South Africa. He argues that for universities to attain greatness, they must evolve, as greatness is evolving in this globalising world. He concludes that institutional research alone is incomplete without a practical response to the grand challenges of cooperation, integration, inclusion, caring and civic-mindedness. To this end, his chapter calls for universities in Africa to refocus on the contemporary global development logic and its attendant agenda of partner or perish in order to reinvent greatness.

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## 2. REINVENTING GREATNESS

*Responding to Urgent Global-Level Responsibilities and  
Critical University-Level Priorities*

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I reflect on the contemporary significance of knowledge institutions—comprising universities, science and research councils, industry research centres, and particularly research universities—for both emerging and established economies and for the world as a whole, but with particular reference to Africa, and South Africa in particular.

As knowledge institutions have become ever more central to human social and economic development (Altbach & Salmi, 2011; Sawyerr, 2005; Yesufu, 1973), and as globalisation has made countries more aware of their relative positions within an interconnected world, so too have comparisons between, and rankings of institutions and countries become more influential. Universities in particular are under enormous pressure, from political leaders, state bureaucrats and often their own administrators, to perform in ways which elevate their standings in terms of global rankings, which are heavily weighted towards research outputs and citations, and the training of postgraduate research students—or else they risk falling behind in the global development race (Hazelkorn, 2011; Marginson, 2007).

The logic behind this compulsion to ‘perform or perish’ (Miller, Taylor, & Bedeian, 2011) is not new; it has been with us for centuries and has been spurred on by successive industrial and technological revolutions. But this dominant global development logic has intensified in recent years. As universities around the world seek to catch up with or surpass their more highly ranked peers, they reinforce this logic and the assumption that *greatness* in terms of knowledge and research is already known and needs only to be emulated. This assumption, however, is misplaced, and the logic which underpins it is unrealistic. In our globalising world, greatness is evolving and must evolve, in response to the multiplication and proliferation of pressing challenges faced by the whole of humanity and the planet. Universities, particularly those which specialise in research, can no longer be ranked primarily by their research production, but also by how they respond to grand challenges, in terms of cooperation, integration, inclusion, caring and civic-mindedness. Our current global development logic needs to be rethought, and replaced by a new logic: ‘partner or perish’. It is time to reinvent greatness.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTIONS

Given their functions of knowledge production and innovation, the training of highly skilled citizens, and the promotion of social mobility, knowledge institutions are key to delivering the knowledge requirements for development (see Subotzky, 2000; Waghid, 2002). First, this is due to the strong association between higher education participation rates and levels of socio-economic development. Second, higher levels of knowledge and innovation are essential inputs into the design and production of new technologies, and for the development of society. For instance, the number of PhDs per million of a country's population is closely correlated to direct foreign investment flows that are becoming increasingly indispensable for development. Third, the ability of a country to absorb, use and modify new or existing technologies—premised on the knowledge production capacities and skills of their institutions and citizens—accelerates development and promotes higher standards of living. Fourth, knowledge institutions can enable developing countries, in particular, to transition more rapidly through stages of economic development. Last but not least, an essential role of knowledge institutions is to identify and offer solutions to the so-called 'grand challenges' of human development (Kraak, 1997). These challenges, simultaneously national, regional, continental and global, range from sustainable development to democratisation, from growing populations to scarce water and energy resources, from global IT convergence to the widening gap between rich and poor, from epidemics to financial instability, from war and civil war to transnational organised crime, from the status of women to the future of the youth, from cities for the future to climate change, and from voluntary and forced human migrations to global governance and ethics.

Indeed, all nations now face a singular emergency: regardless of their current stage of socio-economic development, if they wish to advance from a resource-based through an efficiency-based to an innovation-based economy and beyond, a globally competitive domestic system of knowledge institutions is an essential ingredient. Most nations also aspire to improve and advance their knowledge institutions with respect to global rankings (see Alden & Lin, 2004; Altbach, 2004; Marginson, 2007). This places extraordinary strain not only on research universities, but also on all other institutions of higher education which focus on the equally, if not more essential tasks, of teaching and learning. Indeed, the logic of global rankings is increasingly differentiating not just universities but also nations and regions.

#### THE PROBLEM WITH OUR PRESENT DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

The trouble with our present development paradigm is that it is short term and short-sighted, and threatens to leave the poor and the less developed further and further behind (Hursh & Wall, 2008; Kearney, 2009; Mamdani, 2011). The concentration of research resources in a minority of institutions, even in the same country, coupled

with vast global disparities in wealth, ensures that the majority of universities will never significantly alter their positions in the greater scheme of things.

Another problem is that the present paradigm pays no heed to the consequences of unnecessary competition, and the narrow and unreflective pursuit of rankings for the sake of rankings. Improving the global competitiveness of one nation's knowledge institutions may help it increase its odds of producing more effective responses to its particular challenges; but if isolated competitiveness is the sole focus, unleavened by the cooperative production and sharing of knowledge, no coherent and effective global response to the grand challenges which affect all countries is likely (Ordorika, 2006).

Moreover, while the dominant development logic may have at times driven unparalleled economic growth, it has not done so for all; and all too often growth has occurred at great human cost, coupled with environmental destruction on such a scale that potentially irreversible alterations have been made to our planet's climate. In 2008, corrupt and fraudulent manipulations of financial markets brought economic growth to a shuddering halt, after some two decades of growth, and recovery is halting and slow.

Our current development logic also encourages both university administrators and national leaders to make investment decisions that prioritise research over teaching and learning (Parker, 2008), since research output and impact are weighted more highly by global ranking systems. This occurs despite the fact that less developed nations require equally significant investments in undergraduate education if they are to improve their societies' portfolios of highly skilled university graduates. For their part, more developed nations need to enhance the participation and success of poor and marginalised communities within their university systems, and especially their research universities, if they and their societies are to become more equitable. A more balanced and astute approach to investment in both undergraduate education and research development has now become urgent.

A fundamental rethink of the dominant development logic should first consider the possibility of multiple, indeed, even dramatically different, national development paths; it may even ponder lower rather than higher future income trajectories. More to the point, since universities and nation-states exist and evolve within an interconnected global system, purely institution-based or nationally focused development approaches are outdated and even counter-productive. The grand challenges of the present cannot be solved by any single scholar, leader, university or country working on their own.

Our increasingly integrated and interdependent world requires global-scale combined and cooperative innovations and solutions (Altbach, 2008; Ntuli, 2004). To address our grand challenges we must place the highest premium on the pooling and networking of resources at a global level. It is both unrealistic and undesirable to expect the universities and nation-states of the South to emulate the resource-intensive developmental trajectories of their northern and eastern peers. What the

knowledge institutions of the North and the East require as much as the South—taking into account the varied sizes, ages, profiles and developmental outlooks of their countries’ populations—are a multiplication of global development partnerships, resource-intensive where necessary, but extensive, inclusive and all-embracing wherever possible (see Harle, 2013; Samoff & Carrol, 2004).

#### RESPONDING MORE COHESIVELY AND COHERENTLY TO HUMANITY’S GRAND CHALLENGES

It is against the background described above that university leaders must regularly review their actual versus their announced missions and charters. Research universities, in particular, must now, more than ever before, reflect on both their own significance and the significance of their contributions to the world’s knowledge institutions and knowledge production systems (see Bienenstock, 2006; Cloete & Maassen, 2013; Muchie, 2008). It is in large measure dependent on knowledge institutions to find sustainable solutions to the grand challenges of human development.

For research universities to effuse true greatness, they must elevate, and be seen and known to elevate, all of humanity, including the poor and the marginalised inside and outside their nation-states, regions and continents. Their true greatness, given the present state of our world, will reside in their ability to purposefully, coherently and comprehensively take the lead on four fronts.

First, it is necessary to establish more (and foster existing) international inter-university epicentres of critical thought and conversation, so as to provide spaces for reflection, future thinking and the development of scholarly and research-informed solutions to our grand challenges.

Since institutes of advanced studies and global studies are already involved in active global partnerships, they are ideally placed to step up their respective contributions. So too, are networks and collectives, as is evident from the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) initiatives. Another example is research intensive university networks such as Universitas 21, where institutions can pool and thus multiply their efforts within diverse and cross-continental networks. These forms of global research collaboration are certainly increasing, but hardly at the scale of global investment in research and development, which has doubled within the last 15 years to US\$1.4 trillion, but remains fragmented nationally, regionally and globally (Suresh, 2012).

Second, and arising from such inter-university epicentres and other global research collaboration programmes, urgent action within global networks and forums is needed. To this end, Davos-like gatherings of political, business and academic leaders, equally informed by research and scholarship, must debate proposed solutions and seek agreement on the way forward, and on the roles of each of the partners involved in implementing these agreements.

Theme-focused gatherings—such as how cities of the future can overcome the challenges that cities today are facing; or how to respond more effectively the next time an Ebola outbreak occurs—will enable participants to examine the implications of an issue for their own constituencies. They will be able to understand simultaneously how their constituencies are linked to others, realise how local events can trigger global emergencies, and become aware of what cooperative networks and communications plans already exist to inform policymakers and prioritise responses. By bringing knowledge and scholarship into global public awareness, reflection and dialogue, we can make a far more significant contribution to the future prospects of our vulnerable planet.

Third, it is necessary to pay concerted attention to developing curricula and cooperative teaching methods which nurture more civic-minded and cosmopolitan citizens than have been produced, until now, by a narrow development logic. By extolling resource-intensive development, the current logic has deepened poverty, widened inequality, and fostered social and political conflict.

Given the avarice, fraud and collusion that led to the 2008 collapse of the world's financial markets, the values and ethics that inform curricula in our knowledge institutions clearly need to be revitalised. Strikingly, our research universities are often the first to claim captains of industry as their alumni, and many university ranking systems value this aspect quite highly. However, we must do more to ensure that the values and ethics our universities encourage, and the conduct we incentivise, are consistent with the best traditions of civic-mindedness, cultural engagement, inclusion, caring and the nurturing of a cosmopolitan identity. Indeed, it seems to me that research universities cannot be evaluated by their research contributions alone, but must also be judged by the impact that they have beyond research, in promoting values that advance our shared humanity and that seek to uplift the most vulnerable in our societies (Altbach, 2013; Marginson, 2011; Muchie, 2008). At the same time, developing ethics-based curricula which reflect eastern and southern traditions and value systems as much as northern ones will foster greater international research cooperation.

The fourth front against which our knowledge institutions in general, and research universities in particular, must lead us, is to enrol and embrace far higher proportions, and secure the success of youths and minorities from poor and marginalised urban and rural communities. More often than not, the poor and the marginalised are excluded from universities, especially research universities, since they either cannot afford the fees, or are assumed to be academically unprepared, or both. Sometimes, the poor are locked into a new generation of poor quality, high-fee private higher education institutions, where their trusting belief in the value of higher education motivates them to spend resources they cannot afford. Women, who face numerous obstacles in becoming, let alone being, researchers (obstacles all too often 'justified' in the name of biology, or tradition, or religion, when it is usually pure chauvinism), invariably receive fewer citations than their male counterparts, even when they are

established as researchers and are first authors of their publications (Larivière, Ni, Gingras, Cronin, & Sugimoto, 2013). Entrenched gender disparities in scientific research are thus another effect of our citation-weighted global rankings.

All knowledge institutions, whether public or private, need to be responsive to their communities. In a global context in which tuition fees are rising, state subsidies are declining, and there is a general shift in student financial aid away from grants and bursaries and towards income-contingent loans, universities must learn to do more with less, and innovate. For example, the use of free or low-cost distance and e-learning mechanisms, such as MOOCs (massive open online courses) and open access materials, can reduce costs per student and expand participation. Not all research requires expensive technology, and general research methodologies can often be taught and conducted without any equipment. Moreover, one of the cheapest and most effective forms of including the poor and the marginalised is simply to welcome them and make them at home. This can be done by creating an enriching, student-friendly learning and living experience, fostering excellent learning and teaching practices, supporting students throughout the student lifecycle, and forging a responsible and respectful academic culture and ethos.

#### LOCATING AFRICA, AND SOUTH AFRICA, IN THE GLOBAL RESEARCH STAKES

Africa is rising. After Asia, Africa is the world's most populous continent. By 2050 it is forecast to be home to one quarter of the world's population (or some 2.3 billion people, half of whom will be urbanised), including 40% of the world's children (United Nations, 2014). Africa's vast mineral wealth is well known; further, recently burgeoning infrastructure development, expanding agri-processing and strong consumer demand have caused the continent to become a favoured investment destination. Real GDP growth rates in Africa have exceeded 5% per annum over the past decade (African Economic Outlook, 2015). Mobile/cellular telephone subscription growth rates in 2014 were twice as high as the global average (ITU, 2014). While only one quarter of Africa's population currently has access to the Internet, usage has exploded by 6,000% in the last 15 years (Miniwatts Marketing Group [MMG], 2014).

All these developments represent tremendous opportunities for growth and progress, but they also have major implications for the continent's under-resourced knowledge institutions. Much higher and more sustained investment in higher education is required if Africa's universities are to accommodate growing demand for higher education and lift the participation rate from the current level (8%) to approximately 32% which was the global average in 2012 (Marginson, 2014). Africa's research productivity is also low, accounting for less than 2% of global research output: in 2008, Africa's total number of research publications (about 27,000 papers) was equivalent to that of the Netherlands (Thomson Reuters, 2010). The same report shows that African researchers are more likely to co-author publications

with US or European peers rather than with other African researchers. Much more research collaboration, both within and beyond Africa, is necessary for the global dissemination of the continent's essential contributions to the identification and resolution of the grand challenges of development.

South Africa's higher education system shares many features of its African counterparts, although it stands out in a number of respects. There are just under one million students enrolled in South African public universities, but 85% of these are in undergraduate programmes, and only 7% are undertaking masters and doctoral studies. Science, engineering and technology programmes produced just under one-third of all graduates in 2012 (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2013).

Nevertheless, South Africa is the most prolific African country in terms of research production across most of the main knowledge fields (Thompson Reuters, 2010). In the last decade, research output has doubled, and international research collaboration has tripled. The country is among the world's top five in plant and animal science research, and very productive in the geosciences, social sciences and chemistry; it also exceeds world averages in environmental and ecological sciences, space sciences, immunology and clinical medicine (Elsevier, 2013). From 2001 to 2012, South African authored papers indexed in Science Direct were downloaded more than 20 million times—16.9% of these downloads were from the US, 9.7% from China, and 8.6% from the UK (Elsevier, 2013). Nevertheless, just as Africa's entire research output is no more than that of the Netherlands, South Africa's output as a whole—which accounts for 40% of Africa's output—is matched by Harvard University alone.

South African universities continue to be shaped by their colonial and apartheid pasts, as a recent report to the country's Parliament made clear. Notwithstanding enormous progress, such as the doubling of university enrolments over the past decade, and the diversification of the student body (over 80% of all students are black, and almost three-fifths are women), the South African university profile still does not fully reflect national demographics. The low overall enrolment rate of 19% is skewed in that the participation rate among the black population is only 14%, compared to 59% among whites. Staff complements in universities are still mainly white and male (and aging): only 46% of instructional and research staff are African, and 45% are women. If the current slow pace of transformation is maintained, it is estimated that it will take at least another decade before student graduation figures match national demographics—and another 40 years before academic staff components do so (Parliamentary Monitoring Group [PMG], 2013).

The current configuration is inimical to meeting South Africa's labour market (or even academic labour market) demands, let alone to maintaining its standing in the global research productivity stakes. Accordingly, the country's National Development Plan aims by 2030 to: increase the university participation rate to 30%, or 1.6 million enrolments; produce 5,000 doctorates per annum; increase the percentage of black academics to at least 50%; and the percentage of all academics



with doctoral qualifications to 75% (from around 40% currently) (National Planning Commission [NPC], 2012).

Forward thinking, such as that contained in national development plans, is essential if countries are to advance socially and economically, and high quality research is critical for clarifying and charting ways forward. But today's interdependent world means that development, and research, cannot and indeed should not take place in isolation. Reciprocal global research partnerships, aimed at mutually beneficial, sustainable solutions to our grand challenges, must be prioritised, not least because the pace of technological progress is often matched by the intensification of human need.

South Africa, with its large youth and working-age populations, has recently entered a demographic window of opportunity to increase its economic output and to invest in the technology, education and skills to create the wealth needed to cope with the challenges that the country faces. It must seize this opportunity, as must Africa as a whole, which will soon enter the same demographic window (United Nations, 2003). But no country can do so in isolation. Already the consequences of large sectors of our planet being rich in resources but poor in development are becoming apparent, for example in the huge exodus of populations, from Morocco to Myanmar, towards lands and lives they perceive as offering greater opportunities. The South cannot fully develop its people, let alone its knowledge, without collaboration. But the same applies to the North and East, whose economies are increasingly dependent on the importation of labour at all skill levels. The opportunities and challenges facing South Africa, Africa and the South in general are not just their own opportunities and challenges; they are opportunities and challenges for the world, and for humanity at large.

#### REDEPLOYING RESEARCH RESOURCES

How then might just one knowledge institution—my own institution, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in South Africa—redeploy its resources so as to engage on the four fronts suggested earlier, on which research universities should take the lead in responding to our responsibilities and priorities? Since the second of these fronts—research to promote awareness and debate which can form the basis for action—is precisely the purpose of this chapter, I shall focus mainly on the first, third and fourth fronts mentioned earlier.

Regarding the first front, it goes without saying that a research university must conduct research. Reflecting the pressure being exerted by national policymakers in this era of global rankings, UJ has made considerable investments in research, and as a result, has tripled its research publications within the last five years. These investments have been strategically focused on areas where the institution is either already strong, or can become globally excellent, or both. UJ is also focusing on smart international research collaborations and partnerships, including joint postgraduate programme offerings and the appointment of globally renowned professors and

visiting professors. A prime example is the new Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Studies, a joint venture with Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. The Johannesburg institute is an inter-university epicentre primed to examine the grand challenges of the present and the future from a pan-Africa-Asia perspective.

While acutely aware of its many domestic challenges, UJ has set itself the task of achieving a consistent ranking within the world's top 400 universities by 2020. Moreover, in recognition of the considerable value of research cooperation and exchange, UJ is thoroughly involving itself in prominent research university networks such as Universitas 21 and the Council of Graduate Schools, which help to build networks for its researchers across influential global research projects. This effort is being undertaken in the knowledge that the grand challenges we face cannot be solved by a single university or nation; that said, the better any university can equip its staff and students, the better will be knowledge production in general. Hence, in addition to jointly offered postgraduate programmes, the university has significantly expanded the number of postdoctoral fellowships, and initiated a multifaceted programme—replete with new assistant lecturer posts, senior tutorships and supervisor-linked fellowships—which will see the proportion of academic staff with doctoral qualifications increase to 65% by 2020.

An important sub-focus of these endeavours is an attempt to improve the quantity, quality and directionality of global flows involving our senior students and leading scholars. These networks could, in part, reduce the brain drain from the South by providing researchers with multiple and repeated opportunities to undertake collaborative research, share knowledge and resources, and build mutual capacities with counterparts in the North and East, without permanently relocating. With such increased interconnectivity between scholars and universities, it will be essential to develop and extend globally endorsed standards and protocols for the merit-review of research proposals and the peer-rating of scholars, such as those proposed by the Global Research Council (Suresh, 2012). Over and above these efforts, by 2020 UJ aims to grow its international student body from 2,500 to 5,000, and its international academic staff complement from 12% to 20%.

In terms of the third front, UJ is systematically building intellectually rigorous and ethically-based curricula which respond critically and innovatively to the dominant development paradigm and the grand challenges of the 21st century. We are doing so by incentivising and promoting undergraduate teaching and learning as an essentially scholarly activity. This includes deepening the compulsory *Global Citizenship* programmes and the institution's *Learning To Be* teaching philosophy, coupled with the innovative presentation of programmes built upon the phased-in use of tablets, e-books and other handheld devices. Senior undergraduate programmes emphasise entrepreneurialism and preparation for the world of work, and all programmes involve regular teaching evaluations by students.

On the fourth front, in order to meet its responsibility to and ensure the success of the poor and the marginalised in the national context, UJ is investing in academic development programmes in order to improve the quality and responsiveness of

all its programmes. With national unemployment exceedingly high (as much as 60% among young people, including an estimated 4 million young South Africans not in college, university, training or employment—Statistics South Africa, 2016), universities cannot sit by and bemoan the continuing poor quality of schooling outcomes. UJ is devoting a considerable amount of its free marginal assets to academically supporting and enabling poorly prepared, and often first generation students to make a successful transition to the demands of university education. As much as 5% of university resources previously committed to research have been diverted to building a successful First Year Experience Programme, buttressed by an extensive 2,600-strong tutor system and premised on early notification of underperformance.

Taking our responsibility to the poor and the marginalised seriously can go hand in hand with being responsive to the need for highly skilled graduates. UJ's meaningful contribution to diversifying South Africa's professions and vocations is evident, for example, in the fact that 22% of the country's black Chartered Accountants who successfully completed the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants' 2015 Initial Test of Competence were trained at the university (Achiever, 2015), with similar numbers for engineers, technicians and technologists. Research and hands-on learning experiences are also at the fore in another intervention aimed at counteracting the weak state schooling backgrounds of incoming students and simultaneously, over the long term, improving the quality of future applicants. This is UJ's newly upgraded Soweto campus, which focuses on teacher education. It includes a primary school which doubles as a dedicated teaching school—the first of its kind in South Africa—where trainee teachers can practise their craft in an authentic setting and researchers can directly study children's learning and development.

## CONCLUSION

The knowledge institution which can match its global-level responsibilities with its university-level priorities will elevate itself way beyond its standing in terms of global rankings. The research university which includes the world in its research, which promotes and shares the flow of knowledge and scholars, which embraces the poor and does research for humanity, will be a truly great research university. It is this kind of institution that will lead the global research community in its efforts to cooperate ever more closely in order to meet its responsibilities to itself, the planet and humanity.

It has been a truism throughout history that greatness comes with responsibility. In the middle of the 17th century, the great educational reformer John Comenius (Jan Komensky) (cited in Piaget, 1967) proposed a new kind of knowledge institution, a universal 'College of Light', the members of which would

... pay attention to themselves first and foremost, to be themselves what they should make others: enlightened. (p. 210)

The task of our research universities today is to pay attention to themselves, precisely in order to enlighten others and the world. If we must conceive of global development, and global research rankings, in terms of a race, it should not be as a race between institutions or countries considered in isolation, but as a race by humanity as a whole against the great challenges it has set for itself. Our knowledge institutions, and particularly our research universities, must be, and must be seen to be, inclusive and civic-minded, and cooperative and integrative in their efforts. There is no alternative.

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### 3. *UBUNTU*

#### *African Philosophy of Education and Pedagogical Encounters*

##### ON SOME OF THE POLEMICS ABOUT *UBUNTU*

In my previous work, the book *African philosophy of education reconsidered: On being human* (Waghid, 2014), *ubuntu* is etymologically explicated as a concept that has both an individual and a communal orientation—individual, in the sense that people act with their individualities (attitudes, beliefs, understandings and ways of seeing the world) and therefore have something to say or contribute, and communal, in the sense that their association with other individuals in a collective is important when acting or doing things. My understanding of the phrase ‘I am because we are’—often used in association with the notion of *ubuntu*—is that the ‘I’ does not have priority over the ‘we’, and the ‘we’ does not have priority over the ‘I’. Rather, that what is enacted should be as a consequence of an individual’s aspiration in relation to a group with which he or she is associated, and hence, ensure co-operation and peaceful co-existence.

Thus, *ubuntu* is a form of human engagement that draws on both individual and collective decision-making. I am not persuaded by the argument that in *ubuntu* an individual’s ideas, aspirations and actions are subsumed by the communal and succumb to the interests of the group. Some scholars such as Enslin and Horsthemke (2015) contend that in *ubuntu* the individual must capitulate to the collective and they argue that the vulnerability and liability of *ubuntu* lies in its disregard for the individual. But it does not follow that, in the application of *ubuntu*, a person’s individuality is inevitably sacrificed to the interests of the group. Rather, the individual contributes to the aspirations of the group, and what is agreed upon, communally, is representative of a collectivity of individual ideas. It is in the latter regard, where *Ubuntu* is understood differently from existing understandings of the concept. And, its implementation in pedagogical encounters particularly amongst students and teachers will also differ in the sense that the autonomy of the individual is not necessarily undermined as Enslin and Horsthemke would aver (2015). This does not mean that an individual departs from the group. Instead, the group’s collective aspirations become that of an individual as well. There is therefore no reason to suppose that the individual will necessarily lose her individuality in the association with other individuals. Instead, the thoughts of others contribute to developing the thoughts of the individual. For instance, if an individual is determined



to contribute to the eradication of poverty on the African continent, she should, and most often would, find support for her individualist aspiration within the collective since, when such an aspiration has the support of the collective, it has a far better chance of being realised. Similarly, in a spirit of *ubuntu*, a collective's practice of perpetuating gender inequality could be influenced by an individual's desire to counter such forms of discrimination when the individual offers and defends a course of action that is different to the group's ideas. In this way, individual ideas have the potential to rupture untenable collective ideas. What would be the point of sharing ideas otherwise? Similarly, collective ideas have the potential to counter the untenable ideas of an individual. Indefensible ideas such as discrimination and gender inequality require contestation, and the rupturing effect of the ideas of people with different points of view can initiate change.

The individual's reasons for acting are given a collective opportunity to be responsive to what is under consideration. An individual does not abandon her individuality but merely brings her individuality into the presence of other individualities, which is very different from saying that an individual succumbs to the views of others and, in the process, loses her sense of self. Losing one's sense of self would mean relinquishing what one has to offer, which would therefore make one incapable of engaging with the group and contributing to their aspirations. Taylor (1989) posits that the individual self, if annulled, can no longer be a present self. If one loses oneself, one is absent. *Ubuntu* requires the self and other selves to be present in a collective, and all to be present in a quest or a communal endeavour. *Ubuntu* can only function if the group recognises the presence of the individual selves and responds to the aspirations of the group and the individuals, and not at the individual's cost. Consequently, *ubuntu* does not undermine the individual selves. Instead, the individual self is foregrounded in the presence of other selves and, collectively, they endeavour to come to an agreed arrangement, with their individual autonomy intact. The collective is only possible because of individuals.

The view that *ubuntu* is some rural (or village)—and therefore parochial—concept that has no bearing on a philosophy of education or broader human practices, is a narrow and uninformed standpoint. *Ubuntu* has its origin in the forms of human engagement of past, and perhaps present, African communal living. One way in which the community gained understanding and further explication of the concept was through the oral traditions of African sages (wise people). Notwithstanding the seminal work of Wiredu (1980), Shutte (1993), Ramose (2002) and several others, the concept of *ubuntu* is under-researched and has been largely neglected in the scholarly literature. However, it is not the (academic) neglect of the concept that has contributed to many regarding it as an essentially 'rural' or even medieval approach to life. Rather, it is its association with African communal practices and ways of living—from the past to the present day—that has led to its being undervalued and seemingly relegated to the margins. And, if this apparent 'parochialism' is the reason detractors speak so condescendingly about the concept, then I have to remind them

that African communal forms of living are not merely relics of the past, they are vibrant, contemporary forms of living.

The concept of *ubuntu* cannot be declared null and void or irrelevant just because it manifests in communal practices. Conversely, some detractors argue that the concept of *ubuntu* is *not* manifest in communal practices because the African continent is so beset with conflict, and communities are brutalised by violence and suffer atrocities and genocide as a result of tribal wars. This (the state of unrest in Africa), the detractors such as Enslin and Horsthemke (2015) contend, brings the African communal ways of living into disrepute and negates any possibility that *ubuntu* is actualised successfully on the continent.

Critics of *ubuntu* might imagine that the concept can only be justified through actual examples. I wish to stake the claim that for something to ‘be there’ it has to be actualised—that is, there must be evidence that the concept is in existence. Such an understanding of concepts does not hold, since one does not have to witness genocide in order to have an understanding of genocide or for the concept of genocide to exist. Do I have to witness a human rights violation in order for the concept to exist? No. Similarly, one does not have to witness beauty for the concept of beauty to exist. The conception of beauty is in the minds and, at times, practices of people but it does not mean that one has to have testimony of the concept to validate its existence. Hence, I do not have to witness *ubuntu* for my testimony to validate the existence of the concept. *Ubuntu* exists in the thoughts and actions of people. Taylor (1985) describes how concepts can be constituted by the norms of mutual action—that is, by both thought and practice. Given the unforgivingly high levels of famine, violence, atrocities, genocide and human rights violations on the African continent, the mere survival of the human spirit is perhaps, in itself, a testimony to a spirit of *ubuntu* even where it is not visible. Those who stand outside it, and do not experience it, might therefore not be able to lay claim to it.

Agamben (1999) contends that the potentiality for something to be what it is, or to become something else, lies in potentiality itself. He argues that when something is actualised, for example, thought and practice, it has been realised, attained or has come to fruition and it no longer has the potentiality to become something else. Its actuality nullifies its potentiality to be something different. If, following this argument, the concept of *ubuntu* has already come into being, it no longer has potentiality. It would follow then that, if *ubuntu* has been actualised, it is already ‘here’ and the potential that it had to be anything else has been thwarted. So, in contrast, the very understanding that *ubuntu* has not yet been actualised is, in fact, an acknowledgement that the concept has, or is in a state of, potentiality—that is, it can be something or become something else. In my view, *ubuntu* has not as yet been actualised, otherwise its potential to be this or that would have been curtailed. Thus, an acknowledgment that the concept has not been actualised is in fact tantamount to recognising that the concept has potentiality. This is the view which I support and which I will analyse in relation to an African philosophy of education.

AN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND ITS  
COMMENSURABILITY WITH *UBUNTU*

On the basis that any philosophy of education is associated with meanings pertinent to its existence, in a way that a Greek philosophy of education, Chinese philosophy of education or Arab philosophy of education is determined by the thoughts and practices associated with it, an African philosophy of education does not derive its meanings from outside its context. I am not suggesting that the aforementioned philosophies of education have not influenced the African philosophy of education. Philosophies of education are not uninfluenced and uncorrupted ways of perceiving education and they should not, therefore, be understood as delineated conceptions. Just as the Greek philosophy of education influenced the Arab philosophy of education—for instance, the Socratic notion of dialogue is very much evident in the deliberative approach to mutual consultation or *shura* advocated by the primary sources of Islam (Waghid, 2011)—so has the African philosophy of education not remained uninfluenced and immune from Greek or other philosophical influences. For example, the notion of respect for other people on the grounds that people are human beings, which is fundamental to an African philosophy of education, is as much associated with the Chinese philosophy of education and also resonates with philosophies of education advocated by Greeks and Arabs. Any philosophy of education that considers respect for all people to be important and of value in its thoughts and practices is attuned to any other philosophy of education that advocates the same ideas. Thus, we find that just as primary texts on the philosophy of education in the Western and Arab world have been influenced by Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Al-Ghazzali's *Ihya Ulum al-Din* (The Sciences of Religion), so has the African philosophy of education been influenced by ideas, such as described by Wiredu (1980), of what it means to be an educated person. At the core of these three philosophies of education—Western, Arab and African (and I draw these distinctions only for the sake of the argument)—is the notion that respect for other people should be central to any philosophy of education.

What does respect for other people in an African philosophy of education entail? In the first instance, to be respectful towards another person is to recognise the other person in her own individuality and not just as one might perceive her to be. When one dishonours another person, one might also reject what the other stands for and, taken to the extreme, one might want to see the other rebuked, humiliated or even eliminated, as was the case when Tutsis were massacred by Hutus in Rwanda, and Coptic Christians were tormented and killed by Muslims in Egypt. These examples are not testaments to how flawed an African philosophy is, but rather demonstrate that respect for other people is not always lived out. The disregard shown for other people in perpetuating atrocities such as these is not a justification for ridiculing an African philosophy of education since no philosophy of education would renounce respecting others. It would be quite erroneous to assume that an African

philosophy of education is implausible because of heinous violations of human dignity by some Africans. Communities beyond the African continent have often witnessed, and continue to witness, equally reprehensible violations. It is not that an African philosophy of education is flawed, but rather that disrespect towards other people is sometimes shown despite the advocacy of a philosophy of education that people should be honoured. Violating a principle of human living does not render a philosophy of education redundant but merely confirms the failure to honour it. Would the Chinese authorities torturing a protester be a testimony to how inappropriate or untenable a Chinese philosophy of education is? Similarly, Hutu aggression does not render an African philosophy of education superfluous. It merely calls into question the specific acts of people irrespective of whether or not they advocate or live by a particular philosophy of education. What follows from the afore-mentioned, is that within pedagogical encounters, students and teachers ought to respect one another whereby they recognise the potentiality of one another to come to speech. In this way, *ubuntu* might be enacted as the practice draws on both the individualities of teachers and students. Such a pedagogical encounter is one that invokes the self-understandings of both students and teachers and it does not authoritatively reify the position of a teacher or student for that matter.

A philosophy of education cannot be dismissed on the grounds that some people's ways of conducting themselves undermine its tenets. The argument cannot be that a specific philosophy of education does not exist or cannot exist because of the (atrocious) actions of a few. Instead, the argument has to be about what a particular philosophy of education might be, and what it might offer, in addressing the weaknesses and egotisms of people so that they engage their humanity and act respectfully towards others.

So, if respect for other people is constitutive of an African philosophy of education, how does such a philosophy unfold in education, specifically? In 'traditional' African communities the voice of the elder or sage is important and authoritative and should not be hastily disregarded or brought into disrepute. Elders have given much thought to developing their understanding of the world and it is a mistake to dismiss their ideas impetuously when one disagrees with their views. Disagreement should only come after one has contemplated and reflected on the views put forward, otherwise one's disagreement is not guided by informed judgment. How would one develop the acumen to critically engage with an elder's views if one does not allocate sufficient time to absorbing what has been said and the thoughts that come to mind? How can one challenge and even repudiate the words of elders if one has not listened attentively to what has been articulated? The very act of listening to an elder's views and trying to make sense of what is said should be an act of critical scrutiny. Not questioning an elder immediately should not be regarded as an unwillingness to challenge authority but rather as a form of criticality as an individual or group makes sense of what an elder advocates.

Silence when ‘wise’ views are being expressed shows respect for the person speaking and the views being expressed. It is a critical part of making sense of such views, which is not at all the same as mere blind imitation of someone else’s (especially an authority figure’s) views. The non-questioning of authority should not be confused with uncritical acceptance of a particular view. Rather, listening, in the African sense, is part of one’s critical engagement with another’s point of view. Listening to wise words and making sense of them contemplatively is the first step in the process of critical scrutiny. An African philosophy of education has often been accused of discouraging critical thought in the face of the authority of elders’ voices. But this contention is unpersuasive and does not hold because criticality requires listening reflexively as a precondition to questioning. An African philosophy of education seeks to avoid robust and provocative critique that precedes listening. Respect for others, in the African sense, requires that one first listens to what is being said before making a judgment, which if constructed hastily, might be erroneous, ill-conceived or indiscreet. Following on the latter argument, pedagogical encounters do not simply involve students dismissing teachers’ views at will. Rather, students contemplate about the views being espoused before offering their thoughtful responses.

A second aspect of an African philosophy of education requires that, as part of respect for others, after listening to what others have to say, one conveys one’s thoughts to others in a non-belligerent way. Unlike Callan (1997), who is of the opinion that even a distressful process of deliberation can lead to conciliation, I contend that belligerence towards another person could alienate one from the other, although in mitigation of Callan’s view, belligerence does not preclude maturity of opinion. In some African university classrooms (and my institution is no exception), the expression of immature views and a rush to judgment are very evident and at times detrimental to learning. Immaturity of viewpoint often co-exists with wanting to cling to what is familiar, without attempting to bring into question all that a person has learned previously. Rushing to judgment or instantly dismissing new ideas is evident on the part of some people, especially when what they are faced with seems incommensurable with their own, often unreflexive, ideas.

To assume that belligerent action is an appropriate strategy in challenging a person’s accepted views and assumptions would not be a desirable pedagogical approach. Many Africans have an acute sensitivity towards robust and provocative behaviour—extensive alienation and discrimination under colonialism and apartheid have impacted the psyche of many Africans who, as a consequence, consider belligerent action as demeaning to their very being. Understandably many Africans would therefore be insensitive to belligerent action in education, as such action, Callan (1997) contends, requires maturity of mind and contentment on the part of the people being aggressively addressed. This is why *ubuntu* has potential as a pedagogical strategy in Africa as, under *ubuntu*, people are required to engage with others without showing hostility. According to *ubuntu*, people would engage with

one another in a non-hostile, non-aggressive manner, in an atmosphere of tranquillity without rage and fury provoking them into acting unkindly towards each other.

Respect for other people, in the *ubuntu* sense, is associated with being calm and moderate in one's engagement with others. Belligerence is too much of a risk in pedagogical encounters. A moderate approach to human engagement creates a space where respect for others can be demonstrated and enacted whereas belligerence might curtail or even preclude the very act of engagement—a belligerent response could abruptly end a conversation while a more moderate one would not. However, I am not arguing that belligerence should be avoided at all cost but rather that it should not be used in a dialogue prematurely. So, to start a conversation belligerently would be premature, but it would not be as risky to introduce belligerence as the conversation unfolds. Immediate belligerence is not in keeping with the spirit of *ubuntu*.

Another aspect of the concept of *ubuntu* and its emphasis on respect for others that has relevance in an African philosophy of education is the idea of reconciliation. The practices of people on the African continent and the fragile and fractured communities spawned by colonialism and apartheid are in need of attention so that Africans do not continue to live in fear, hostility and, in some cases, even hatred. An African philosophy of education can contribute to reconciliation and healing. The cultivation of reconciliation, so much part of an African philosophy of education that promotes respect for others, cannot and should not turn a blind eye to hatred and hateful behaviour. Showing hatred and resentment towards others deepens the fracturedness that has come to characterise many parts of the African continent, as is evident in the unrelenting wars and ethnic conflicts that are rife in, for instance, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, and Sudan.

*Ubuntu* requires that people do not respond antagonistically towards others, even if experiencing fear, or being confronted by aggression or hate speech, for example. Responding negatively towards vile acts, hostility and anger could further entrench loathsome ways of human engagement. *Ubuntu*, as respect for other people, is a reconciliatory practice that would allow the perpetrators of hateful acts and hate speech to treat others more humanely, and would enable the 'victims' to respond more humanely to the aggression with which they are confronted.

Hatred does not disappear without someone interrupting it. Considering that the perpetrators of hatred are not always willing or able to curb their repugnant behaviour, those upon whom the hatred is foisted—I reluctantly refer to them as victims of hatred—are encouraged, in the spirit of *ubuntu*, to give hatred a different signification. Instead of blindly retaliating, those who are the targets of hatred (who might then see themselves as 'recipients' of hatred rather than 'victims') could give hateful acts and hate speech a positive response. It would be somewhat unlikely that perpetrators of hate speech would persist with their slanderous behaviour if they were countered with speech that reduces the proclivity for further hateful acts. If the West-African terror group Boko Haram, which is opposed to Western-style



education, were to be engaged in dialogue and negotiation, and became convinced—and such persuasion is possible in the spirit of *ubuntu*—that learning a Western language, whether English, Spanish or French, is important in disseminating a Quranic narrative of Islam to the West without abandoning Arabic, it is doubtful that they would persist in their rejection of such a language and, by extension, Western education.

In the notion of *ubuntu*, counter hate speech (in the sense used by Butler 1997 to give a positive spin to its application), is important in retaining respect for others—and this idea is in harmony with an African philosophy of education, which should not ridicule what others hold to be inviolable. Instead, such a philosophy of education embraces otherness or difference as an opportunity for showing how respect for others can be demonstrated.

I have argued in the sections above that an African philosophy of education is in harmony with the practice of respect for others according to *ubuntu* in three aspects: listening (without first rushing to judgment); non-belligerent forms of human engagement (although not excluding a delayed form of belligerence, on the basis of more mature relations); and the nurturing of reconciliatory action (as with counter hate speech).

In the following section, I move on to a justification of *ubuntu* as respect for others vis-à-vis reasonable and cultural autonomy, human responsibility, and democratic iteration—all aspects of *ubuntu* that give an African philosophy of education its distinctive impetus.

#### AUTONOMY, RESPONSIBILITY AND ITERATION: TOWARDS A DEFENSIBLE AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Humans have respect for one another on the basis that they offer reasons in defence of their actions. Respect for others is an act of autonomy because humans have the freedom to consider the justifications of others—their reasons for action—in order to make judgments about their own and others' ways of being and living. A person's reasons are not confined to their presuppositions, or the opinions that might be informed in relation to analysed texts and practices, but might also reflect their situatedness and where they happen to find themselves in the pursuit of their narratives. Humans' views are enmeshed in a web of action that is often informed by thoughts, desires, opinions, aspirations and orientations towards a variety of things. Humans are cultural beings whose judgments are informed by the reasons they offer based on their contextual connectedness. Their feelings, emotions and sense of being are enacted according to their cultural attunement. The reasons they proffer for their ways of doing things are most often grounded in their societal (cultural, ethical, political, economic and sometimes religious) persuasions. How else would they give an account of their reasons? Their autonomy is framed by the contextual or societal reasons they offer to account for their ways of acting. And, the respect they show to



others is harnessed according to the societal reasons they give to account for their very being.

Like any philosophy of education, an African philosophy of education depends on human justifications—reasons for being and acting—to characterise this form of education. An African philosophy of education cannot therefore be oblivious to the societal reasons on offer for constituting it the way it is, and the way that it can yet become. To consider philosophy of education as distant from the cultural practices Africa's people enact, is to ignore an important dimension of the reasons on offer to make sense of such a form of education. It seems ludicrous to ignore people's cultural autonomy in the construction of their reasons since they couch a philosophy of education in the language of respect for others. How else, could reasons be considered and accepted or rejected if not based on the respect people should exhibit in relation to one another? Disrespect of reasons, or the absence of respect, treats others' points of view with contempt and as unworthy of consideration and reflection.

A philosophy of education can exist only when people contemplate, (re)construct and deconstruct reasons in defence of people's thoughts and practices. Humans only respect one another if they honour the reasons that are rendered for their ways of being and living. To criticise the reasons of others without giving due consideration to what is presented would be to undermine the very reason a philosophy of education exists. I am not suggesting that reasons should not be contested. On the contrary, reasons can and should be contested on the grounds that reasons need to be justified. A lack of engagement with reasons renders the engagement unproductive. When people respect one another for whatever reasons are being rendered, be they political, societal, cultural, ethnic, economic or religious, they contribute towards enacting a philosophy of education.

Similarly, an African philosophy of education can exist only on account of the autonomous contextual reasons people render in defence of their actions. Thus, separating people's cultural and contextual orientations from the reasons they give in making a philosophy of education what it is, is not only the same as showing disrespect towards others but it also disregards what characterises a philosophy of education—that is, an invocation of people's autonomous orientations. For example, ignoring the African artefacts, images, symbols and practices that constitute some of the reasoned justifications for people's ways of being not only denies an African philosophy of education its right to exist but also disrespects the reasons Africans offer to account for their ways of being. Ignoring other people's ways of being, and by extension the reasons they render, is tantamount to assuming that only one's own reasons are valid and that other's reasons are not deserving of any consideration at all, especially when such reasons have a cultural grounding. This would destroy a philosophy of education as such a philosophy is conditional on the provision of reasons.

The assumption that an African philosophy of education does not have authentic reasons to render undermines the very notion of authenticity. Following Taylor (1991), a practice is authentic if it implicitly lends itself to the rendering of reasons. An African philosophy of education is no exception—reasons are fundamental to its practice and such reasons are inextricably linked to people's cultural and political contexts.

Respect for others is a human responsibility that people owe to one another. Respect implies responsibility towards others. How else could respect for others manifest if people are not obliged to enact a responsibility towards others? To be responsible towards people means showing accountability towards them. Human responsibility means *responding* to people by being answerable to them and *showing* one's aptitude or ability to act in an answerable manner. Yet, being answerable to others happens only in the recognition that people are in communion with one another, as noted by Cavell (1979). If one is answerable to others one cannot turn a blind eye to them or what happens to them. Answerability implies an acceptance of whatever goes wrong with others since one cannot be left alone in not giving an account of the wrongs of others. According to *ubuntu*, everyone should be responsive and answerable because whatever happens to one individual, cannot be ignored by the others. So, if some people on the African continent suffer and experience famine and hunger, others should respond with responsible and compassionate action and devise ways to alleviate the human suffering. An African philosophy of education that advocates (as it should) answerability to all others, calls for human action that responds propitiously to human living conditions. It would be unfitting and indecent of an African philosophy of education and its proponents to be insensitive to the need to eradicate human suffering on the continent. How else would such a philosophy of education secure humanness and human dignity?

Another important aspect of the concept of respect for others is that humans should not act alone. Following *ubuntu*, they act in community. However, the communality that people exercise is in association rather than in aggregation—people reason together on the basis of being interconnected through an associative community. Such a community depends predominantly on the number of people who have been aggregated and who are deemed decision makers, and agreement is not a corollary to the majority of votes solicited. Rather, in such a community agreements are attained, or not attained, through deliberative engagement. In an associative community, the most desirable outcomes are not necessarily secured by an over-reliance on majoritarianism. The majority's decision is not always the best—many a majority is responsible for inexplicable human suffering on the African continent after groups agreed to initiate conflict and embark on wars that alienated and annihilated others. However, a community grounded in deliberative engagement is one that encourages listening to others and justifying points of view through iteration—that is, by encouraging consistent talk and response. Benhabib (2011) reminds us of how deliberative iterations engender more defensible points of view. *Ubuntu* is attuned to the idea of deliberative engagement because through

talking back, iteratively, more plausible strategies might emerge to address human indignity and suffering on the African continent.

Thus, an African philosophy of education that invokes the tenets of *ubuntu* would unfold as follows: people would render reasons for their choice of action and an appreciation of reasons of all kinds would gain credence; responsible human action, that encompasses answerability to others and their suffering, would ensue; people would seek out and respond to African problems in an iterative fashion; and matters would not just be thought through repeatedly, but would be resolved on the basis of talking back to them. In this way, views could become more credible and hence, justifiable.

After the above discussion of how an *ubuntu* instantiated African philosophy of education would manifest, in the section that follows I turn to a discussion of such a philosophy of education in reference to its implications for pedagogical action.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF AN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION FOR PEDAGOGICAL ACTION

I have shown in the sections above that *ubuntu*, and its manifestation as respect for others, should be the basis for the formation of an African philosophy of education. Such a philosophy of education would not be able to disrupt human injustices on the African continent if it were *not* informed by the tenets of *ubuntu*—that is, the rendering of culturally autonomous reasons, the enactment of human responsibility, and the practice of deliberative iterations.

In the final section of this chapter, I examine some of the implications of such actions for university pedagogy. Firstly, through recognition of culturally autonomous reasons, students and educators in a university would draw extensively on each another's perspectives and, in this way, the potentialities of both students and educators would be evoked. Exposure to different people's diverse reasons can enrich pedagogical encounters and make them more caring in the sense, following MacIntyre (1999), of being concerned with evoking the potentialities of others. When people are exposed to different and, at times, contentious meanings and understandings, their sense of wonder might be aroused.

Secondly, fulfilling one's responsibility towards others can have the effect of enabling educators and students to view themselves as engaging in inclusive pedagogical relations where opportunities exist for all participants, both educators and learners, to speak. Showing responsibility towards others goes some way towards countering exclusion, and the possibility that participants in a pedagogical encounter are marginalised or become voiceless is then less likely. Responsible pedagogical encounters acknowledge that every person has something to say, because they would collectively, in Rancière's (1991) words, be "summoned to speech". That is they would be encouraged to speak their minds and thus to exercise their intelligence.

Thirdly, in an atmosphere of *ubuntu*, educators and students develop a sense of trust whereby they can, at times, take risks in the pursuit of knowledge. In addition,

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acting in accordance with *ubuntu*, they can extend their trust in one another to the point that they might, in speaking collectively, reveal the unexpected. In confronting the improbable, they might find ways to deal explicitly with injustices on the African continent. Pedagogical action could, in this way, become aligned with dignified action in the face of human adversity (Benhabib, 2011).

In sum, an African philosophy of education, strengthened by *ubuntu*, could stimulate pedagogical action that is more risky and disruptive but, at the same time, humane. These are all aspects that could become part of autonomous human action and responsibility towards others. Such a project as an African philosophy of education would remain forever in the making—that is to say, ‘in the process of becoming’, since taking risks and being disruptive, while acting humanely, does not produce a finalised project.

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## 4. KNOWLEDGE AS A PUBLIC GOOD

### *A Critical Gaze at the African University*

#### INTRODUCTION

Universities routinely carry out research, and through staff and graduate student ‘outputs’, produce knowledge. In recent times, however, demand for an increasingly mercantile feasibility of knowledge among academic knowledge producers has become significant. Economists consider higher education to provide both private and public benefits (Marginson, 2007; McMahon, 2009) and one of the central concerns of contemporary higher education policy debates is the extent to which higher education contributes to the ‘public good’. The definition of public good in relation to education nevertheless shifts from time to time and place to place (Williams, 2014). In policy formulation in a variety of national, regional and international settings, the expression of a commitment by higher education to the public good has gained currency (see Delanty, 2001, p. 98). In terms of private benefits, students, as consumers of higher education, receive significant post-graduate employment opportunities, higher salaries, and increased income over a lifetime, making having attended university financially beneficial (Dill, 2011). From an educationist viewpoint, some scholars (see Arendt, 1954; Brown, 2010; Calhoun, 2006; Rhoten & Calhoun, 2011; Singh, 2014) have criticised the economist perspective and argue that the introduction of privatisation and market competition into higher education systems in the name of neoliberalism has diminished the contributions to the public good that institutions of higher education are making, and is also compromising academic activity within universities.

In the academic terrain of the twenty-first century, anxieties have emerged about what the core functions of universities should be and how contemporary influences have changed universities’ academic missions, especially in the domain of knowledge production. African universities, in particular, face overwhelming challenges as agents of direct change and forces for social integration. The question of whether higher education *is* a public good or is *for* the public good is subordinate to the overarching perspective that views university education as the epicentre for addressing complex social challenges (see Chambers, 2005; Duderstadt & Womack, 2003).

We pose the questions: Is university education a public good or a tradable commodity? What is a university’s relationship with, and responsibility towards,

society and the public sphere? What *could*, and *should*, be ‘public’ about it? If universities were to close what ‘greater good’ would individuals and society lose? The traditional functions of a university and the social benefits it produces are well understood and are considered to constitute public goods in themselves (Tilak, 2008a). In this chapter we discuss the two opposing discourses on the purposes and value(s) of contemporary universities, that is, the neo-liberal and the public good paradigms (Singh, 2014). This is done by critiquing the nature of the structures and modes of production of knowledge under the dominant neo-liberal dispensation in the context of the African university. We argue that many of the problems at knowledge production and distribution levels stem from “a shift from a public good knowledge/learning regime to an academic neo-liberal knowledge/learning regime” (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, p. 8) and from a consequent failure to recognise the encroachment of the profit motive into the academy (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997, p. 210).

In order to understand and attempt to answer the philosophical questions posed above, we will examine the traditional functions of the university and then discuss the notions of public good as opposed to private good, as a means of critiquing the role of the university in society. The argument culminates in a contextualised debate over the case of African universities in which a critical gaze is cast over the ‘publicness’ of these institutions. The connection between knowledge production and change in the African university, and the impact this relationship has on the development of societal priorities and the amelioration of the so-called ‘African crises’, circumscribe the chapter.

#### FUNCTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY

Universities are “nurseries of ideas, innovations and development and gradually they become reservoirs of knowledge” (Tilak, 2008a, p. 453). They facilitate the creation, advancement, absorption and dissemination of knowledge through research and teaching. They play a critical role in “the production of highly skilled labour and research output to meet perceived economic needs” (Brennan, King, & Lebeau, 2004, p. 16) and contribute to industrialisation of economies through the provision of manpower with professional, technical and managerial skills. Universities can also be considered as “key institutions in processes of social change and development” (Brennan, King, & Lebeau, 2004, p. 16) since higher education serves to unlock human potential at all levels of society by enabling talented people to obtain advanced training whatever their background. This creates a pool of highly-trained individuals which forms a critical and key national resource. Highly regarded universities are magnets that attract educated researchers and talented students, and may even encourage business people and companies to locate themselves close by in order to tap into the various resources offered by the university.

Universities can assist individuals in building character and establishing moral values; they inculcate ethics, standards, and orderly habits. By providing a space

for the free and open discussion of ideas and values, they make attitudinal changes possible, and assist in socialisation of individuals. They protect and enhance societal values (Tilak, 2008a; Tilak, 2008b) and contribute to the transformation and modernisation of societies.

Universities also have a nation-building function, deepening democracy by producing a citizenry which is more likely to participate actively in the civil, political, social, cultural and economic activities of the society. The university has a vested potential to produce social and political leaders of high calibre and broad vision (see Tilak, 2008a) by producing members of society who understand, interpret, preserve, enhance and promote national, regional, international and historical cultures in a context of cultural pluralism and diversity.

#### THE NOTION OF PUBLIC GOOD

The discourse on the concept of public good in relation to higher education has a long history, dating back to Immanuel Kant (see Williams, 2014). We subscribe to the view that “there is no single or fixed formula for stipulating the content of the public good, especially in abstraction from specific socio-political struggles (Singh, 2014, p. 103). In his book *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant describes the nature of university–society relations and describes university faculties as acting as “smaller societies, each comprising the university specialists in one main branch of learning” (Kant, [1798] 1979, p. 23). With the passage of time, the understanding has moved away from “knowledge as a public good in and of itself” to “objective knowledge outcomes which can be used to reap a national economic return”, and further, to “a focus upon social inclusion and social mobility in the form of individual employability, increased earnings and job security” (Williams, 2014, p. 2). Consequently, the social contract between universities and the state has also altered, shifting the longstanding relationship where, in return for autonomy, universities furnish the state with its cognitive requirements (Delanty, 2001, p. 2). Political theorist Hannah Arendt’s position is that educators have a moral and social obligation to initiate new generations into the pre-existing knowledge of society as well as to pursue individualised outcomes (Arendt, 1954).

The public good is composed of a large quantum of externalities known as social or public benefits. From an economist’s perspective (for example, Samuelson, 1954; Musgrave, 1959) the public good is non-excludable, that is, the benefits that accrue cannot be provided exclusively to some individuals with others being prevented from benefitting. They are also non-rivalrous, that is, their reception by some should not adversely affect the situation of others (Tilak, 2008). The consumption of public good benefits is generally accessible to all and they are not subject to competition. An important aspect of the public good is that it is financed by the state from general revenues, without necessarily being determined by reigning prices or charges such as student fees and market levels (Tilak, 2008a; 2008b). However, while we acknowledge that the distinction between public and private good tends to assume



a technical or an ideological orientation, the classification of public good is not an absolute one and we maintain that stakeholder interests, government policies, market conditions, level of development and political realities are all central in decisions made concerning the public good. After all, the public good has been a consideration since the Middle Ages, at least, and hence it needs to be redefined time and again to take into consideration the changing political realities (Desai, 2003).

The various conceptions of a public good can be better understood in the context of what is public about a university. In Mbembe's view, what is public is what pertains to the realm of *the common*, that is, what does not belong to anyone in particular because it is shared equally among equals who occupy a particular space. It has to do with ownership of a space that is a public, common good. But something cannot be said to be a public if:

every human being becomes a market actor; every field of activity is seen as a market; every entity (whether public or private, whether person, business, state or corporation) is governed as a firm; people themselves are cast as human capital and are subjected to market metrics (ratings, rankings) and their value is determined speculatively in a futures market. (Mbembe, 2015, n. p.)

Given this conception of a public good, is it defensible then to regard university education and its role in knowledge production as a public good? While it is true that entry into educational institutions is available and given to some, whereas others are excluded, and so consumption by some necessarily means a reduction in the possible consumption of others, is this a very shallow interpretation of the technical attributes of the public good and the consumption of education? Stiglitz (1999) argues that knowledge, specifically the fields of higher education and research, does satisfy this condition. Few deny the existence of externalities in the case of higher education. If consumption is interpreted as consumption of benefits from education (not consumption of a good per se) (Tilak, 2008), then university education, whose core concern is knowledge, and knowledge production and dissemination, satisfies the required features. It is not feasible to ration the public good, nor is it desirable to do so. While we accede that it may be practicable to limit admission to university education, we consider it undesirable to ration admission to higher education (Weisbrod, 1988) and the distribution of benefits that flow from it. University education is also an 'experience good' (McPherson & Winston 1993), whose end-product value, in terms of quality and price as well as profit, is difficult to quantify in advance. It can only be determined upon use. But can we distinguish the economic from the social benefits of university knowledge production, research and service?

#### THE UNIVERSITY IN SOCIETY

Mbembe asks, "[i]s today's university the same as yesterday's or are we confronting an entirely different *apparatus*, an entirely different rationality—both of which require us to produce radically new concepts?" (Mbembe, 2015, n. p.). The question

of knowledge and the university—society relationship needs contextualisation. While globalisation and concerns about economic competitiveness have impacted higher education strongly, they are inadequate in explaining the range of current pressures centred on forms of institutional responsiveness, including equity, nation building and human rights. We submit that the core functions of the university that are relevant to society have been emasculated. The structures of knowledge within and across the disciplines in universities have shifted from Mode 1 to Mode 2 knowledge approaches (Gibbons et al., 1994) and are driven by academic/theoretical and professional programmes that prioritise skills, application and problem solving, with profound implications for research, teaching and learning in the university. This has paved the way for ‘an ethic of productivity’ and efficiency that Donoghue (2008) regards as an ultimate expression of utilitarianism. According to Slaughter and Rhoades (2004, p. 1), the theory of academic capitalism explains the integration of the university into the new (global) economy, and, more specifically, how faculty, students, administrators and academic professionals use “a variety of state resources to create new circuits of knowledge that link higher education institutions to the new economy”. This reflects the encroachment of the profit motive into the academy (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997, p. 210).

This position can be further explicated in the context of narrow utilitarianism centred on economic benefits and narrow conceptions of knowledge driven by workplace demands. Universities have experienced the entrenchment of narrow instrumentalism, with its accompanying emphasis on the economic (most often in terms of profiteering and meeting the demands of the markets) rather than social function. Utilitarianism vacillates between a narrow emphasis on economic benefits—through utility-based knowledge related to the world of work and pragmatic skills-based approaches (Kraak, 2000)—and an emphasis on wider societal benefits in terms of inculcation and promotion of social values such as human rights, social justice, equality and equity. Universities once focused on discipline-based knowledge, underpinned by an emphasis on academic, theoretical and conceptual enculturation, and they privileged particular modes of analysis and modes of argumentation, based on a mastery of discipline-rooted concepts. Instead, they are now turning to skills development and professionalisation of curricula for workplace readiness, at the expense of knowledge perceived as theoretical or academic (Gibbons et al., 1994). We contend that institutional managers are overseeing the subtle replacement of the idea of knowledge as a public good, with that of profit. Universities are affected by trends in the global economy, while the state is becoming increasingly unresponsive to local needs and powerless to meet the increasing (funding) demands of higher education.

#### THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY IN CONTEXT

How much university knowledge rearrangement is necessary for initiating economic and social change in communities in Africa, in particular, is subject to debate. In

this section we discuss whether an African university, for public good, is a socially-engaged or socially-embedded university. Besides the response to the demand for higher education in context, social embodiment commits institutions to striving to equip their graduates with the appropriate mental attitudes and pre-dispositions to operate on a complex continent that is riddled with poverty, social injustice, conflict, bad government, civil war, economic collapse, catastrophic epidemics like HIV/AIDS and Ebola, and the exodus of skilled and talented individuals (Wilson-Tagoe 2007, p. 238). Hence, it should equip them with a strong moral responsibility. Metaphorically, one could refer to social embodiment as *habitus in habitat*, or institutional habituation, in that institutions are open to both the opportunities and challenges offered by the socio-cultural environment in which they operate (*habitus*) (Fourcade, 2010). This means that institutions can be more or less *context-bound* or *context-independent* (disembodied) in their discourses, policies and academic practices, since the people and institutions surrounding them mediate what universities do. This, in our view, makes an African university, and the knowledge it produces, a public good.

Our point of departure is that, in the context of African universities, neo-liberalism, which emphasises the *economic* and market function of the university rather than its *social* function, has destabilised the articulation between higher education and society, particularly in the domain of knowledge. Today, academic work and institutional output are driven by global markets and narrow economic concerns (Kant, [1798] 1979; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997), making them increasingly unresponsive to local social and cultural needs such as social cohesion. Commodification and commercialisation of knowledge, and the consequent changing professional values, norms, and beliefs dictated by market ethics, dominate university practices. Under such circumstances, progressive virtues (self-development, positive human relations and informed citizenship), democratic principles (equity and social justice), and a commitment to social transformation guided by altruism and the common good encapsulated in an African higher education vision, are fast disappearing.

If a university is to be *socially embedded*, its programmes, interventions and strategies require an appreciation of institutional and social diversity, and a deep understanding of national historical roots as well as the world context at large. It is worth mentioning here the widening *social responsibility* demanded by the complex and constantly changing national and global environments. Redefined and institutionalised within the European Union by the Bologna Declaration (1999), a socially embedded university is “broadly accessible”, “socially useful” and “organisationally flexible”. For Williams (1997, p. 103), accessibility encompasses such topics as access (to information), guidance, funding and financial support, admission procedures, credit for existing skills and knowledge, knowledge and curricula that are relevant, facilities, the variety of courses and modes of study, differing learning processes, a supportive environment, a variety of certification and accreditation mechanisms, and a range of vocational and occupational outcomes. Social usefulness ties the university to social progress, that is, universities should

function as drivers of progress in a globally competitive environment. A good system is highly diversified, inclusive, relevant, and working for all. In the context of the then newly independent African countries, the 1972 Association of African Universities Workshop in Accra endorsed the importance of universities in Africa as *development* universities (Yesufu, 1973). In Sawyerr's view, a development university is "a new institution [that can] help African nations build up their capacity to develop and manage their resources, alleviate poverty of the majority of their people, and close the gap between them and the developed world" (Sawyerr, 2005, p. 2). The question is, to what extent are such institutions strategically poised to represent and produce knowledge as a public good?

While the idea of a development university is the ideal, neoliberalism is the major philosophy propelling African universities and the knowledges that they produce and disseminate. This position views the individual as pursuing his or her own interests in the market place, as an autonomous entrepreneur responsible for his or her own progress, position and success or failure (Hursh & Wall, 2008). The African university, while preaching rhetorically about its inclination towards serving the interests and putting the social good of the local and the African first is, in practice, operating according to the ideology and adopting the fundamentals of the neoliberal project, under the ambit of globalisation. In this system:

[e]very social transaction is conceptualized as entrepreneurial, to be carried out purely for personal gain. The market introduces competition as the structuring mechanism through which resources and status are allocated efficiently and fairly. The 'invisible hand' of the market is thought to be the most efficient way of sorting out which competing individuals get what. (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004, pp. 137–138)

The role and function of the African university as an independent institution is progressively jeopardised by the interests of a corporation in both elusive and palpable ways. Knowledge research, expertise, and instructional faculty are all merchandises to be operationalised in engendering revenue and institutional profit. In the view of Slaughter and Rhoades (2005), such a situation can best be described as "an academic capitalist knowledge and learning regime" which, in its emergence, has substituted the "public good knowledge and learning regime".

Limited national budget allocations to universities are forcing African researchers to look for foreign financial support, and faculty members in the new capitalist academic setting are compelled to develop research that attracts funding, increasingly in the form of sponsorship from international corporations or funding institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Union, for example. African researchers are paid, fairly well, to produce new knowledge that will, in some cases, be sold under the patent of the sponsoring agency and exported back to Africa at exorbitant prices. As the trend towards greater entrepreneurialism in research gains momentum, the risk of narrower academic freedom emerges, as researchers are more likely to advance research that is fundable, and publish what is

permissible under funding agreements (see Mendoza, 2007). This example supports Sandel's (2012, p. 7) assertion that "[t]he reach of markets, and market-oriented thinking, into aspects of life traditionally governed by nonmarket norms is one of the most significant developments of our time".

The mechanisms of hegemonic Western forms of knowledge and the manner in which they are expressed have succeeded in "universalising Western particularism through [an] epistemological colonisation that decentred pre-existing African knowledge systems" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 38) and drove African forms of knowledge to the 'savage' fringes. The adoption of an attitude of "epistemological mimicry and intellectual dependence" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 38) by African universities, that characterises what is taught and how it is taught, can be blamed on this colonisation. We observe how, in Africa, universities that claim to be ethno-provincial institutions attempt, in practice, to replicate the knowledge research and dissemination processes of Harvard, London or Cambridge. As Mbembe states:

[they are] "Westernized" if all that they aspire to is to become local instantiations of a dominant academic model based on a Eurocentric epistemic canon. (Mbembe, 2015, n. p.)

In the attempt to equal the productivity of those international institutions by imitating them, African universities lose their 'publicness'. Being Westernised, they are not public African universities, hence they do not advance knowledge as a public good in Africa. Even fifty years after political independence, the knowledge systems furthered by universities in Africa continue to perpetuate the separation of the 'knower' from the 'world to be known'. In this system, if the knower generates knowledge, it has to be in the universal form, removed from an African context. We therefore posit that to recognise knowledge as 'true' merely because of its Western scientific constructions is tantamount to furthering the hegemonic notion of Africa as no more than an annex of the West. In our view, such knowledge is not knowledge as a public good, and for the public good, since the publicness is located outside the context of Africa.

The introduction of the language and management approach of private capital into public services such as education has eroded the ethics, language and style of public service and duty. While traditionally, the involvement of non-governmental organisations in education, most often religious organisations, was on a non-profit basis, in recent times there has been an upsurge in for-profit activities. University education is no longer the social institution it once was, and the knowledge produced therein has been subordinated to international market goals, as has the language and self-conceptualisation of educators themselves. Hill and Kumar (2009, p. 21) consider that:

the language of education has been very widely replaced by the language of the market, where lecturers "deliver the product," "operationalize delivery," and "facilitate clients' learning," within a regime of "quality management and

enhancement,” where students have become “customers” selecting “modules” on a pick ‘n mix basis, where “skill development” at universities has surged in importance to the derogation of the development of critical thought.

With specific reference to knowledge research in the African university, Mohamedbhai (2011) is of the opinion that the inevitable result is that:

[t]he relevance of the research carried out is ... questionable. Most faculty undertake research for personal gain, with the aim of publishing in internationally refereed journals for promotion purposes. The chosen topic is often not appropriate to national development. Most faculty do their research as individuals; there is insufficient multidisciplinary research, essential for solving development problems. Much of the research is externally funded, and being determined by the funders, the topics may not be of direct relevance to national development. Research publication comprises another challenge. (p. 21)

The woeful state of knowledge production by African scholars is compounded by the lack of funding. It is estimated that Africa spends less than 0.5% of Gross Domestic Product on research (Mouton, Gaillard, & van Lill, 2015), a level of funding that compromises the continent’s development and poses a major challenge for the future. The absence of capacity with regards to research and knowledge production further marginalises the African university, and pushes knowledge research to the periphery instead of benefitting Africans directly. This renders knowledges and their processes of production private commodities, subject to manipulation by those who wield the financial power.

Given the unprecedented social and economic upheavals that have taken place in Africa, what options are there for African universities to re-invent themselves so that they act in response to particular local and global circumstances? In the following section we propose a paradigm shift that emphasises epistemological, ethical and political responsibility in research-based knowledge production and utilisation according to which an African university might fulfil its mission as a public good.

#### REPOSITIONING THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

We argue that the nature of the knowledge contribution a university makes to society is at the core of effective university – society relations. A university in Africa should engage with and reflect the identity of the society it is supposed to serve, and the knowledge it generates should be relevant and responsive to the needs of the people. It should primarily be a site for the production and distribution of new knowledge in the context of the African experience, alongside the global experience. The production of such knowledge necessitates a great deal of epistemological, ethical and political responsibility. Our argument is built on three important premises namely responsibility, embeddedness and world-classness. First, we suggest that the



*responsibility* associated with being an African university demands that knowledge production be rooted in the university's historico-cultural milieu (its comparative advantage), and grounded in African experience (its epistemological basis) without being insular or parochial (ghettoised from the global world). This reflects the standpoint of one of Africa's greatest leaders, Kwame Nkrumah (1956), who stated "[w]e must in the development of our universities bear in mind that once it has been planted in the African soil it must take root amidst African traditions and cultures". The African experience is not only the 'foundation' of all forms of knowledge, but also the 'source' for the construction of that knowledge (Ramose, 1988). It draws its inspiration from its environment, as an indigenous tree growing from a seed that is planted and nurtured in African soil (Magkoba, 2005). It is from its *embeddedness* in its context, and its translation of the experience of that context into locally and globally relevant knowledge – its embodiment and engagement – that the strength of its own competitive advantage on the international stage is derived. This is the route along which much-desired international reputation and recognition can be pursued, that is, global recognition through local excellence. Ngugi wa Thiongo writes about his conception of Africa as the personal centre of education and knowing:

Education is a means of knowledge about ourselves ... After we have examined ourselves, we radiate outwards and discover peoples and worlds around us. With Africa at the centre of things, not existing as an appendix or a satellite of other countries and literatures, things must be seen from the African perspective. (Ngugi, 1986)

This resonates with Molefi Asante's call for Africans to stand by "the belief in the centrality of Africans in post-modern history ... placing African ideals at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture or behaviour" (Asante, 1987, p. 6). It follows, from the above statements, that if African universities are to offer knowledge as a public good, then knowledge research and production should start within the continent, embedded in the African milieu, before gazing outwards to the global. African universities can only play a strong and sustainable role on the global stage if their international reputation derives from local excellence, such that their *world-classness* becomes an expression of their *Africanness*. University knowledge processes that are genuinely world class should have a strong sense of self, and should play a transformational role in the development of the society in which they are located. A university should operate in ways that stretch local knowledge horizons into the global arena 'without losing its soul' (Downing, 2003). This will ensure its contribution to global knowledge is meaningful. As Makgoba (2005) states:

... our universities should be unmistakably African, in the same sense that Harvard, Yale and Stanford are unmistakably American; and in the same way that Oxford, Manchester and London are English; and in the same way that Edinburgh, St Andrews and Dundee are Scottish. (p. 24)



A professor at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) recently elaborated on the sort of transformation that is required with reference to his home institution which, historically, was for white students only:

The university as it is thought of is an African university cut off historically from the continent. If it is a national institution, it's going to respond to what the priorities of the government and the nation are ... it must engage with the rest of Africa. If it is going to have the pretension ... that it is a world-class university, it is not going to be a world-class university by trying to replicate ... Harvard or Oxford or the orientation northward ... The way this University will be a world-class university is if it's perceived by the rest of the world as the place to go to for expertise. On what? 'Africa' (quoted in Cross, 1992, p. 86).

The traditional role of African universities, and universities around the globe, is the fulfilment of their "obligation to their social milieu for the preservation, the imparting and the generation of knowledge" (Makgoba 1997, p. 179). He warns, however, that "it is important to recognise ... that the imparting of inappropriate or irrelevant education, even of the highest calibre, would ... lead to a poor and ineffective product" (1997, p. 179). Thus university education should be relevant, not only to the people receiving it, but also to the cultures and the environment in which it is being imparted. We support the view that the quest for public good possibilities in higher education should encompass not only community engagement, but should also be viewed as an essential part of the teaching and research functions of higher education (see Chambers & Gopaul, 2008, pp. 78–82). Ali Mazrui (2003) is of the opinion that:

African university systems have grown up with structural or other links with metropolitan universities in Europe and North America, [and] the African university has continued to be heavily unicultural: it has been more a manifestation of Western culture in an African situation than an outgrowth of African culture itself. (p. 153)

According to Mazrui, a university that considers itself African should be in the process of repositioning itself by moving "from being a multinational corporation to a multicultural corporation" (Mazrui, 2003, p. 153).

The fact that university managers and leaders in Africa are themselves responding to the Western scientific orientation that nurtured them, makes it very difficult for them to escape gazing towards and mimicking Western scholarship in the institutions they lead. They are only paying back in so far as they are serving the good of the present research and knowledge production of the institution in their hands, as well as those who funded their education. We argue that this has done much to imperil the public good aspect of knowledge in the university. However, we are sympathetic to their position since "mental colonisation is the hardest part to decolonise and the worst form of colonialism" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 50).

In repositioning the knowledge of an African university as a public good, we are in agreement with the *Campaign for the Future of Higher Education*, which took a strong stand against the commodification of university education and argued that:

... students are neither customers nor clients; academics neither facilitators nor a pizza delivery service. Universities are not businesses; producing consumer goods. Knowledge and thought are not commodities, to be purchased as items of consumption, whether conspicuous or not, or consumed and therefore finished with, whether on the hoof as take-away snacks or in more leisurely fashion. Education is not something which can be “delivered,” consumed and crossed off the list. Rather, it is a continuing and reflective process, an essential component of any worthwhile life—the very antithesis of a commodity. (Campaign for the Future of Higher Education, 2003, n. p.)

Since universities on the African continent have not been spared the baggage of irrelevance bequeathed by colonialism and apartheid, we regard *epistemological emancipation of university education* from the hegemony of Western-imposed knowledge systems as a pre-requisite for authentic knowledge production relevant to Africa. Universities in Africa have been criticised for being mirror images of Western epistemology and for operating in rather imitative and replicative fashion (Makgoba, 1997, p. 174). Contemporary epistemologies in African universities suffer from Euro-centrism characterised by a biased and skewed mainstream scholarship rooted in Western scientism that coerces faculty and students into adhering to “paradigms that do not reflect their knowledge or experience of the world” (Lowy, 1995, p. 728). Recent literature is flooded with an abundance of epithets and descriptors of this problem: “epistemological imperialism” (Osha 2011, p. 152), ‘epistemicide’ (Ramose, 2003), ‘epistemological authoritarianism’ (Kaphagawani, 1998), ‘epistemic injustice’ (Fricker, 2003, 2009) and ‘paradigmatic tyranny’ (Rahnema, 2001).

Against this background, universities in Africa must act to *change themselves* both in changing borrowed or imposed epistemologies, and changing their priorities in response to the social imperatives that press upon them. This involves catering for the complex challenges posed by life on this continent. Decolonising the university by reordering spatial relations is necessary, that is, by de-privatising and rehabilitating public space through the creation of a new set of mental dispositions (see Mbembe, 2015). In plotting the way forward for knowledge processes in the twenty-first century, Mbembe (2015) concludes that:

[w]e need to reconcile *a logic of indictment* and *a logic of self-affirmation, interruption and occupation*. This requires the conscious constitution of a substantial amount of mental capital and the development of a set of pedagogies we should call *pedagogies of presence*. (n.p.)

We argue that different foundations exist for the construction of pyramids of knowledge depending on the social, economic, political and historical conditions

of the people they serve and the environment in which they operate. Each pyramid is unique by its very nature and should enter into genuine and *critical dialogical encounters with other pyramids of knowledge* as an equal partner. Each pyramid should facilitate a critical emancipatory approach to solving the problems of its people and should produce the material and capacities for Africans to determine their own future(s). This requires the production of knowledge that is relevant, effective and empowering (Letsekha, 2013). Worth mentioning here is the promise made by post-modernist discourse in the late 1980s, which dealt with the recognition and legitimisation of subjugated knowledges or silenced voices. The post-structuralist understanding was that “all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and to have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate” (Harvey, 1989, p. 48). This discourse created spaces for marginalised voices to speak their own knowledges, and drew attention to “other worlds” and “other voices” that had for too long been silenced (Harvey, 1989, p. 48). This was a novel idea at the time and we seem to have forgotten it in contemporary higher education. We argue that it is time to place the concern for teaching, research and community engagement that foregrounds African self-knowing, self-understanding, self-regeneration, self-definition and self-rule in African affairs, at the centre of the African university as the purveyor of knowledge for the public good,

#### CONCLUSION

The idea of the public good as a key factor underlying university education relates directly to the roles that academic institutions ought to play in society. We noted how previous debates about university education and the knowledge-bases therein related to whether it are a public good—increasing value to society by educating its people, who in turn become productive citizens—or they are a private good, essentially advancing personal profit such as earning more money, and allowing an individual to enjoy other returns from education. The gist of the argument is that in the sense of the private good, beneficiaries of education should pay for the process of acquiring knowledge, while in the domain of the public good, society should bear responsibility by providing support.

University education budgets in many countries have declined or been cut significantly. The neoliberal spirit has invaded public academic institutions which, requiring to fund an increasing portion of their costs themselves, have raised tuition fees and are converting themselves into commercialised entities that market a product. The limitation of resources has put immense pressure on African universities to follow the neo-liberal paradigm that foregrounds knowledge for profit and economic competitiveness under the sponsorship of external determinants and stakeholders.

We challenged the narrow utilitarianism that has framed university knowledge according to constricted economic goals and private interests. We found the publicness of university knowledge systems to be weakened by the struggle

to be entrepreneurial and market-relevant. We argued the need for a reorganised and reconstituted space, where epistemologies acknowledge the diversity of both local and external human ideas and knowledge and thus become tools with which individuals negotiate the complexities of everyday life. We argued that teaching and research in the African university should provide social and economic benefits to the environments in which they are located by speaking to the necessities of their social context. We accede that both the neo-liberal discourse and the public good view of university knowledge in Africa emphasise obligations to society, but argued that, as institutions of higher education, universities in Africa should take the lead as socially accountable institutions and should dispense social benefit through their core functions. The need for African universities and African scholars to transcend dependence on Western models cannot be overemphasised. Universities in Africa have a vital role to play in safeguarding and advancing the national interest on all economic, social, cultural, and political fronts, through the generation, synthesis, adaptation and application of relevant and responsive knowledge. We appreciate that there is a need to raise African scholarship to the global standard while at the same time making African scholarship global by producing knowledge that speaks to and illuminates the challenges and opportunities of the peoples, economies, societies and cultures of Africa. We therefore issue a clarion call for African universities to foreground knowledge production and dissemination through research and teaching and learning activities that have local relevance, in order to enhance the social and economic worth of knowledge as a public good. We argued that if knowledge processes in African universities are to be genuinely effective, they should foreground the public good paradigm for social advancement of African priorities and challenges instead of the private good approach that is embedded in neoliberal ideology.

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## 5. THE CONDITIONS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### *Decolonial Historical Realism and the Decolonisation of Knowledge and Education*

#### INTRODUCTION

This essay presents decolonial historical realism as an important move towards the decolonisation of knowledge and education. Inspired by Africana philosopher Lewis Gordon, decolonial historical realism can be broadly defined as a way of taking responsibility for thought and ideas, and articulating the conditions that make us who and what we are.<sup>1</sup> The essay makes an initial attempt to discuss the various implications of decolonial historical realism, taking into account the intellectual contributions and critical thinking emerging from scholars concerned with decolonisation in Africa, Latin America, and Europe. To the extent possible within the space limitation of this chapter, this implies respecting the socio-historical differences as well as the colonial and anti-colonial interconnections that have been part of these experiences. One of the consequences of the decolonial historical realist approach, among others, is that discussions pertaining to the decolonisation of knowledge and education around the globe will have similar—yet different—concerns. For example, discussions on the Africanisation of higher education in Africa are different, and have parallel but different concerns and effects from equally relevant, albeit still absent, discussions of the Africanisation of higher education in Europe or in Latin America. Yet, these differences also entail interconnections, starting from the most obvious, namely that neither Africa nor Latin America would be what they are today without the European colonial endeavour and the continued interventionist politics carried out by contemporary imperial powers. These differences and interconnections all pertain to questions of taking responsibility for thought and ideas, and articulating the conditions that make us who we are as a plurality of realities that, however diverse, continue being framed by coloniality.

Coloniality refers to the system of domination that emerged with the European expansion initiated by the Castilian colonial endeavour in the Iberian Peninsula—more specifically the conquest of Al-Andalus and the persecution of the Roma people, the subsequent conquest of the Americas, the witch hunts in Europe and the Americas, and the establishment of the transatlantic slave trade (Fernández et al., 2015; Suárez-Krabbe, 2015). Coloniality emerged as a local (European) colonial

project that spread globally in several interconnected ways. First, it spread through territorial, economic, political and social occupation, theft and control. Second, by the spread and mutual influence of the colonising powers in terms of practices of domination, including their institutionalisation. Third, the global range of coloniality increased by means of racialisation, gender categorisation, sexual domination and labour exploitation and, finally, through cultural, spiritual and epistemic domination. These practices of domination generated a specific articulation between racism, capitalism and patriarchy which is still in play today.

The articulation between racism, capitalism and patriarchy that is characteristic of coloniality, involves modes of production, political organisation, spatial organisation, relationships to other people and living beings, ways of thinking, modes of acting, practices of production and reproduction of life and death, sexuality, aesthetics, spiritualities, knowledge construction, among other aspects. (Quijano, 2000). As a globalised system of oppression, coloniality does not manifest itself in local contexts in the same ways. One of its crucial strengths is its capacity to adapt to and assimilate local social, political, cultural, and spiritual configurations. Because coloniality is a shared system of oppression that, among other things, classifies groups of people hierarchically, it must be taken into account when thinking through the meaning of ‘difference’: What does it mean to take responsibility for thought and ideas? How do we articulate the conditions that make us who and what we are in a world where epistemicide and imposition have been intrinsic to the colonial endeavour, and where the frameworks of understanding that legitimated that colonial endeavour are still presented as true, scientific, universal, and objective? And how are we to understand difference among us, including colonial hierarchical difference, in ways that work against coloniality in knowledge and education? Thinking through difference from the viewpoint of decolonial historical realism is a necessary step towards pluriversalisation. Developed by Arturo Escobar (2008) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014), among others, pluriversalisation is broadly understood according to the Zapatistas’ call for “a world where many worlds are possible”. Creating a pluriverse implies breaking with ideas about the uni-versal, which might involve the coexistence of diverse life projects, but subsumes and hierarchises these, obeying the mono-logic tenet that they all revolve around one historical, cultural, political and economic organisational axis—coloniality. My understanding of pluriverse includes the above points, but draws decisively from Audre Lorde’s ideas concerning difference, power and social change. As such, in my understanding, pluriverse relates to difference not as something to be “merely tolerated”; rather, difference is “a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic” (Lorde, 1984, p. 110). Furthermore,

Within the interdependence of mutual (nondominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. Difference is that raw and

powerful connection from which our personal [and collective] power is forged.  
(Lorde, 1984, p. 111)

Decolonial historical realism is a necessary tool of work towards the understanding of these differences, their interdependence and connected strengths. This understanding is necessary in our search for a world where many worlds are possible, but equal in power.

The chapter is organised as follows. In the following section I present the basic outlines of decolonial historical realism. I then move on to apply this method of inquiry, firstly by de-centering Europe's own colonial frameworks of understanding and instead, in the spirit of Aimé Césaire (2000), investigating how colonialism shaped Europe. Subsequently, I discuss the case of Latin America centering specifically on insights from the decolonial perspective,<sup>2</sup> and highlighting how many *Mestizos* heralding this perspective tend to reproduce important aspects of coloniality in their endeavours to decolonise knowledge and power. Drawing parallels to and insights from the former sections I then move on to engage theoretically in some salient aspects in the discussions on Africanisation among scholars involved in thinking decolonisation and change in Africa.<sup>3</sup> I close the chapter by discussing some of the consequences of decolonial historical realism for the decolonisation of higher education. In this context, I highlight the material dimension as being crucial, to both decolonisation and pluriversalisation, at least on two levels: the economic-political level illustrated through the issue of reparations; and the epistemic level exemplified through current efforts worldwide to decolonise the curriculum. In overall terms, the chapter simply underlines the importance of engaging in South-South discussions and activities, whereby we can continue opening paths towards pluriversality.

#### DECOLONIAL HISTORICAL REALISM

Taking responsibility for thought and ideas, and articulating the conditions that make us who and what we are, includes scrutinising various socio-historical and economic-political experiences shaped by coloniality, and considering the intellectual contributions that have emerged from African, Latin American, and European struggles for decolonisation. Coloniality does not operate only on one or the other continent, and it does not operate in the same way everywhere. We can, however, conceptualise it as a system of oppression operating on a global scale, due to the historical and systemic commonalities shared by each of its specific localised forms. As we will see in the following sections, these commonalities include the entanglement of local histories through which the global system of oppression emerged and continues being to be reproduced. Consequently, Europe also needs to be understood as a continent deeply shaped by colonialism—both the colonialism carried to the outside world, as well as within the continent.

Decolonial historical realism involves the epistemic and historical decentralisation of Europe: an endeavour that studies how the different continents

emerged historically, considering the fact that the dominant Eurocentric colonial version of history was shaped by the interests of colonial domination which continue to be reproduced. Decolonial historical realism also rejects the relativism embedded in the idea that history will always be partial as it is always told by the winner. While history does entail interpretation and can be used to legitimate power or resist it, there are also historical facts of such crucial importance that we, as scholars struggling for decolonisation, must insist are not trivialised through discussions of various interpretations. The transatlantic slave trade is one of these realities, but I refer also to coloniality. Although increasingly accepted in some activist and academic circles worldwide, coloniality continues to be trivialised and negated in dominant knowledge construction and education—not to speak of media representations of, for example, western military interventions in the global South, drowning people in the Mediterranean, or transnational extractivist practices backed up by (trans) national political elites in the world. A decolonial realist approach defends the position that one cannot deal with these problems without taking into account the historically constituted system within which they continue being produced (see also Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, especially Chapter 4).

Decolonial historical realism starts off by recognising the importance of coloniality, and how that, which is believed to be true of the world is at this point in history part of the over-determination and over-representation of ‘whiteness’; thus the need to decolonise truth, so to speak. As will be evident in the section concerned with Latin America, decolonial historical realism literally requires continuous dialogue with our ancestors, not only so that we can learn from the conditions that made them who and what they are, but also learn from their struggles, their violence, their mistakes, and their achievements. On a different but interrelated level, a necessary step in understanding what Africa, Latin America and Europe are, is to take into account how coloniality shaped them in different but relational ways. Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2013) brief account of what we learn from Mudimbe’s (1988) *The Invention of Africa* proves useful to illustrate this point:

The making of Africa and its people involved the work of explorers, cartographers, missionaries, travellers, colonial anthropologists, colonialists, African kings and chiefs, ordinary Africans as makers of history, historians, imperialists, pan-Africanists and African nationalists, and others too numerous to mention. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, p. 100)

Indeed, the making of Latin America similarly involved the work of explorers, cartographers, missionaries, travellers, colonial anthropologists, slave masters, enslaved Africans, conquerors, indigenous leaders, historians, imperialists, communists, socialists, Catholics, etc. And the making of Europe correspondingly involved the work of actors overlapping with those mentioned. Thus, it is important to recognise that a variety of actors shaped today’s Africa, Latin America and Europe, and that some of them had the privilege of engaging in discussions with peers across these continents about their particular projects and concerns (as do we,

today). It is also crucial to acknowledge that these overlapping actors contributed to moulding the continents in different ways: the colonial historians and ethnographers did not participate in the making of Europe in the same way that they participated in the making of Africa, or of Latin America. Additionally, these processes of ‘making’ implied processes of ‘un-making’; they happened at the expense of something and someone else. What is more, taking into account this diversity in the shaping of Africa, Latin America and Europe is important, but not sufficient. It is equally imperative not to lose sight of the fact that, however diverse, all these processes occurred within the framework of coloniality. Coloniality is hence the common factor which connects these histories. Taking coloniality into account does not imply negating plurality; it implies recognising that plurality came to be shaped as part of, in opposition to, in complicity or subversive complicity, assimilation, revolt, rejection, negotiation or welcoming, of the imposition of racism, capitalism and patriarchy, and that this all happened in different ways—the ways in which coloniality was adapted and became localised. The following sections make an initial attempt at grasping and discussing some of these complexities with regard to Europe, Latin America and Africa.

#### EUROPE AND COLONIALITY

Decolonial historical realism requires re-thinking Europe as a colonial place and as a place that contains the possibility of its own pluriversalisation: its ‘other’ populations. The historical and epistemic de-centering of Europe does not mean ignoring pivotal events involving Europe, nor dismissing intra-European events. Rather, it implies approaching Europe as emerging in relation to the positions that it sought to eradicate, subjugate and control, but that have also historically been in opposition to it, both inside and outside the European geographical space (Suárez-Krabbe, 2013, 2014). This includes articulating the conditions that have made Muslims, Jews, Roma, indigenous people, Latinos and Latinas, and people of African descent what and who they are—in Europe and beyond.

Indeed, coloniality took shape through six processes of extermination that involved these populations, and that were historically simultaneous with the rise of Europe as a global imperial power.<sup>4</sup> In a period of ten years around the end of 1400, the following key events took place in Europe: the witch hunts had begun; Al-Andalus, the remaining Muslim society had been conquered; the largest expulsion of Jews from Christian soil had been accomplished; colonisation of the Americas had started; the transatlantic slave trade was established; and legal measures to expel Roma populations had been inaugurated.<sup>5</sup> These six historical moments are pivotal to the configuration of coloniality in two ways: on the one hand, they constituted ‘whiteness’ and its institutions, and by this they also created the realities and loci of enunciation of those they sought to erase. On the other hand, the narratives of homogeneity and belonging that were to territorially dis-place and/or re-place peoples from their lands, from history and from knowledge production, emerged in

the context of these genocides (Suárez-Krabbe, 2015). We now discuss each of the six events in more detail.

First published in 1486, *The Hammer of the Witches*, or *Malleus Maleficarum*, tied women to witchcraft, sorcery and the devil. The basis for later investigations attached to the witch hunts, this document reflects how dualisms such as ‘mind-body’, and ‘human-nature’ were already in operation (Wright, 2001, p. 51). *Malleus Maleficarum* can be seen as a precursor to the logic applied during the conquest of the Americas, which involved racialisation and feminisation of the indigenous populations. Additionally, “the treatise was widely publicised through the new technology of printing and laws prohibiting witchcraft were enacted throughout Europe beginning in France (1490), the Hapsburg Empire, England, Scotland, Russia and Denmark” (Wright, 2001, p. 51). The misogynist process of which the *Malleus Maleficarum* is an expression targeted women who carried and practised alternative knowledges and spiritualities. Together with the legal documents that followed in its wake, *Malleus Maleficarum* indicates that institutionalised misogyny in Europe is central to the configuration of coloniality, and is neither external nor sequential to it (see also Ochoa, 2014, p. 110).

The expulsion of Jews from Christian territories materialised with the *Decreto de Granada*, issued on 31 March 1492. Months earlier, on 2 January 1492, the conquest of Al-Andalus at the hands of the Catholic crown reached its culmination. The idea of purity of blood emerged at this point, in conjunction with a specific way of conceiving spirituality (the idea of the ‘pure’ Christian). Through these ideas, human beings were hierarchised theocentrically (Wynter, 2003), and spiritualities and deities were hierarchised according to Christianity’s own interpretation of the Christian deity. While Al-Andalus had been organised according to a logic that allowed the coexistence of multiple identities and spiritualities within one form of political authority, the expulsion of the Jews and the conquest of Al-Andalus implied the imposition of a correlation between one identity, one political authority, and one religion (González Ferrín, 2006). Considered from within the context of the spread of misogynist practices mentioned earlier, we find here the incipient notion of the racist and patriarchal nation-state, as well as an early articulation of the limited frameworks that continue to hamper any understanding of spirituality in the minds of many secular westernised subjects. Together with the genocidal practices against the Roma people (since 1499) that applied criteria of sedentariness, productivity and servitude (Fernández Garcés et al., 2015), these intra-Iberian processes of extermination influenced other emerging European empires and were further developed and adapted in the domination of other peoples.

With the conquest of the Americas that was initiated by Columbus’ travels in October 1492, the criteria of hierarchisation involving purity of blood, spirituality, sedentariness and servitude were combined with the idea of the human being as the property-owning man who is separate from nature. The theocentric logic that was used to legitimise the genocides against the Semites in the conquest of Al-Andalus was the same one in play when the Spanish elites engaged in philosophical



discussions concerning whether or not the indigenous populations in the Americas were human. As Grosfoguel (2013) states, with the conquest of the Americas, people's humanity was no longer established by looking into what god they prayed to. Now, their humanity as such was considered questionable. The persecution of two categories of people in the Iberian Peninsula, the 'Semites' (Muslims and Jews) and the 'Gypsies' (Roma people), starting from 1499, adds further dimensions to this discussion. In 1499 the Catholic crown signed the first 'anti-Gypsy law', a legal document that required the Roma people to become sedentary and economically productive, predominantly through agriculture (Motos Pérez, 2009). The last royal 'anti-Gypsy law' was issued in 1788. The first legal documents targeting the Roma population were tied to the normativity of the emerging capitalist system. Indeed, the Catholic crown's imposition of a correlation between one identity, one political authority and one religion was concomitant with the imposition of a specific way of life, in harmony with the productivist logic of capitalism.

With the establishment of the transatlantic slave trade, racism became the foundation for the logic of capital and the exploitation of labour. The extermination of the indigenous populations in the Caribbean was almost comprehensive and preceded acknowledgment of their humanity, this last coming at the expense of various populations in Africa who were then brought to the Americas to replace indigenous people as the workforce. The enslavement of Africans proceeded from an imperial certainty about them not being human at all (Wright, 2001, pp. 46–61); and to engage in discussions about their humanity was not even an option. According to colonial logic, the *raison d'être* of the enslaved Africans was for them to be subjected to exploitation and violence. Being enslaved became rationalised as a natural attribute of theirs, more so than an actual condition of oppression (they were considered to be slaves, not enslaved *persons*). This adds yet another dimension to racism: its central articulation with capitalism (Cox, 1959, pp. 321–352; Quijano 2000). This condition remained true even after the formal abolition of slavery in the eighteenth century. Colonialism targeted other knowledges and ways of being in the world that existed among large segments of the populations in Europe, the Americas and Africa, including their relationship to their territories and other spiritual and natural beings.

The new and emerging paths of research, not to mention the political consequences that follow from taking these events seriously, are multiple. As we move on towards Latin America and then Africa, we need to take with us three lessons from this section: firstly, these are significant—but not the only—events shaping the loci of enunciation of people not only in Latin America and Africa, but significantly of those living inside Europe who descend from the populations targeted in the six processes of extermination. Secondly, these events are an initial, yet clear point of inception to help us understand how internal colonialism in Europe goes hand in hand with its colonial endeavours focused on the outside world. Finally, the epistemic and historical de-centralisation of Europe includes acknowledging how the deletion of European imperial histories is at the heart of academic scholarship (Bhambra, 2014),



and how this neglect constitutes current legal frameworks used to define identity and belonging, and to determine citizenship in Europe.

#### LATIN AMERICA AND DECOLONISATION

Considering differences and interconnections without losing sight of coloniality contributes to pluriversalisation. As such, these differences and interconnections all pertain to questions of taking responsibility for thought and ideas—a precondition of freedom—and of articulating the conditions that make us who we are, as peoples sharing the experience and legacies of colonialism, but doing so in different ways. In order to explore some salient challenges that Latin American Mestizos face in this regard, some key historical features involving the different stages of decolonisation in Latin America must be taken into account.

As Mignolo (2005) has shown, the idea of Latin America evolved among the Creole and Mestizo elite populations during the periods of independence and of republic building at the end of eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. At that time, these elites were identifying with European histories, sharing the belief that the only way possible for the course of history to unfold was to move toward European modernity, civilisation, and progress. Seen as an extension of the new central axis of European imperial powers and intellectual centres of Germany, France and the United Kingdom, Latin America was the domain of the Latin race (not of the American indigenous, nor those of African descent). Post-republican Latin America took shape by reproducing and adapting colonial hierarchies and social organisation to conform to the interests of these new elites. The idea of purity of blood, which had been brought to the conquered territories from Spain and Portugal, now became fundamental for the hierarchical social-racial differentiation that justified the domination these elites over other groups. In this hierarchy, the Creoles (people with Spanish father and mother, but born in the American territories) were followed by the Mestizos (indigenous-European descent); the Mulattos (Afro-European descent); the Indios (descendants of indigenous populations); the Zambos (Afro-Indian descent); and the Negroes (Afro descent).

In the late nineteenth century, the United States (US) started to gain an important role with respect to Latin America. It achieved political, economic and military control over Cuba, Panama and Puerto Rico. The Roosevelt corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in the early twentieth century (1904), which claimed the right of the US to intervene in Latin American countries, marked the transition from European to US dominance in the continent. Correspondingly, struggles in Latin America were oriented both against this new imperialism, as well as to address issues of social inequality, especially in the distribution of land. Marxism was subsequently influential in many of these struggles, informing Latin American critical thinking and the political agendas of emerging liberation projects such as Sandinismo, the Cuban Revolution, and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). The Latin American anti-imperial struggles during this period seldom questioned

the notion of *mestizaje*, which in its Marxist expressions was a naturalised identity, with class being highlighted and race neglected. As I have implied above, Mestizo—which is the denomination for people embodying *mestizaje*—is a colonial social category in Latin America just as much as the category ‘indigenous’. At the same time, however, *mestizaje* is very different from indigeneity because it was created as a category whose central interest was to access white privilege, and not to change the system that upheld those privileges.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, some Latin American elites were concerned about the colonial legacy and the inception of new colonialisms; they were searching for an understanding of history and society based on rationales different from those dictated by European thought. These critical reflections, however, were often an expression of the colonial legacy in the Mestizo identity—involving self-construction as the good, indigenous-friendly or indeed indigenised person—more than an actual change in the politics of being *mestizaje*. Since the late 1990s a new wave of decolonisation has taken place, including the emergence of intellectual Mestizo elites who have contributed decisively to the discussions and political projects of decolonisation, most notably in academia. As mentioned, we face several challenges as we articulate the conditions that make us who and what we are, and take responsibility for thought, and for the consequences of our actions—including those of our ancestors.

In his considerations about the pitfalls of national consciousness, Fanon (1963, especially Chapter 3) warned of the dangers that emerge in the wake of the decolonisation of administrations, where new hierarchies begin to settle between those who led the struggles for decolonisation and the rest of the population. In other words, those who took the lead in processes of decolonisation may have been fit for those purposes, but unfit to undertake the next task—that of building the nation (Gordon, 2015, pp. 122–123). The pitfalls lie in how the leaders of victorious decolonisation processes tend to conclude that the rest of the population is indebted to them, and demand the continued loyalty of the people on the basis of the leaders’ participation in the struggles that brought about decolonisation. Furthermore, a leader whose position is legitimated solely by his struggle against colonialism, will continue to depend on an enemy that justifies continued anti-colonial endeavours. By pointing to this tendency, Fanon was not denying the hard-lived nature of colonialism. He was rather pointing to the decadence and stagnation of decolonisation goals, when people who lead these processes adjudicate to themselves the power to define what colonialism is, how it is to be fought, and when it has been defeated. This phenomenon displays replication of the colonial attitude of former colonisers by the new national bourgeoisies.

A similar mechanism seems to be at play among the intellectual, especially male Mestizo populations from Latin America, that today herald the decolonial perspective.<sup>7</sup> As we have seen, *mestizaje* emerges historically in the context of the struggles for independence and the processes of republic building in Latin America. While *mestizaje* was used by the elites of the time to legitimise their

belonging to, and ownership of the territories in Latin America, it was at the same time a counter-narrative and counter-identity against the ideas of purity of blood by which the Spanish colonial powers organised the social, political, and economic hierarchies of their empire. Mestizaje was also a continuation of the colonial logic at play in the Spanish imperial endeavour: although it celebrated racial *mixture*, in practice it implied that the whiter the mix, the better. Although mestizaje today includes militant identities that challenge racial thinking and engage powerfully in processes of decolonisation, the whitened idea and identity of mestizaje remains largely naturalised, and must be understood both as a colonial social category and a social, political and economic institution. Indeed, Mestizos and Mestizas continue to enjoy white privilege in Latin America, although in differing ways. We enjoy those privileges because our people have been at the forefront of the social, economic, political and educational structures that guarantee those privileges. As identities and institutions constitutive of the racist structures in Latin America the discontinuation of our racial dominance entails self-destruction (cf. Fanon, 1963, see also Suárez-Krabbe, 2015).

The big questions that many Mestizos engaged in the current decolonial turn in Latin America continue to avoid, are connected to taking a stance. Further, taking a stance requires that we, in line with decolonial historical realism, re-connect to our ancestors—both those who colonised and those who were subject to colonisation; that we analyse the ways in which their legacies have shaped our present, and take responsibility for thought and action learning from them—from both their violence and their resistances. Indeed, many of the otherwise rich discussions that emerged in the wake of Quijano's (2000) coloniality of power essay underline the importance of taking the locus of enunciation in account, while at the same time failing to address their own locus of enunciation thoroughly, or ignoring key elements that constitute this locus of enunciation. For instance, deep analyses of how settler colonialism impacts their places of enunciation are absent in crucial thinkers such as Quijano, Mignolo, Grosfoguel and Dussel. However, it is a fact that through settler colonialism, we Mestizos granted ourselves rights over lands that were not ours to take. Latin America was named by our people to cover colonial and white interests, including the naturalisation of settler colonialism. In the process of naming Latin America, we became the continent and its history, and the indigenous and Afro populations became our colonial subjects. We replicated colonialism and racism.

Thinkers adhering to the decolonial perspective often continue to pretend that they are thinking from the locus of dispossessed colonised subjects, while negating and failing to think through and act as a consequence of the ways in which they may be replicating, or re-adapting, colonialism. Thereby, they tend to incur bad faith (Gordon, 1999), whereby they position themselves as standing for decolonisation, while at the same time they largely define the terms of decolonisation, its priorities, and in some notable cases, even dictate who are valid 'decolonials'. As such, the decolonial perspective continues to be an expression of a whitened, normalised and normative identity. While the decolonial perspective pays attention to historicity,

most of its adherents tend to avoid placing themselves really, existentially, as part of this history. Instead, they seem to employ racial privilege to choose which aspects of their history and legacies they take on as constitutive of their places of enunciation, and which aspects they simply deny (see also Suárez-Krabbe, 2015).

As Milton Almonacid, points out, the decolonial perspective also avoids confronting the material consequences that such an exploration would have over our ways of living.<sup>8</sup> It is, indeed, in terms of materiality that the consequences of coloniality are spelled out; it is here that the intersections between race, class and gender are most obvious. For instance, they are noticeable in the fact that it is predominantly the male Mestizos' voicing of decolonisation that is taken as the voice of contemporary critical thinking in the Americas—in spite of the large and rich traditions of thinking in this direction represented in Latin America today among indigenous and Afro-Latin American men and women. These unaddressed issues and unanswered questions suggest that decolonisation requires of Mestizos something very different from what it entails for indigenous or Afro-Latin American peoples. In our case, decolonisation requires destruction on the level of selves, of community, and of institutions. As I have argued elsewhere (Suárez-Krabbe, 2015), it requires obeying much more and leading much less. How this is relevant for all of us across the globe, who descend from settler-colonial populations, is a key question that could usefully be explored through decolonial historical realism.

#### AFRICANISATION AND CHANGE

The various dilemmas and preoccupations that emerge from current discussions about Africanisation (see, for example, Adésinà, 2006; Hountondji, 2005; Letsekha, 2003; More, 2002; Mudimbe, 1988) display important dimensions in the search for decolonisation that were not addressed in the previous sections.<sup>9</sup> How might we articulate the conditions that have made Africa what it is, and Africans what they are, in a context shaped so thoroughly by racist violence? And is 'Africanisation' the proper term if one is to avoid disregarding internal hierarchies, differences and life-projects? Hegel's deletion of Africa from history and Kant's racist anthropology are the most common examples used to show how the supposedly scientific and rational thinking born out of the European coloniser's experience was at the same time the effect and legitimisation of an ontological force imposed on Africa: a no-place with no-people (Eze, 1998, 1997).

The challenge is immense as it relates to affirming existence in the face of the ontological construction of Africa as a zone of non-being (Fanon, 1986) governed through necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003). In Fanonian terms (1986), Africanisation must be seen as an affirmation of existence; in itself, then, a negation of the negation (see also Adésinà, 2006). But we know that beyond the affirmation of existence lies a plethora of emerging problems and complex questions. Among the crucial issues to be addressed is the question of to what degree we can approach the idea of what Africa is without finding recourse in colonial knowledge? For example, remarking

that the significance of Tempels' work lies in the title of his book, *Bantu Philosophy* (1945), Eze (1998) states that,

Whereas the anthropologist spoke of "savage mentality" or "primitive thought", Tempels spoke of philosophy; and because philosophy, to the Western mind, is the honorific term symbolizing the highest exercise of the faculty of reason, the book's title amounted to an admission of the existence of African reason, and hence—following this logocentric European logic— African humanity. [...]. The author intended it as a "handbook" for the missionary cultural worker: a plea to the European colonialist administrator or missionary that the African's "philosophy" and culture ought to be understood and respected in order for the "civilizing" mission to succeed. (p. 217)<sup>10</sup>

The question of traditional African philosophies, of course, needs to take into account and seriously analyse epistemicide and resistance to epistemicide. The question is relevant; not to essentialise African thinking nor Africans, but because part of the endeavour to recognise what Africa is, includes the issue of what epistemicidal practices have targeted. However, we must not thereby assume that 'traditional' refers to something outside or without history, and that it is only to be found in books such as Tempels'. In other words, that which we call 'traditional' involves ancient knowledges that did not remain static because of their predominantly oral distribution. In relation to oral knowledges, we must assume that as with any other people, the holders of these ancient knowledges have done their best not to kill the power of their knowledge, and hence have adapted, re-contextualised and re-theorised it, over the course of time, according to the conditions that they were facing. Additionally, *Bantu Philosophy* was part of the colonial endeavour and written in a foreign language (in this case French), but it also played an important role in the re-engagement of some central philosophical concerns. Having been written down by a missionary, the work was created as one thing, but, being taken up by African scholars concerned with countering the effects of colonialism, it continued its life and responsibility for thought was reclaimed. In Mudimbe's (1988) words:

Even though some of Tempels' disciples continue to use his controversial concept of being-force, they generally bring in stimulating African visions and conceptions. Yet after Aimé Césaire, one could also infer the political complicity continued in the book and better see its relationship to colonial ideology. Yet without doubt, *Bantu Philosophy* paradoxically opened some holes in the monolithic wall of colonial ideology [...]. Of course, one is perfectly entitled to question the sociohistorical significance of the book, and to fear [...] that Tempels' thesis of the evolution of Bantu thought simply means the reduction of Bantu temporality to a fixed past. (p. 154)

In this context it is important to underline that, in spite of the processes of domination, extermination and extractivism characteristic of colonial legacies, there is a vast plethora of perspectives, worldviews, and philosophies that are very often

articulated around the struggles against these colonial legacies. This is what allows us to discuss issues pertaining to decolonisation, including the decolonisation of knowledge and education. However, we also know that we cannot speak of any ‘culturally clean’ nor ‘separate’ people, inasmuch there has been mutual influence between us, most notably the influence of the process of colonisation with its violent imposition of religion, custom, sexuality, knowledge, etc., but also through processes of epistemic extractivism, such as the one described in the essay on Hegel and Haiti (Buck-Morss, 2000). Because of racial hierarchisation, however, the discussions also revolve around the snares of ideas of (racial, cultural, epistemic) ‘purity’ and the dangers of ‘mixture’—that is, how to deal with race-thinking, where on the one hand we live in a world where contemporary races and identities became real through the European colonial processes of domination and hierarchical categorisation of peoples, and on the other hand, these races and identities also exist as contestations to the processes of domination. *Bantu Philosophy* displays precisely how mixture is no less problematic than purity; indeed the dangers of mixture involve covering over past and present systemic racism (see More, 2002, pp. 64–65). What is crucial to take into account is the realities and life-projects that specific works, interpretations or re-appropriations authorise, and which ones they do not allow for.

But there is more to this than the relevance or degree of dynamism of ancient knowledges. In his defence of the African Renaissance, More (2002) cites Gyekye (1997) to make a fundamental observation that displays how the colonial frameworks of thinking also inform the ways in which we frame the problems that we face today—and even what (and whose) problems we address, and what problems we disregard:

Indeed, as Gyekye argues, every modern society is simultaneously “traditional” to the extent that it “maintains and cherishes values, practices outlooks, and institutions bequeathed to it by previous generations and all or much of which on normative grounds it takes pride in, boasts of, and builds on”. Accordingly, modernity cannot justifiably be antithetical to antiquity or be supposed to be a rejection of the past. Modernity and antiquity are thus not discontinuous but maintain a certain relationship of continuity. (More, 2002, p. 73)

Let us look at this issue taking into account that the division between tradition and modernity emerges as part of coloniality, and as such is monolithic, but does different things in relation to different knowledges, and socio-historical and economic-political realities. More’s (2002) point is important because it allows us to see how ideas of modernity and antiquity are played out in different ways in relation to European thinking. Indeed, European thinking draws upon those it has located as constituting its traditional knowledge base, such as the ancient Greek thinkers, often returning to them, without this practice being interpreted as a wish of the European thinker to return to ancient times.

However, the concern of African thinkers to learn from the past, from ancestral oral and written knowledges, even if some of these are less than 100 years old, is—



at least in the northern academe—often thought of as being a problem of nativism with a strong tendency to essentialise. An example of a thinker whose drawing on the past is considered unproblematic is Hannah Arendt, and her thoughts regarding the polis in *The Human Condition* (1998). I am not problematising Arendt's use of the past by pointing to it. What I am problematising is that when African or Latin American scholars draw from a non-European past, we find ourselves being accused of essentialism, naiveté, and the like. Remember that the reactions of European anthropologists against their peers' essentialism were framed within a specific socio-historical and economic-political experience where anthropology was part of the colonial endeavour; where it characterised and categorised people in ways that legitimated coloniality and its civilizing, developing missions.

The anti-essentialism among anthropologists reflected a particular concern with the colonial legacies of anthropology. As such, this concern was legitimate. The problem is that anti-essentialism is today applied to every other practice that involves the questions of who and what we are, as if we all held the same position in the colonial hierarchies of power. What is at stake here is the fact that there is a great difference in asserting who one is when one's existence has been denied, and asserting who one is through over-determination, over-representation and the characterisation of other people as essentially inferior or non-existent (cf. Wynter, 2007). In the European academy, anti-essentialism often functions as a weapon used to defend the *Master's House* (Lorde, 1984) and to legitimate the lack of engagement with the knowledges produced in the context of anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles around the world. As such, anti-essentialism works to silence, to invisibilise, and to perpetuate the zone of non-being.

Similar mechanisms seem to be in play in the idea of 'reverse' racism. Racism involves the over-determination of whiteness, a whiteness that has granted itself the power to structure, manage, categorise and dominate the global society. Whiteness is the result of more than 500 years of domination and institutionalisation. In certain localised situations, we may speak of discrimination against whites (as in safe spaces for people of colour). This is a justified form of discrimination that seeks to open up spaces to speak about the problems of racism without having to explain what racism is, without having to 'prove' its existence, without having to deal with the attacks launched by people who prefer to ignore the problems of racism than to deal with them.

But the point here is that the idea of 'reverse' racism ignores how coloniality shaped the realities of the majority of the population of the earth. To reject the false notion of reverse racism does not imply minimising concerns about genocide and xenophobia. The severity of these problems has been thoroughly analysed by African scholars taking into account the ways in which these problems are part of what I refer to as 'coloniality' (see, for example, Mamdani, 2001a, 2001b, 2008, 2009; Neocosmos, 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). In other words, in analysing such problems, it is crucial to take into account the interaction between globalised racial hierarchies, and the ways in which local hierarchies became racialised through coloniality. There can



be no anti-white racism, because (a) racism is a globalised principle of domination connected to colonialism; (b) today's power structures continue to be the result of colonialism; and (c) racism entails the over-representation and over-determination of whiteness. There can, however, be replications of racism by people of colour towards other people of colour; that is, people of colour's attempts to be what they can never be, namely white (cf. Fanon 1983; see also Mills, 1997).

Another consequence of taking the step of affirming existence is the recognition that Africa is not homogeneous (see also Letsekha, 2003; Horsthemke, 2004). Accordingly, the question is: what happens then to the notion of Africanisation? Does it scatter into plurality and multiplicity, dissolving concerns with the core problems of colonialism and racism? I think that we can agree that there is no 'essential Africa'. There are, however, crucial socio-historical and economic-political events and conditions that produced and continue to present Africa as an essential 'non-existence' (see also Eze, 1998; Mbembe, 2003; Mills, 1997; More, 2002; Mudimbe, 1988). So even though we may agree that there is no African essence, the *problem* of Africa as an essence remains—this reflects the ontological power of coloniality that forces upon the colonised a reality that is not theirs to control or name, but that must be contested as real before it can be changed. In other words, the recognition of plurality cannot imply the negation of the socio-historical and economic-political conditions that have shaped the existence of that plurality which has been hierarchised through colonialism and racism.

Continued engagement with these socio-historical and economic-political conditions forces us to break the insularity of Africa: while there is no essential Africa, neither is it a place on another planet. Africa is part of the world system, and as such, worldwide promotion of the Africanisation project is needed. For example, in Latin America, the notion of Africanisation would assist in breaking with anti-black racism and ameliorating the systematic disappearance of Africans as historical actors, thinkers, political agents; as people whose legacies and contemporary thinking are crucial to finding solutions to the problems of coloniality and racism.

In a similar way, Africanisation is needed in Europe. What are the problems that the European white man and woman would start to address were they to take seriously the critical thinking that takes into account the African socio-historical experience? What kind of genealogies of knowledge would we need to acknowledge, were we to leave aside Eurocentric genealogies of knowledge? Understood as such, the Africanisation of Europe is a necessary step towards Europe's decolonisation and pluriversalisation. Such a step would necessitate serious engagement with the critical thinking and work of people of African Descent or Afropeans, such as Ayim (2003), and Opitz et al. (1992) in Germany, McEachrane (2014) in Sweden, as well as contributions from white scholarship on the matter (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014). Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (2000) must also be seen as a contribution to the Africanisation of Europe. Indeed, hegemonic Europe needs to be defined in terms of what it did and does in the rest of the world, and how these doings (and undoings) influence, rebound in, and form what Europe is today.

AFRICANISATION, DECOLONISATION AND PLURIVERSALITY

In this chapter, I have employed decolonial historical realism in order to understand the complexity of coloniality, taking into account the socio-historical experiences and the intellectual contributions that are emerging from African critical thinking, Latin American Mestizo critical thinking (the author's own tradition—the decolonial perspective), and emerging critical thinking on the decolonisation of Europe. Decolonial historical realism is an important move towards the decolonisation of knowledge and education. It provides important elements to help understand, on the one hand, how coloniality as a globalised system of oppression informs our realities and identities differently, and on the other hand, how this shared system of oppression consequently requires distinct strategies and attitudes of decolonisation amongst us.

I have drawn upon Fanon's ideas about the pitfalls of national consciousness in the wake of decolonisation, in order to reflect upon some of the mechanisms at play today among decolonial Mestizos in Latin America who tend to reproduce whiteness. I have pointed to the challenges that we face, as intellectuals committed to decolonisation, in terms of the material consequences of our theorising—or the limits of reflection in this regard. In signalling the similarities in the attitudes of Mestizos in Latin America and Fanon's criticism of African elites and their decolonisation projects vis-à-vis the rest of the African populations, my purpose is not to be blind to the historical development of nationalism in Africa. Indeed, as Mkandawire (2005) shows in a lengthy essay, African nationalism has many faces and expressions throughout the African continent, and has changed over time. Mkandawire's (2005) is an important discussion because it links the development of African (nationalist) scholarship with the local conditions it has faced in different places and at different times. He emphasises the importance of the material conditions in Africa, defending the need for development—understood as improvement of the material conditions of the vast majority of Africans—as a necessary part of any effort to adapt knowledge to African realities. His point is strong, and translated to the concerns of Africanisation, it poses the question as to whether Africanisation does best in thinking through and finding solutions to the most severe material problems faced by the majorities in the continent, rather than—as he seems to imply—by discussing what decolonisation and Africanisation actually mean. In terms of the decolonisation of knowledge and education, my position is that these two issues go together.

If we return to Gordon's idea about decolonisation involving taking responsibility for thought and understanding the condition that makes us who we are, then Mkandawire (2005) is doing just that. Mkandawire's reading, however, loses sight of the ways in which global articulations of power work. If we constrain potential solutions to the problems we have inherited from the European colonial endeavour within the borders of current African nation-states, our efforts will remain unsuccessful. It makes no sense to look for intra-national solutions for problems that are inter-national by origin and continuation. The solution strategies that we

implement need to attend to the socio-historical engagements of empires and nations in the North with those in the South. An international perspective, such as that on the Prison Industrial Complex (see for example Gilmore, 2007; Davis, 2003, 2012) obviously points to the ways in which the material conditions in Europe and the US are directly related to, and dependent upon the material conditions lived by the majority of Africans and Latin Americans in Europe, the US and beyond. How can we contribute to solving these problems without replicating the paternalisms and imperialisms of the international development-industrial complex/white saviour-industrial complex?

Indeed, the material dimension is crucial to both decolonisation and pluriversalisation. Materiality links with decolonisation strengthens the conditions for a world in which many worlds are possible in at least two levels. The first level is the economic-political level. The strategy of reparations is a good political tool, not because they redress the problems of coloniality, but because they hurt the pockets of imperial nations. In this sense, for example, development in Africa could be framed from within an analysis of the socio-historical and economic-political conditions that have made Africa what it is. Of course, this requires the political will in Africa to push in this direction. Reparations can have a fundamental impact, compared to most development projects where priorities and aims are formulated through an uncritical colonising mind that replicates the logic and practices of colonialism.

The second level in which materiality links with decolonisation is the epistemic level, for example, through current efforts worldwide to decolonise the curriculum and the university (Alvares & Faruqi, 2012; Boidin et al., 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016). Besides contributing to the decolonisation of knowledge and education, changing the curriculum has material consequences, at least to the extent to which the usual white elites will not be the perfect candidates to teach a decolonised curriculum. Thus, the material conditions of racialised persons will improve within academia, albeit on a small scale. On a larger scale, one can dream of changes in curricula translating into changes in research priorities and practices, where for example, part of the formation of students would imply them working urgently to improve material conditions among communities.

Finally, in spite of the problems entailed in current processes of decolonisation, the changed regimes in countries like South Africa, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, plus the current crisis in Europe, provide an open window for articulated international efforts to change curricula. This in turn, will enhance South-South discussions concerning decolonisation, foment the various anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles in the global South, and provide support to reparation initiatives. Initially the strategy can be pursued as inter-institutional efforts, linked together internationally, so as to gain important relative power and strengthen similar efforts through international pressure. Indeed, while coloniality largely made us what we are, our freedom resides precisely in prioritising each other's needs, and in learning from our similarities and differences.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Lewis Gordon lecture, organised by the Pan African Baraza and ThoughtWorks to mark the 90th anniversary of the birth of Frantz Fanon. Nairobi, January 8, 2015.  
Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixNrKiW19mU>
- <sup>2</sup> The Latin American modernity/coloniality perspective, or the decolonial perspective emerged in the wake of Aníbal Quijano's essay on the coloniality of power (2000) and addresses two interlocked problems; one regards the place of indigenous and black thought and practices within the Latin American context—that is, it is concerned with exclusion, genocide and epistemicide inside of Latin America. The other is concerned with these same problems, but looking into outside places and practices. From these concerns emerge alternative, innovative and transforming inputs to anthropology, history, philosophy, political economy and sociology, which aim at contributing not only to the production of knowledge within the academic realm, but to the transformation of society as a whole.
- <sup>3</sup> Being a Colombian-Danish Mestiza (mix) influences this reading. My knowledge of perspectives in the Americas and Europe is much more nuanced and informed than the one I have on Africa and the intellectual heritage and diversity of positions coming from the African anticolonial traditions. As an activist and intellectual, however, my sources of inspiration and learning are not limited to the Latin American anticolonial traditions: indeed, I have been deeply influenced by Afro-Caribbean and Afro-North American anticolonial/antiracist thinking (especially Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Lewis Gordon, Sylvia Wynter, Angela Davis, W. E. B. DuBois, Malcolm X and Audre Lorde), which then brought me to explore and learn from similar thinkers from Africa. Living—and having part of my roots – in Europe has also brought me to engage with thinking born out of decolonial and anti-racist struggle in this continent. The imbalance in relation to my knowledge and understanding of the critical thinking in Africa, however, remains because understanding the complexity of the problems addressed and solutions proposed requires on-the-ground engagement that I have never had in any African country.
- <sup>4</sup> This historical reconstruction draws together insights from Wright (2001), Santiago-Valles (2003), Wynter (2003), Mignolo (2006), Federici (2010), Grosfoguel (2013), and Fernández Garcés et al. (2015). A more detailed presentation is to be found in Suárez-Krabbe (2015).
- <sup>5</sup> This sentence is partly a paraphrase of Wright (2001, p. 59), but includes mention of violence against the Roma, which, as Motos Pérez (2009) highlights, is often neglected.
- <sup>6</sup> Mestizaje is both a notion of whiteness and domination, an identity used strategically by racialized populations in the continent, and a category which in some cases is redefined “from below”. Discussions of these issues can be found in De la Cadena, 1996; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012; Gómez, 2011; Hale, 1996; Sanjinés, 2002; Segato, 2010.
- <sup>7</sup> I thank Milton Almonacid and Herson Huinca-Piutrin for all the conversations concerning mestizaje, whiteness and the decolonial perspective. What is presented here is as much theirs as it is mine.
- <sup>8</sup> Personal communication, May 22, 2015.
- <sup>9</sup> As a way to engage in the discussion on Africanisation I divided the readings into the most salient issues discussed. It is important here to note that the texts I have engaged in the discussion reflect the access that I have had to these pertaining language. I have not read texts in French, Portuguese, not any African languages. My initial reading divided the discussions as such: *Firstly*, some scholars express concerns with how or whether to proceed with Africanisation—that is, of adapting knowledge and curricula to African realities – without becoming assimilated to the global neoliberal market logic by which plurality is accommodated to the needs of the market and made instrumental to it (Mngadi, 2008; Dick, 2014). Closely connected to this is the concern about whose needs Africanisation really covers; the needs of an (intellectual) elite who is engaged in re-defining African realities, or the needs of the materially impoverished populations in the African continent (Mkandawire, 2005). *Second*, the issue of Africanisation involves questions about what and who is African, and what and who is not African (Mudimbe, 1988; Mngadi, 2008; Dick, 2014, More, 2002;

Hountondji, 2005). Core questions about race and identity are at stake, and with these also concerns with essentialism (Dick, 2014), xenophobia, and so-called ‘reverse racism’ (More, 2002; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, esp chap 4). *Third*, in its efforts to counter the effects of Eurocentrism, Africanisation entails both *unanimism* and *extroversion* (Hountondji, 2005). The problem of unanimism implicates the idea of an insulated and “culturally, politically, linguistically and religiously monolithic” (Black) Africa (Dick, 2014). Mngadi (2008), for instance, argues that the idea of a monolithic black Africa involves the idea of an equally insulated and monolithic (White) Europe, and this binary conceals an agenda of power or the desire for power: his point being that “in order for power to absolutize itself, it must generalize about its targets” (2008: 18). Additionally, he asks us to consider “what is lost and/or gained in insisting upon a colonialism that was absolute as a basis upon which to install an absolute decolonisation/Africanisation?” (p. 19). The problem of extroversion: inasmuch Africanisation is a reaction to Eurocentrism, and because much of that which we today call scientific knowledge is Eurocentric, Africanisation may involve an external orientation becoming thereby “dependent on the questions posed by the West, and intended to feed theoretical and eventually practical needs expressed by the West” (Hountondji, 2005). As such, the idea of a monolithic Africa may be an idea expressing the needs of the West, and Africanisation a process that in the end may suit these needs very well. A *fourth* issue present in the discussions relates to traditional knowledge versus modern knowledge. At least in some of its expressions, Africanisation and decolonisation seems to uncritically adopt the idea that some knowledges are ‘past’ (traditional) and others are ‘present’ (modern), and that what is traditional has stayed in an – idealised or rejected – (precolonial) past while the modern is in constant dynamic movement in the present and towards the future (Mngadi, 2008; Wiredu, 1998). In this context, the debate also contains deliberations of how to conceive of the “African” knowledges; as endogeneity (cf Hountondji), as African Renaissance (cf. More), or as Indigenous Knowledge Systems. *Finally*, we also encounter the problem of the relationship between language, epistemology and the political, and the hierarchies between different languages. Language is inseparable from culture, from how we understand the world and how we interact with it and in it. How we understand the world and interact in and with it is a political concern inasmuch it relates to social organisation where the social may include our relationship and interaction with non-human others like the environment, the elements, the ancestors, who then come to form part of the political (Thiong’o, 1987, see also Suárez-Krabbe, 2015). Thiong’o’s understanding of language is important in this context inasmuch it is necessarily holistic, it is connected to people’s wealth: what they produce, how they produce it, and how it is distributed (Thiong’o, 1987: 16, paraphrase). According to him, what colonialism did was to impose “its control of the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship” (p. 16). The discussions regarding Africanisation and decolonisation thus revolve around themes and preoccupations relating to the capitalist and then neoliberal workings of the world on a global scale; identity, race, inclusion and exclusion; unanimism and extroversion and power relations; traditional vs modern knowledges and life-projects and finally colonialism, language, and politics. A salient absence in these discussions is related to the discussions concerning gender, feminism, both in their colonial and anticolonial workings. In the end, this excludes half of Africa’s population from being the targets of the concerns in the discussions of Africanisation. Significantly, it also invisibilises the feminist and womanist critical anticolonial traditions (see fx. Mama, 1996, 2003, 2005; Mohanty, 2003; Mohanty et al., 1991; Oyerónké, 1997, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Some 420 years earlier another missionary, Bartolomé de Las Casas, had engaged in discussions with other individuals belonging to the Spanish colonising powers, and defended the rational capacity of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and their potential to become Christian. In contrast to Tempels, however, Las Casas did not actually engage with the philosophies of the indigenous peoples with whom he was concerned. And as we know, Las Casas’ efforts to save the Indians’ souls were followed by his suggestion to replace the indigenous people, as a workforce, with enslaved Africans. Although Las Casas regretted this in his later years, his suggestion was already complicit with the establishment of the transatlantic slave trade (see also Suárez-Krabbe, 2015).

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## 6. KNOWLEDGE, GLOBALISATION AND THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

### *The Change Agenda*

#### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we examine the relatively brief history<sup>1</sup> of the African university, which is largely a post-colonial phenomenon. We assess both the alignment and misalignment between the purposes for which the African university was created, and how it has acquitted itself in serving those purposes. In the process, we consider the opportunities and challenges responsible for the role this institution has played in Africa's development so far. We then examine the positioning of the African university in the increasingly competitive and rapidly changing global context of higher education. Against that backdrop, we discuss the extent to which the African university remains faithful and relevant to the African development process, as well as the efforts it is making in carving out a place for itself as a key player in the global marketplace, while striving for visibility, recognition and acknowledgement. Deriving from the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the African Union's 'Agenda 2063', and recommendations from the 2015 Dakar Summit on African Higher Education, we proffer an agenda to guide discussions about future directions for this institution and models for achieving goals we have identified as areas that deserve a priority focus. Nevertheless, we recognise that any agenda we offer will not necessarily be universally applicable or acceptable; nor do we consider our treatment of the subject exhaustive, given that there are nuances not captured in a broad, Africa-wide assessment.

The need for change is no longer a matter for debate—there is a general sense that the African university is in need of re-thinking. The university represents a significant concentration of any nation's intellectual capital. It therefore comes as no surprise that the creation of “an African knowledge society through transformation and investments in universities” is amongst the key goals of the African Union's Agenda 2063 (see African Union, 2015, p. 9). Teferra and Altbach (2004) make it very clear that “[i]f Africa is to succeed economically, culturally, and politically, it must have a strong post-secondary sector; academic institutions are central to the future” and they proceed to remind us that “Africa, a continent with fifty-four countries, has no more than 300 institutions that fit the definition of a university. By international standards, Africa is the least developed region in terms of higher

education institutions and enrolments” (p. 22)—this is a real indictment and a call to action. As suggested by Makri (2014), the expansion of the higher education sector has become a *sine qua non* for Africa’s development, and without hesitation, he observes that “[t]he ‘how’ might be contested but there’s agreement on one thing: universities need reform to help drive development” (p. 1). Although a gradual evolution has taken place in terms of the administrative aspects of curriculum and teaching, the changes that have occurred in the actual content have been comparatively small.

The African university faces a real dilemma because it is now caught up in a cross-wind between the type of agenda it ought to have developed to meet the mission for which post-colonial African governments invested in these institutions, and the institutions’ own desire to increase their visibility in the global academic space. However, the rate of progress towards their quest for recognition and being taken seriously beyond the continent (justifiable and worthy goals to pursue), has been so slow that the institutions are now also having to be responsive to the push-and-pull factors of globalisation and modernisation.

In this chapter we argue that the African university must therefore, of necessity, work on the basis of priorities, rather than pursue an unrealistic agenda intended to address both past gaps and the opportunities and challenges of the future. Starting with knowledge production and dissemination, this presents an opportunity for the African university to “rethink and reinvent”<sup>22</sup> itself.

While we are aware of a multiplicity of issues relevant for debate in this chapter, in the interest of clarity and economy of space, we need to be selective and focus our attention on some in particular. We merely flag others and highlight their significance, thus limiting our in-depth discussion to what we consider top priority issues. We identify the following for discussion:

- defining the African university—meaning and mission
- governance
- funding
- curriculum and pedagogy
- research
- re-thinking the agency for change
- globalisation and internationalisation

Even in terms of this list, we are forced into further prioritisation, so that some issues are briefly broached, while others are discussed more fully.

#### DEFINING THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY—MEANING AND MISSION

The task of defining an African university may seem rather pedestrian and straightforward, yet scholars have spent considerable time grappling with establishing a universally acceptable definition, or at least one relating to its mission

(see Mazrui, 2013; Van den Berghe, 1973; Woodhouse, 1987). While some may think of the African university as a colonial and post-colonial phenomenon—which, in most cases, it is—let us not forget that, as far back as before the first millennium, world renowned centres of scholarship and formal universities had taken root in Africa. Those centres of learning, such as Alexandria and Timbuktu, had many similarities to the culture and ethos which reigned at places like Padua and Bologna.<sup>3</sup> We acknowledge that the early African centres did not survive the various assaults that history and politics brought their way, as successfully as their two European equivalents. Thus the starting point for our analysis must be the point at which we witness the emergence of a true sense of Africanness and of institutions created by African governments (not any colonial power) to address African issues. That period is inextricably linked to the rise of the nationalist movement in Africa, which led to the successful fight for independence from European colonial rule.

The early political leadership in independent African countries comprised a large cadre of people whom we shall describe here as ‘scholar-politicians’; hence it becomes important to consider their views on the role of the university, because they articulated it in both scholarly terms and as part of the fabric of the kind of policies they sought to implement. Key amongst the scholar-politicians were Kwame Nkrumah, Kofi Busia, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere and, in Francophone Africa, Patrice Lumumba and Leopold Senghor, as well as the likes of Amilcar Cabral in Lusophone Africa. Almost without exception, they shared one common view of the role of the African university: they saw it as an important agent for the social, political and economic development of their countries.

At the dawn of the post-colonial African state, Nkrumah (1961)<sup>4</sup> clearly identified this developmental role, first by denouncing the ivory tower nature of colonial institutions of higher learning, which were, as he noted,

...designed to suit the colonial order and their products therefore reflected [sic] the values and ideals of the colonial powers. Consequently, colonial institutions of higher learning, however good-intentioned, were unable to assess the needs and aspirations of the societies for which they were instituted. (online; no page number)

Nkrumah (1961) went on to say that the new African university was expected to be:

...responsive to the sense of urgency that exists in a developing nation; to use its resources imaginatively and effectively to contribute to the economy of the social organisation; to interpret their studies for the benefit of the people and to learn from their problems. (online; no page number)

With great foresight in those early days, Busia (1962) also addressed issues that, surprisingly, remain central to debates on African higher education today. He observed that Africans and others have raised questions about the content of education:

How much general education should be provided? How much specialisation should there be? At what level should it begin? What place should African studies have in the educational system?

Busia (1962) also commented about related problems such as the connection between the arts and sciences” (p. 91). Decades later, the invocation for African universities to run on an African agenda remains loud but almost unheeded, as the works of Shanyanana and Ndofirepi (2015), Makgoba (1999) and Waghid (2012), among others, attest.

In a sense, for the concept of a true African university to flourish, it needs to be understood as being much more than a single campus; it is essentially a movement, a stream of consciousness. In much the same way as the ‘western university’ is not just Bologna, or Padua or Oxbridge, the African university must become a way of doing things that is pervasive on the African continent. It must be a pan-African movement, a proposition which poses a number of challenges, as one its early advocates, Julius Nyerere (1966), observed in response to his own question as to how this ideal might be achieved:

I do not believe the answer is easy. Indeed I believe that a real dilemma faces the Pan-Africanist. On the one hand is the fact that Pan-Africanism demands an African consciousness and an African loyalty; on the other hand is the fact that each Pan-Africanist must also concern himself with the freedom and development of one of the nations of Africa. These things can conflict. Let us be honest and admit that they have already conflicted. (p. 1)

As he said, “Pan-Africanism demands an African consciousness”, which has to survive side-by-side with the responsibilities towards the nation within which an individual university exists. In the same address, Nyerere (1966) posed the following questions:

Who is to keep us active in the struggle to convert nationalism to Pan-Africanism if it is not the staff and students of our universities? Who is it who will have the time and ability to think out the practical problems of achieving this goal of unification if it is not those who have an opportunity to think and learn without direct responsibility for day-to-day affairs? And cannot the universities themselves move in this direction? Each of them has to serve the needs of its own nation, its own area. But has it not also to serve Africa? (pp. 216–217)

More specifically, he made several seminal pronouncements on the transformative role he felt the African university needed to play when he stated that:

...the University has not been established purely for prestige purposes. It has a very definite role to play in development in this area, and to do this effectively it must be in, and of, the community it has been established to

serve. The University of East Africa has to draw upon experience and ideas from East Africa as well as from the rest of the world. And it must direct its energies particularly towards meeting the needs of East Africa... (Nyerere, 1963, pp. 218–219)

Those remarks remain relevant to the university in Africa in general today.

The fact that the mission of the African university has remained rooted in the trinity established for Western universities, namely, teaching, research and service, is an area we believe needs revisiting. For one thing, there has never really been a major attempt to define the extent to which the pillars of that trinity may or may not be equal in importance. Observation suggests that the teaching pillar takes on a considerable stature, with research in close second place. The service element generally tends to be poorly defined and often enjoys only lip service, which runs counter to the idea of a transformative institution.

More recently, Cakata (2005) offered a critical analysis of attempts at defining the African university in the South African context. Her analysis focuses on the issue of gender balance within the ranks of academic staff. In the same volume (Waghid, 2005), deals with broader issues and where the focus should be, suggesting that the notion of an African university would "...mean veering away from the fascination with outputs, throughputs, and outcomes and rather be concerned with building scholars who are critical of knowledge and are given spaces to interrogate knowledge claims" (p. 1311). In our quest for an acceptable definition of the 'African university', while we strongly subscribe to Waghid's (2005) view, which advocates a reflective and critical interrogation of scholarship and learning as central tenets of the naming and meaning of an African university, we consider what others have offered so far. We counterpoise other sources against our own experiences and expectations, in order to arrive at a working definition that might enjoy broad support and be applicable in an equally broad manner.

In our view, in order to assume a truly unique identity, the African university needs to undergo some major structural changes, starting with a serious review of its 'mission'. We are in no position to prescribe what that mission should be, but it needs to be informed by an examination of Africa's problems, some of which are uniquely African and, in some cases, are Africa-wide, while also recognising the importance of those that may be peculiar to some African states or regions. In order for us to have a clear context for our submission here, we take the bold position of adopting our own definition and statement of mission, which we offer here:

*An African university* is one whose mission has a clear focus on addressing problems that confront its immediate African setting. It represents all that the Bologna<sup>5</sup> concept of the university offers, but inextricably links it to an ethos inspired by a philosophy and a set of values that are inherently African and deeply rooted in what is important to each locality. Through such values and philosophy, it seeks to create a deep and respectable body of African thought,

scholarship and solutions to African problems, whilst also subscribing to the traditional principles that universities across the globe subscribe and aspire to.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the African university cannot exclude itself from playing a role in addressing global issues and rightfully claiming its place in the kind of scholarship that seeks to address global issues. Nonetheless, the African university has disappointed when it comes to addressing African issues with global dimensions, or global issues which have direct and serious implications for Africa. Examples of failed opportunities include such seemingly simple challenges as deforestation, land degradation and food security, as well as complex ones such as HIV, Ebola and other virulent diseases. Admittedly, some of these challenges reflect the inadequacies arising from the legacy of poor or unreliable funding for research, which has become the bane of many African universities. Equally, some of those problems cannot be tackled by universities alone, without strong state support and a policy framework that prioritises the resourcing of work which focuses on national needs. Therefore, the ‘Africanness’ of an institution goes beyond geography, and strongly encompasses ethos and orientation.

While we acknowledge the debilitating challenges which the African university faces, we wish to round off this section by drawing the university’s attention to itself. The African university needs to also be an advocate for itself. It is often lacking in confidence about itself, its mission and how to communicate its position to the wider academic community. It needs to be bolder and less diffident. The struggle for identity among African universities is well captured in a 2013 statement by the UNISA Vice Chancellor, Prof. Makhanya<sup>7</sup> who observed:

Do we constrain ourselves, perhaps through our own lack of vision, our own fears and lack of self-belief, or are we constrained by others? Or is it a combination of both? Or, perhaps, none of the above. At a time in our history when the world believes that Africa is rising, that our time has come, we wrestle with these questions every day, wondering how we can achieve that magnificent breakthrough that will ensure the realisation of the vast potential that resides on our continent.

This element of “lack of self-belief” is one that most young institutions need to contend with; yet, despite the self-doubt that may exist at the institutional level, there are many individuals and entities within those same institutions who have demonstrated that the capacity exists to create internal structures and research outputs that have an indigenous focus but, at the same time, are of world standard.

#### GOVERNANCE

If an institution is to be successful and relevant, its governance framework needs to be dynamic, responding to evolving needs. Better still, it should anticipate change so that it can be instrumental in the implementation of the anticipated changes,



thus minimising disruption and dissonance. Good governance creates the kind of environment in which the values for which the university stands can be seen in action. Such values can be transformed into a practical demonstration of the type of exchanges that lead to creative conversations, which is essentially how knowledge is created or improved upon. Therefore, if governance structures are weak or not fit for purpose, the first building block of a fertile knowledge environment will be seriously undermined, or even eliminated altogether.

With very few exceptions, in most of Africa, the governance structures adopted from the ‘metropolitan’ model of the erstwhile colonial powers have remained largely intact. There has, however, been some degree of democratisation and the ‘Africanisation’ of practices. We believe more can be done to ensure that higher education institutions serve as analogues for governance in the nations in which they exist. For the purposes of this chapter, we believe the changes necessary in governance can be effectively considered in direct relation to the other topics discussed below and, for that reason, we keep our remarks here to a minimum.

#### FUNDING

If we were to identify one issue which has the power to either destroy the African university, or catapult it to new and greater levels of achievement, it would be funding. Nkrumah’s (1961) view that these would be institutions for which “no sacrifices should be too great...” played itself out in every African country at the time of establishing a national university; sadly, commitment to the project has tended to fade with time. Unfortunately, the road to a truly African university is now littered with innumerable examples of broken dreams, broken promises and sheer neglect, particularly when it comes to providing the resources to support that ideal. We highlight this issue because it is the most debilitating factor affecting the potential development of African universities, and impacts every facet of their existence. Academe everywhere, even in wealthy industrialised nations, faces fiscal problems, but the magnitude of these problems seems to be far greater in Africa than anywhere else.” Teferra and Altbach (2004) reported that “[t]he central reality for all African higher education systems at the beginning of the twenty-first century is severe financial crisis” (p. 26). The situation remains unchanged and, in many cases, has worsened (UNESCO, 2010, p. 2; World Bank, 2010; Trust Africa, 2013, p. 8). The direness of the situation is cited in a World Bank Report (2008), which states that:

Backed by a significant amount of new and updated data, the report concludes that, in most sub-Saharan African countries, enrolment in higher education has grown faster than financing capabilities, reaching a critical stage where the lack of resources has led to a severe decline in the quality of instruction and on the capacity to reorient focus and to innovate. (p. xiv)

The funding crisis is not an accident, nor something to which policy makers have been oblivious; it is simply the result of poor planning or deliberate changes in

policy positions. There has also been a deliberate and calculated move on the part of some governments to undermine an institution they fear, or simply want to frustrate for as long as it is driven by objectivity, rather than blindly pandering to whatever positions government may take on important policy matters. Trust Africa's (2013) *Higher Education Policy Brief* highlights this politically-induced pathology:

...in line with the dominant neo-liberal economic approaches, economic liberalization policies favored by sponsoring international financial institutions (notably the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank), which were introduced in most African countries in the post-Cold War period, involved significant reductions in state spending on social services, including higher education. This led to underfunding of universities. (p. 4)

The report also points to some strategies by which African universities themselves may be able to address the challenge of underfunding. From our own perspective, one such modality whose benefits in Africa, compared to other parts of the world, have been rather miniscule, is the area of 'internationalisation'. The paradigm of internationalisation needs to be thought through for Africa, to find ways to increase potential financial and other benefits. In many poorer African countries, if it were not for the inflows of cash and equipment from 'partnerships' with institutions from the 'global North', little research would take place. In some of those institutions, such funds often become a major source of cash to increase salaries to levels that can at least distract staff from moonlighting to earn extra income.

The situation of staff salaries has two interesting and almost opposing sides to it. The one is that, when staff salaries are dependent on external sources, it is clear evidence of how governments have abdicated that responsibility, even to the extent where there appears to be no sense of shame in doing so. The other aspect is that it represents a funding modality with the potential for refinement and augmentation; it could be designed in such a way that it is based on African institutions offering a research and development agenda that is competitive and attractive enough for 'investors' to be willing to put money into it, rather than as a 'gift' out of the goodness of the hearts of richer nations.

The exploration of alternative funding channels is a challenge we wish to put to the African university in general, recognising that the range of opportunities will vary according to a variety of local considerations. We make further reference to the idea of alternative funding modalities later in this chapter, when we address the idea of re-thinking the agency for change.

#### CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

There are many examples of well-thought-out curricula which lay the foundation for good educational experiences; however, if they are not supported by effective pedagogy and delivery methods, they fall far short of their desired goal, which is to serve as a tool for instilling a particular kind of learning experience and scholarship.

We therefore see great value in considering curriculum and pedagogy together. In discussing pedagogy, we shall also consider issues relating to delivery methods. Starting at a general level, and considering the Western teaching-research-service trinity, the link between the community service pillar and the other two elements has generally remained weak in Africa, as far as relevance to national needs is concerned. The focus of research, even in such fields as agriculture, education and medicine, which should have direct and immediate applications locally, has modelled itself on global research trends instead of prioritising national or local needs.

There has been a clamour for curriculum reform to enhance the relevance to the African situation and even to adopt vernacular languages as the medium of instruction. Immediately juxtaposed to the clamour for Africanisation of the curriculum (see Labehang, Phalane, & Dalindjebo, 2006; Louw, 2010; Moulder, 1995; Ndofirepi, 2014) is the call for a curriculum that is responsive to the changes taking place in the job market. What the job market calls for requires universities to deviate from their traditional methods of teaching, and to infuse more practical elements into all disciplines. At the same time, concepts that respond to the changes brought about by globalisation and the pervasive reality of information technology need to be infused into the curriculum. Clearly, therefore, the question becomes: What should the priority be when it comes to curriculum reform in the face of these competing needs?

We believe that changes in curriculum and pedagogy can bring about true ‘Africanness’, especially in the field of humanities. Without excluding other possibilities, we suggest that, comparatively speaking, the humanities more readily offer scope to create new knowledge or change paradigms than would be the case in the natural sciences, for example. Much of the curriculum in African universities has become fossilised and continues to be based on the colonial template. In those cases where time was taken to review and even reform the curriculum, quite often, that has been done on the basis of ideas borrowed from other parts of the world and, in many cases, with little modification or adaptation. While it may be understandable that such borrowings represent a shortcut to creating benchmarks for comparison with long-established or highly-regarded institutions, it certainly begs the question of how to create a university experience that reflects the needs and realities of Africa.

In a recent paper in which the issue of decolonialisation of the curriculum as a keystone for higher education reform is examined, Morreira (2015) suggests specific ways in which the humanities can change the game by offering

...content...which consciously (aims) to take the specificity of African experience seriously, be it through teaching post-colonial theory; deconstructing dominant canons or worldviews; using African examples, texts, and contexts; correspondent examples or theories from other parts of the so-called third world...

She goes on to add that such an exercise would need to be based on experiences “where such resources are valued... Given that African knowledge and resources are

usually undervalued...” (p. 2) (even in the context within which she was writing—South Africa). We fully subscribe to Morreira’s (2015) inclusive, holistic and balanced way of defining Africanisation, an approach which is “not an ethnocentric one” (p. 2) and recognises:

...the entangled nature of forms of knowledge in postcolonial Africa (such that it is impossible to categorise knowledge as “African” versus “European”, for example). We are thus concerned with adopting and examining an epistemic lens that recognizes multiple knowledge forms as legitimate. (p. 2)

Morreira’s (2015) paper is enriched by taking a multi-disciplinary approach to ways of including African content. She also touches on the issue of whether Africanisation should include the use of African languages as a medium of instruction, and comes to the same conclusion as we have, namely that the language issue is a complex and often highly political one. In fact, it becomes a diversion, which detracts from the more fundamental and central, but also more educationally relevant and potentially paradigm-shifting things we could do, and from which we can expect immediate gains and high impact in the desired change of direction.

We would therefore warn against a view that suggests that, for our institutions to be African, they should be something less, or so different from the central concept that they lose their identity as members of a global fraternity. The marriage of ideas and values referred to earlier as “the entangled nature of knowledge” (Morreira, 2015, p. 2), clearly demands a flavoured homogenisation rather than de-constitution of the components. The desired institution needs to be one that is built on universal values and principles, but designed to have an African flavour, in much the same way that we see the basics of building engineering in architecture, with resultant buildings that take on dimensions that are distinctly Greek, Moorish, Byzantine, Georgian, and so on. The African university must retain those elements on which the concept was founded, but adopt ways of doing things, ways of identifying priorities for teaching and research, content, and even pedagogy that speak to the African context, and are ever mindful of that context when addressing issues that reside in the global commons.

Further, we contend that the profile of any important cultural institution can only become a recognisable reality if it is framed in socio-political terms that make it a part of the social capital of a given society. Curriculum reform, especially in those areas where there has been a clamour for Africanisation, is an essential foundation, providing an effective mechanism for managing the complexity of social transformation in Africa, and the uniqueness of the social space, including the higher education landscape. This foundation is necessary in order to realise the kind of social transformation on the continent which can unleash the “immense power” which universities have, according to Dr Ebrima Sall<sup>8</sup> “...to effect the kind of social change required, not only in their countries, but also in their regions and on the continent—but they are faced with various challenges in trying to achieve this”.

The university can only play the envisioned roles if the state plays an enabling agency role, which recognises, values, and is respectful of the skills and knowledge base found in universities. Alas, in virtually all of Africa today, such a relationship between state and university does not exist! In fact, a major part of the reason that relationship is tenuous, at best, is that the universities have been successful in stepping up to their expected role and responsibility to be objective and balanced, and serve as the conscience of the nation in such areas as human rights, accepting and valuing cultural diversity, resolving crises of governance, and promoting democracy. Universities are doing what Mamdani (quoted by Kron, 2015) refers to as "...encouraging students to break established habits of thinking and by returning the university to its foundation of scholarship and 'subversive' thinking" (p. 19). So successful have they been in those areas, that governments generally view universities as hotbeds of dissent and opposition to regimes; furthermore governments operate largely with a mindset which allows little or no space for the 'liberal' approaches which, of necessity, are central to the core values of what a university stands for.

With regard to informing economic development, African governments have largely ignored the wisdom coming out of their own universities. It is also rather ironic that African governments are often unaware of the achievements of their own scholars in policy-related research, or simply do not believe that their work is, or can be, as good as that of their counterparts in the West. What is even more ironic is that, frequently, our governments rely on academic expertise from universities outside Africa, whose scholars in turn rely on local experts to inform their consulting work, for which they invariably get paid handsomely. This kind of behaviour also becomes one of the triggers for the massive brain drain suffered by Africa, as top talent seeks opportunities in places where they gain the recognition their work commands and are rewarded commensurately. Therefore, put simply, until such time as African governments actually value their universities, invest in them, and form a real partnership with them, the African university will remain peripheral and encumbered in its efforts to be an institution that serves Africa.

There is also an apparent failure to appreciate the linkages and interconnections between the different levels of education, clearly reflected in policy frameworks that create separate ministries of education and higher education. While this division of responsibilities is understandable from an operational point of view, it results in a failure to formulate policies that see the different levels of education as a continuum, with the goal of better articulation. It leads to a lack of the kind of "strong understanding" that Busia (1962) points out when he states that "[i]t is true that education at each level depends on that at the level above, which, in turn, is dependent on it". Curriculum reform needs to occur in a multi-level structure that is informed by this continuum, and to appreciate the direct linkages between the various levels of education.

Pedagogy and delivery methods have close mutual links, each being affected by the other. A central debate in higher education today is how technology is changing pedagogical paradigms and revolutionising power relations in the classroom. In

the face of challenges such as the lack of physical space and other resources to accommodate rapidly increasing numbers of students in our higher education systems, a balancing act is now playing itself out. On the one side is the call for greater use of technology based on the view that technology can or should be used to increase access to higher education. On the other side is the practical need and the convenience of using technology to support the delivery of instruction, and to more easily manage administrative services which directly support teaching and learning. While some large and well-renowned universities have expanded their teaching from a largely face-to-face activity, to experimenting with MOOCs,<sup>9</sup> Africa is still somewhat only tentatively engaged with the extensive use of instructional technology. We simply wish to flag this issue, but are constrained in our capacity to address it in greater detail. Technology-enhanced learning, however, remains an area in need of focus and attention, with a view to exploiting it in the interests of optimising the educational experience.

#### RESEARCH

Research remains central and important in defining the purpose of a university, regardless of whether it is an African university or one located in any other part of the world. Indeed, in this regard, Altbach (2013) points out that:

...research universities around the world are part of an active community of institutions that share values, foci, and mission. (p. 328)

Although Altbach's (2013) comments were directed specifically at research universities, they apply actually quite accurately to most African universities which, according to him, are seeking to improve their quality:

Several of Africa's traditionally strong universities are seeking to improve their quality in an effort to achieve research university status, with assistance from external funders; but this process is, in general, behind levels of academic development in other continents.

The same author further notes and concludes that:

All developing countries need these institutions to participate in the globalised environment of higher education. Thus, understanding the characteristics of the research university and building the infrastructure and the intellectual environment needed for successful research universities is a top priority.

The above statement captures well the dichotomous situation in which the African university exists. It must honour and subscribe to the universal values of 'the university' globally, but it must also act in a manner that demonstrates its value and relevance in the society in which it exists.

In most African countries, the research agenda has been influenced and perhaps even driven by five major factors, which we discuss below:



1. *Maintenance of standards.* Institutions usually have a desire to maintain standards, which are often benchmarked on criteria put in place during colonial times and, therefore, in many ways, are similar to those applicable elsewhere; in other words, they tend to conform to a more or less universal standard.
2. *Personal need and professional development.* Academic personnel acknowledge that this is an essential component of providing the wherewithal needed to progress within the ranks of academia, certainly when it comes to increasing prospects for international recognition with its potential benefits
3. *Sources of funding.* This aspect has two interesting sides to it. The first is that most African universities were generally established on the promise of generous state funding and yet, almost across the continent, that source of funding has quickly dwindled and, in some cases, has practically disappeared. An important effect of this is that it almost immediately removes any right government might have to ask universities to prioritise national needs in their research. The universities' priorities will more likely be influenced by readily available sources of funding. Much of that funding comes with its own clearly defined foci and required deliverables. This is a challenge which the university is almost powerless to deal with, and yet it is ultimately one which goes a long way to defining the extent to which the university can have an African focus. The corollary is that, unless African governments seriously understand the value of their own institutions in nation building and development, and respond by providing resources to support initiatives that are of national importance, the African university will struggle to assume a truly African identity, based on its research agenda and profile.
4. *Partnerships.* Although the partnerships that have emerged so far tend to be with other academic institutions, mostly from the more industrialised countries, we are beginning to also see a few partnerships emerging with the private sector or with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). As with the preceding point, these partnerships are often less than altruistic, and therefore result in a skewing of the research foci to suit the needs of the lead partner or the funding provider. However, these partnerships often provide great opportunities for exposing academics and their research to a broader constituency than their national or local one.
5. *Globalisation.* Globalisation has enabled institutions to be part of an ever-present and active global academic space, a kind of *agora* in which anyone can play a role or readily observe others doing so. It has also resulted in both inflows and outflows of skills to and from various nations. Overall, Africa's research agenda has tended to be enriched by these cross-flows and cross-fertilisation processes, especially when African academics have had the opportunity to either work or obtain high level qualifications from abroad and subsequently return to their home countries.

The foregoing points are, of course, broad generalisations which may or may not wholly apply, nor to all the universities in Africa. In countries such as Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, for example, state funding remains substantial.



Interestingly enough, such funding has avoided drawing in its wake much of the usual bureaucratic ‘strings’, where government seeks to influence the character of its institutions by either providing or withholding funds, or strictly prescribing the areas of research.

#### GLOBALISATION AND INTERNATIONALISATION

The theme of globalisation as a key factor was given great prominence by Senegalese Vice Chancellor, Niang (2000),<sup>10</sup> who provided a lucid vision of the African university of the 21st century and its re-framed mission:

The 21st century will, undoubtedly, turn out to be a century of convergence and solidarity. It will be a century of convergence for a true dialogue between cultures, and a century of solidarity towards a humanistic reunion of “give and take” usher in “universal civilisation”. (online)

And the same speaker continued to suggest that:

Based on this approach of the rapid changes affecting societies and nations, educational and training systems should be redefined, beginning first and foremost with the Higher Education system. In this respect, African universities should reckon with - for its part, University Cheikh Anta Diop has already reckoned with - the issue of globalisation taking into account two essential components, namely cooperation and global development by redefining their education and training strategies based on a re-assessment of their missions. (online)

In considering globalisation, we ought to think of it in several dimensions. First, in line with part of the wording of our title, the need for change is driven by both internal and external factors and, with regard to the latter, globalisation has an inexorable influence on the functioning and future of the African university. We should also think of it in the context of the process of internationalisation, a tenet which is sweeping through the entire academy. For decades now, African universities have actively sought partnerships with institutions abroad. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that partnerships with African universities have been sought by institutions abroad, because the initiative has tended to come from outside Africa, rather than from our own institutions. As a result of that dynamic, the resulting agenda has often been dictated by those from whom the initiative has come. While we now see some African universities taking charge of the agenda to ensure that it represents their own interests, rather than those of other interest groups, Dzvimbo and Moloi (2013) consider the issue from a neoliberal economics viewpoint, arguing that:

... sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has for too long been pressurised by neo-liberal market economics and government policies into serving their interests before

its own. In particular, the provision of higher education for the 'clients', the students, has been implicitly geared to furthering the process of globalisation. (p. 2)

Similarly, Joshee (2008) argues that, in education, the neoliberal agenda stresses:

... global competitiveness, the reduction of the publicly financed costs of education, and of social reproduction in general, the necessity for greater market choice and accountability and the hierarchically conditioned, globally oriented state subjects - i.e. individuals oriented to excel in ever transforming situations of global competition, either as workers, managers or entrepreneurs. (p. 36)

There is therefore an urgent need for African universities to do some serious introspection to establish whether what they view as internationalisation is not merely becoming part of someone else's internationalisation agenda. There is often a self-deprecating view which presumes that African institutions have nothing of value to offer to their counterparts abroad, a view which our institutions need to be disabused of, in order for them to gain sufficient confidence to more aggressively seek partnerships that add value to their own enterprise. At first, the answer to the question "What can we offer the world?" may appear daunting and yet, once enough time is spent on it, the answers may be simple but truly astounding. With globalisation, there is a growing trend on the part of 'others' to now pay serious attention to 'forms of knowing' previously considered marginal or inconsequential. There is an accompanying desire and willingness to embrace opportunities to form meaningful partnerships with institutions that either have access to, or are themselves considered to be "owners of indigenous knowledge, thus presenting limitless possibilities for Africa to make its knowledge base important and relevant in the global scheme of things. Obvious examples of where such a process of self-examination could start include the world-wide interest in all forms of indigenous knowledge and the continuing importance of African plants in research related to drug discovery. The idea of engaging in such a process could also be applied to how research can be designed, developed and funded in a way that gives it a sharp African focus.

Internationalisation and globalisation have also affected the African university positively, by way of new opportunities which have become available for African scholars who have distinguished themselves in one way or another, to gain employment at institutions outside Africa. Those opportunities have tended to attract Africa's best, thus creating the now well documented 'brain drain'. Globalisation should be inherently a two-way process and, increasingly, we are seeing countries creating conditions and mechanisms to turn their brain drain into something positive, more of a 'brain circulation' or at least beginning to reverse the drain in some ways. China has done much in this regard and been very successful in creating conditions that make it sufficiently attractive for Chinese in the diaspora to return to China and

put to use the knowledge and experience they gained abroad. In Africa, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) has recently launched an “African Diaspora Support to African Universities” programme. However, to a very large degree, as even some of these examples suggest, these initiatives tend to be driven by those in the diaspora.

Whatever approaches may be adopted eventually, there is clearly a great opportunity for the African university to rethink its relationships with its diaspora and for African governments to put in place effective mechanisms for seizing this new opportunity. As Zeleza (2012) observes, and specifically noting the globalisation factor, the challenges which our institutions face “...are simultaneously internal and external, institutional and intellectual, paradigmatic and pedagogical, political and practical. Globalisation, as a process and a project of neo-liberalism, reinforces and recasts these challenges”. He is clearly pointing to the need for formulating a strategy to deal with those challenges.

#### RE-THINKING THE AGENCY FOR CHANGE

Historically, African development has been based on models brought in, often wholesale, from other parts of the world. The result has often been significantly less success than the designers of the model might have anticipated. It is for this reason that we propose here, that part of the effort in creating a real identity for the African university should go towards trying to find new and endemically African approaches to dealing with the morass in which the African university currently finds itself. The question we would like every African university leader and those in relevant government agencies to ask themselves is “Who or what should be the agents of change to lead us to a truly African university?” We would also urge African scholars to make this part of their regular thinking in the work they do, even though we are aware that, in some quarters, the change agenda is already receiving attention with regard to issues of curriculum, pedagogy, research, language of instruction, etc.

In re-thinking the agency of change, we believe it would be safe to start by acknowledging that, while most African governments have, with little hesitation, put money into creating the physical infrastructure for universities, our confidence in their understanding of, or commitment to, what could make these institutions great is no longer as high as when the process started. The African university must disabuse itself of the long-held view of itself as a kind of ‘ward of the state’ whose survival depends on state support. We now need to look elsewhere for this agency role, starting with the university itself; it needs to look within itself to find new ways to sustain its vision and place in the world. We provide a short list of some of the more obvious possibilities:

- University-driven partnerships with the private sector, both local and international

- Research partnerships with well-endowed institutions and global funding agencies, based on an agenda of issues strategically identified by the university itself, to attract not only funding, but also human and other forms of capital
- Commercialisation<sup>11</sup> of some aspects of the university's operations—our experience shows numerous examples of how universities fail to recognise the potential for commercialisation of some of their activities and display a great reluctance to be associated with 'making money!'
- Cost-sharing models—there are innumerable possibilities, and so we simply offer this as a broad suggestion, which could serve as the start of a massive joint brainstorming exercise
- New schemes to enable parents to start creating small 'education funds' for their children, far in advance of when they are expected to enter university. This could also be done in ways that involve employers in funding such programmes.

No doubt, others could add to this list of ideas and suggestions and, according to the circumstances of each institutional setting, detailed plans could be formulated. Another 'big idea' is, of course, the design of a grand plan for tapping into the resources found amongst the African diaspora, as referred to above. We believe this creates a possible opportunity for re-thinking who or what the agents of change in the African university might be.

#### SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this chapter, we have raised some of the major themes that invite critical thought on the notion of an African university. We have examined the knowledge domain as the stock-in-trade for the university the world-over, but isolated the processes of its production and dissemination in the context of the curriculum and accompanying pedagogy, knowledge production through research, and how the two are funded in the context of the African university. The chapter has exposed some of the challenges confronting this institution—the African university—and opportunities available for it to change. Taking into account the various histories which have influenced the development of the African university, we have offered some insights into how the 21st century African university can reposition itself as a relevant establishment with a mission to attend to African priorities and challenges, first and foremost, before turning to the global. To that end, we posit that knowledge production and dissemination in an African university, originating in the problems and existential conditions of Africa is a *sine qua non* for the change agenda for the African university and African nations as they seek to optimise the value they gain from their institutions, while also positioning them for global relevance and competitiveness. Until such a time as there is also a real commitment by the African political leadership to accord their universities the kind of place and role in society they enjoy in other cultures, and the level of resourcing that shows the seriousness

of the leadership's commitment, the notion of a truly African university will simply remain that—an idea.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> According to the Guinness Book of Records, the University of Al Karaouine, founded in 859 AD at Fez, Morocco by a woman, Fatima al-Fihiri, is thought to be the oldest university in the world.
- <sup>2</sup> "Re-think, re-invent" is the motto of the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.
- <sup>3</sup> Although the oldest known institution of higher learning is the University of Karueein, founded in 859 AD at Fez, Morocco, the modern university is based largely on the philosophy which informed the founding of the University of Bologna. Generally considered the first university in Europe, it was established in 1088 as a centre of learning, with the pursuit of knowledge and truth as its mission—*Universitas magistrorum et scholarium* (community of teachers and scholars).
- <sup>4</sup> Quote taken from speech on his installation as the first Chancellor of the University of Ghana, unpaginated.
- <sup>5</sup> The University of Bologna, established in 1088, is generally considered to be the first university in Europe.
- <sup>6</sup> Quotes inserted to highlight the exact text of our definition.
- <sup>7</sup> Opening remarks at the opening of a CODESRIA conference on *The university and social transformation in Africa*. University of South Africa (UNISA), 13th October, 2013.
- <sup>8</sup> Executive Secretary of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).
- <sup>9</sup> MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses.
- <sup>10</sup> From a speech delivered at the opening on a conference on globalisation, at Cheikh Anta Diop University (no page numbers).
- <sup>11</sup> We have deliberately and carefully thought about the choice of this term, rather than 'privatisation', which has completely different connotations, even though there may be some similarities in the desired end result. The universities would remain national assets and not become private property.

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## **7. AFRICANISATION AND DIVERSE EPISTEMOLOGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION DISCOURSES**

*Limitations and Possibilities*

### **INTRODUCTION: KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY – AN AFRICAN VISION OF HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION**

The ‘Africanisation’ of higher education is generally understood (Moulder, 1995; Pityana, 2004) to involve institutional transformation, and more specifically ‘decolonisation’ of higher education. As such, it has been assumed by many to be ‘beyond debate’.<sup>1</sup> In 2003, an initial meeting took place between the then South African president Thabo Mbeki and vice-chancellors of institutions of higher education. The objective was to pave the way towards transformation, by identifying critical issues and challenges in higher education in South Africa. It was in this context that the relevance (and indeed the interrelatedness) of African culture, African identity and African knowledge systems was articulated. The foundation document, which Malegapuru Makgoba and Sipho Seepe (then acting vice-chancellors of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Vista University, respectively) were commissioned to prepare, was circulated for critical commentary, mainly among academics, before it was submitted to then Minister of Education, Kader Asmal. “The discussion paper ... covers areas such as identity, culture, language and globalisation, but keeps returning to its central theme: What is African knowledge? What is an African identity and what would an African university look like [?]” (Seepe, 2004, p. 8). Seepe adds, somewhat puzzlingly: “Answers are not given to these questions. *Nor should they*” (Seepe, 2004, p. 8; emphasis added). Nevertheless, other universities soon followed suit with dedicated programs of institutional transformation. “The transformation challenge must be implicit in what we teach, the kinds of knowledge we produce”, according to a 2005 Wits University Forum discussion document. “... Informed by the global context, we intend to be distinctly African in our purpose, commitment, curriculum, research and in how we engage with all sectors of society” (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005, pp. 3, 4).

The present chapter explores some of the focal areas in the discourse(s) of transformation in South African higher education, most significantly the ideas of an African essence, culture and identity, as well as indigenous or African knowledge

systems. A popular trend in this regard takes culture and identity to be the “central determinants of which knowledge to get into the curriculum” (Ekong & Cloete, 1997, p. 11; see also Ntuli, 2004<sup>2</sup>). This position is associated with an instrumentalist approach to education, educational institutions and knowledge (Ekong & Cloete, 1997, p. 10; Makgoba, 1997, pp. 142, 143), an approach that “insists on problem-solving skills, applied research, local or African content and community service” (Ekong & Cloete, 1997, p. 10). In other words, education and knowledge are treated (at least implicitly) not as values or ends in and for themselves, but as instrumental in the construction of identity and culture. The present chapter argues that neither the idea of an African essence (culture and identity), nor the notion of African ‘ways of knowing’ constitutes an appropriate theoretical framework for conceptualising change in higher educational thought and practice in South Africa.

In the aforementioned discussion document, Makgoba and Seepe’s (2004) ‘preliminary remarks’ stipulate “an African identity and vision” of higher education that is in opposition to, and a departure from, “the current Colonial-Christian-Western identity and vision” (pp. 13, 14):

[T]he responsibilities [connected with being an African university] are ... served not only by adapting our scholarship to the social structure and the cultural environment of Africa but by also producing knowledge that takes the African condition and the African identity as its central problem. The central issue for our universities today is an institutional transformation in higher education that will provide for the production of knowledge that recognises the African condition as historical and defines its key task as one of coming to grips with it critically. (Makgoba & Seepe, 2004, p. 19)

The same authors go on to say that “[t]he process for translating the African identity and vision in education is called Africanisation” (Makgoba & Seepe, 2004, p. 40).

#### AFRICANISATION AND THE HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN SOUTH AFRICA

The ‘Africanisation’ of higher education in South Africa is multi-dimensional and can be taken to involve at least four different kinds of transformations or changes: (1) transformation “reflecting the demographic profile of the country at all levels of the life of the institution”, i.e. changes in the composition of student, academic and administrative bodies; (2) transformation of the syllabus or content, i.e. changes in what is taught—pertinent considerations here concern issues of relevance, language (‘decolonisation of the mind’<sup>3</sup>) and critical thinking or interrogation of the former, oppressive status quo; (3) transformation of the curriculum, i.e. changes in the whole way teaching and learning are organised; and (4) transformation in terms of “throughput rates and research profile” (Pityana, 2004, p. 4; cf. also Moulder, 1995, p. 7)—changes in the criteria that determine what counts as excellent research etc., on the basis of acknowledgement of, and respect for diverse and subaltern

epistemologies (see Dei, 2004, p. 339). Regarding transformation of the curriculum, the emphasis on indigenous or African knowledge, in particular, characterises the writings of a host of academics and commentators.

Regarding the first of the proposed changes, it might be argued that there has been a steady increase in black student numbers since 1980, with similar changes occurring among academics and administrators. Nevertheless, Catherine Odora Hoppers is critical of projects that focus solely on “Africanisation in terms of personnel rather than in terms of fundamental reconstruction of concepts and theories governing the social reality itself” (Odora Hoppers, 2000, p. 3). She considers this focus on “Africanisation, as a change of colour of face rather than a change of total mind-set ... [to be] oblivious of the changing nature of the violences of neocolonialism and global hegemony in the real world order” (Odora Hoppers, 2000, p. 4). Moreover, “while Africanisation of the disciplines has occurred within subjects like history and other nationally oriented programmes, no deep debate on approaches to the study fields has ever emerged” (Odora Hoppers, 2000, p. 4).

Education theorists in South Africa, of course, are mindful of these problems. Africanising universities is, in addition, as much about changing the syllabus (item 2 of the proposed changes) as it is about “changing the curriculum [item 3], the whole way in which teaching and learning is organised” (Moulder, 1995, p. 7). Barney Pityana contends:

The restructuring and transformation of the higher education landscape opens up a variety of innovative possibilities for a progressive higher education system. ... We could interrogate our attachment to the European coat-tails of intellectual tradition or venture into a new and exciting future of rediscovery as an African society with a rich intellectual and cultural tradition that can form the fulcrum for interrogating and critiquing all other traditions. This means that South African higher education institutions are rediscovering Africa as a discursive space for intellectual growth. (Pityana, 2004, p. 4)

Clearly, and this is significant for the purposes of the present chapter, the very possibility of “interrogating and critiquing all other traditions” (Pityana, 2004, p. 4) presupposes the commensurability and transculturality of knowledge and values.

The proposal of “transformation as throughput rates and research profile” (Pityana, 2004, p. 4; i.e. item 4 of the proposed changes) is understood to contain a plea not for the lowering of standards, but that South Africa should focus on problems that are rooted in and significant for Africa, i.e. it is a plea for relevance. James Moulder (1995) sees it as underpinned by a set of assumptions within which higher education should operate that include the following: South Africa is essentially a third world country; South Africa has a growing number of young people; there are noticeable discrepancies in standards between institutions; university teaching has been pitched at too high a level; higher priority should be given to teaching excellence; research findings should be implemented; graduates should be prepared for a career or vocation; finally, institutions should accept less autonomy (cf.

Moulder, 1995, p. 8; Makgoba, 2003; Pityana, 2004. For a more cautious take on institutional autonomy and government intrusion/state intervention, cf. Vale, 2003, p. 1).

Given Africa's history of colonial subjugation, the basic idea of Africanisation of higher education—as encapsulating a *quest for relevance*—is not implausible. No one would ever contemplate 'Anglicising' Cambridge or 'Germanising' Heidelberg. (The 'Europeanisation' envisaged post-Bologna Protocol has to do with portability of knowledge, assessment practices and qualifications across tertiary institutions throughout the European Union, and not with reclamation, historical disenfranchisement or similar pursuits.) By contrast, then, the idea of Africanising institutions on the African continent appears to make a certain amount of sense, on account of the (past) fundamental inequities and injustices of our society (see Moulder, 1995, p. 7). However, to couch the demand for, and the necessity of fundamental changes also education *exclusively* in the language of Africanisation is not only fanciful, but it appears to miss the political *and* practical *point* of the project. For one thing, it may create a false, or at best superficial sense of 'belonging'. For another, it may lead to further marginalisation or derogation, such as that already contained in ideas such as 'African time'.

In addition, while the language of Africanisation may emphasise relevance, it arguably also implies commitment to an essentialism that is questionable, both empirically and normatively. In this regard, Makgoba and Seepe (among many others) commit what might be called the fallacy of applying the collective singular:<sup>4</sup> "[The] responsibilities [connected with being an African university] are moral, intellectual and inspirational and they are served not only by adapting our scholarship to the social structure and the cultural environment of Africa but by also producing knowledge that takes the African condition and the African identity as its central problem" (Makgoba & Seepe, 2004, p. 19). To speak of 'the social structure' and 'the cultural environment of Africa', not to mention 'the African condition' and 'the African identity' is to appeal to a mythical 'essence' of Africa. Just as there is no (one or single) *African* culture, and certainly not one that subsumes various cultural beliefs and norms, the notion of a single, homogeneous, monolithic and readily identifiable 'African identity' (or 'European identity', for that matter) is mistaken. There is a multitude of heterogeneous, contradictory, frequently incoherent and inconsistent, and occasionally overlapping African identities, sometimes even within one and the same person. Failure to recognise this not only flies in the face of common experience, but also undermines endeavours to address the challenges of multiculturalism (such as responding to diversity and differences, often profound) in theory and practice. Indeed, as Pityana has realised:

South African society is very diverse and expresses its *identities* in a variety of ways. That in itself is not fatal, because such diversity provides the material for intellectual dialogue. (Pityana, 2004, p. 1; emphasis added)

## CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION AND 'DIVERSE EPISTEMOLOGIES'

Regarding transformation of the curriculum (the third item of the proposed changes listed above), Herbert Vilakazi has offered a set of 'urgent requirements': "the need to synchronise education and development policy"; "the need for a massive public campaign on [the right kind of] education ... for actually imparting specific knowledge and skills to members of society"; and "the need to design specific curricula and methods of imparting the appropriate knowledge" (Vilakazi, 2000, pp. 202–203).

The special role of knowledge in Africanisation and the transformation of the higher education curriculum in South Africa are highlighted in the writings of many authors and commentators, some of which are presented below:

- Dani Nabudere (2003) claims that the "models of Western Universities which Africa adopted have proved *completely unsuitable* for Africa's needs" (p. 6; emphasis added), and goes on to state that the higher education curriculum should be culture-specific and knowledge-source-specific in its orientation. As such, curriculum development should aim at:
  - Increasing African knowledge in the general body of global human knowledge;
  - Creating linkages between the sources of African knowledge and the centres of learning on the continent;
  - Reducing the gap between African elites and the communities from which they come by ensuring that education is available to all Africans and that such knowledge is drawn from the communities (Nabudere, 2003, p. 16).

With Vilakazi (1999, p. 204), Nabudere envisages essential input from 'uncertificated' women and men into knowledge production and dissemination, "ordinary African men and women who ... live largely in rural areas" (p. 204) and whose tutorship would guide not only students but also, and importantly, "the African intelligentsia", i.e. African academics and scholars (Nabudere, 2003, pp. 12, 13).
- According to Makgoba and Seepe (2004), Africanisation and institutional transformation will "give us a new approach in knowledge-seeking" ... "The African university should be the custodian of African knowledge, ... so that it can dictate terms of appropriation to the world" ... "The agenda of the African university should be reclamation first, and therefore establishment—or both simultaneously—of African knowledge" (pp. 19, 20).
- Talvin Schultz (2004) speaks of the "development of uniquely African knowledge products" (p. 72) and of universities as "indigenous knowledge construction sites" (p. 73).
- Thandwayisiswe Mthembu (2004) contends that knowledge, "in all its manifestation of formation, context, structure, transmission and acquisition, posits a necessary and sufficient condition for uniqueness of a way of knowing

as could be exemplified by the modern African university”. After asking, “Do we present a unique way of knowing?”, he asserts, “Nobody would deny that the concept ‘African’ exists; and that there could possibly be unique ways of knowing and that there could be a modern African university embedded in that epistemological thrust” (p. 79).

- Teboho Lebakeng (2004) claims that the “process of [higher education] transformation overlooks the fact that during colonial ways of conquest the Western colonialists instituted epistemicide (a destruction of African knowledge systems) and imposed a Western colonial epistemology. In the process they undermined and denigrated indigenous knowledge, social values and socio-cultural identities” (p. 79). He concludes that “epistemic liberation ... can only be achieved by transformation that seeks to reverse epistemicide through reclamation of an indigenous African epistemology” (p. 112).
- With regard to transformation of higher education in South Africa, Annette Lansink (2004) notes that relatively “few critical questions have been asked about the curriculum and the production of knowledge in this country. ... The curriculum is the official register of a society’s knowledge ... [and] includes how knowledge is organised and what legitimate knowledge is” (p. 121).
- Nhlanhla Maake (2004) poses the question whether “the African university” (here, too, the use of the singular is noteworthy) should not be “the custodian of African knowledge, both aesthetic and functional, so that it can dictate terms of [its] appropriation to the world” (p. 168).
- Finally, Pitika Ntuli (2004) argues that “IKS (Indigenous Knowledge Systems) must play a pivotal role in higher education if we are to be grounded on African realities”, before asking, “How do we harness African knowledge systems in our curricula so that relevance is correctly placed at the centre of our project for Africa’s renewal?” (p. 172):

The African university [!] exists within networks of contestation of knowledge systems. Foregrounding IKS requires a clear-eyed analysis and appreciation of the magnitude of the challenges and the need to be focused, dedicated and strategic in all our endeavours. (pp. 172–173)

This selection of quotations by influential African scholars invites a plethora of critical questions. Why would nobody “deny ... that there could possibly be unique [African] ways of knowing”? What does an “indigenous African epistemology” look like or comprise? *Are* there ‘uniquely African knowledge products’? Do the ideas of ‘indigenous’ or ‘African’ knowledge, and of ‘diverse (and/or subaltern) epistemologies’ make sense?

These central ideas have a rich recent history. ‘Indigenous knowledge’ is a relatively recent buzz phrase that, amongst other things, constitutes part of a challenge to ‘Western’ education, i.e. in terms of interrogating the validity of the prevalent knowledge systems. In recent years, it has been the chief focal issue of conferences, countless articles, internet and worldwide web postings, and



anthologies like those edited by Ladislaus M. Semali and Joe L. Kincheloe (1999), Catherine Odora Hoppers (2002), and Boaventura De Sousa Santos (2007). In his discussion of the ways and possibilities of preparing doctoral students for ‘epistemological diversity’, Aaron Pallas writes, “[e]xperienced researchers and novices alike find it hard to keep up with the cacophony of diverse epistemologies ... positivism, naturalism, postpositivism, empiricism, relativism, feminist standpoint epistemology, foundationalism, postmodernism ...” (Pallas, 2001, p. 6). Lesley Green (2008), too, speaks of ‘epistemological diversity’ and ‘knowledge diversity’. However, she relates this appeal not to different normative theories of knowledge, but to diversity across ethnicities, cultures, etc.

A widespread, recent view is that ethnic or cultural groups have their own distinctive epistemologies, that epistemologies are also gendered, and that these aspects have been largely ignored by the dominant social group in the respective countries or national contexts. A corollary of this view states that educational research is pursued within a framework that represents particular assumptions about knowledge and knowledge production that reflect the interests and historical traditions of this dominant group. Odora Hoppers (2002a) opposes “the monochrome logic of Western epistemology” (p. vii), and draws attention to the existence of “plural manifestations of epistemology” (Odora Hoppers, 2002b, p. 18). Other popular terms include ‘democratic epistemology’ (Nkomo, 1990, 2000), ‘multicultural epistemologies’ (Banks, 1998), ‘African’/ ‘Afrocentric epistemology’ (Asante, 1990, 2005; Bakari, 1997), ‘feminist epistemology’ (Code, 2012; Harding, 1987), ‘Chicana feminist epistemology’ (Bernal, 1998), ‘Afrocentric feminist epistemology’ (Hill Collins, 1990), ‘Islamisation of knowledge’ (Dangor, 2005), etc. Further popular terms include ‘sexist/androcentric’ and ‘racist epistemologies’ (Braidotti, 1991, 2006; Scheurich & Young, 1997), as well as ‘women’s’ or ‘gendered ways of knowing’ (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Harding, 1996), and ‘African’ or ‘native ways of knowing’ (Dei, 2002, 2004; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005).

More often than not, however, in such arguments for different, diverse, alternative, decolonised or demasculinised epistemologies, some relevant philosophical issues remain unresolved, if not unaddressed altogether. What exactly do claims about ‘indigenous’ or ‘African’ knowledge and ‘epistemological diversity’ mean? Do these ways of establishing knowledge stand up to critical interrogation? Moreover, how do they relate to traditional epistemological distinctions, e.g. between knowledge and belief, and between descriptive and normative inquiry, and to epistemologically essential components like justification (or warrant) and truth? These questions also pertain to the common reference to different ‘ways of knowing’.

#### ‘WAYS OF KNOWING’

Claudia Ruitenberg (2012) provides some reasons for concern about the plausibility of the notion of ‘ways of knowing’ (pp. 101, 102). Drawing on the work of



R.S. Peters (1970) and analytic philosophers Gilbert Ryle (1963) and Richard Robinson (1971), Ruitenberg (2012, pp. 103, 104) argues that the phrase is not only vague, but also fraught with all kinds of linguistic and conceptual difficulties. She questions the continuing use of this ‘ambiguous’ and ‘vague’ phrase, for example by feminist and Africanist scholars, especially when “more precise descriptions are available, such as ‘sources of knowledge’, ‘forms of representation’, ‘ways of learning’, and ‘regimes of truth’” (pp. 101–102).

Why is reference to ‘ways of knowing’ problematic in the estimation of professed analytical philosophers? In essence, ‘know’ and ‘knowledge’ signal *states*, rather than *activities*. Knowledge, according to Robinson (1971),

... is never an act, or any kind of event. [...] Although [it] is not an event, it has events closely connected with itself, notably its origin, that is the coming to know or learning, and its ending, that is the being forgotten or otherwise ceasing, and its recalls or realisations whenever we bring to mind or remember what we know. [...] there is no actual as opposed to habitual present tense of the verb ‘to know’ in English. (p. 17)

In a related approach, Peters (1970) employs Ryle’s distinction between ‘achievement words’ and ‘task words’ (Ryle, 1963, pp. 143–147, 155). The latter refer to activities, while the former designate the results of these activities. Thus, ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’ are task words, while ‘education’ is the (possible) result of these, i.e. an achievement word (Peters, 1970, p. 26). Similarly, knowledge is not a task word. It *may be* the result of both teaching and learning, just as it may result from ‘reading’, ‘listening’, ‘seeking’, etc. But, even if these difficulties are acknowledged, is the linguistic and conceptual awkwardness of a phrase (in the English language) enough to threaten the validity of the idea it expresses?

Ruitenberg (2012) is careful not to leap to this conclusion (and to avoid what would be, and has been contested by pragmatist philosophers). Instead, she examines the idea of ‘ways of knowing’ and asks what it is meant to convey and to do, i.e. what claims or demands does it “make (and possibly mask)” and what effects it is meant to bring about (Ruitenberg, 2012, p. 110)? It appears, she says, that “the phrase ‘ways of knowing’ often addresses issues far beyond epistemology” (p. 110). Indeed, a conflation of ontology and epistemology is manifest, not only in some appeals to ‘women’s ways of knowing’, but also in Asante’s (2005) assertion that “African ontology involves the interconnectedness of all reality, thus African epistemology is grounded in holistic reason” (p. 42). Similarly, although less explicitly than Asante, Dei (2004) speaks of “the struggle to affirm diverse forms of knowledge as a way to transform education at the school site into learning experiences that are interconnected with the individual and collective reality or realities of the learner in a locality” (p. 338).<sup>5</sup> Ruitenberg (2012) argues, correctly I believe, that the phrase ‘ways of knowing’ covers<sup>6</sup> various ideas, like “spiritual beliefs, beliefs about the individuality or relationality of human beings, and beliefs about the relation between

reason and emotion ... under a single verb with a long history in Western philosophy” (p. 114). According to Ruitenberg,

The use of an epistemological-sounding phrase such as “ways of knowing” ... can have the effect of legitimating a discussion that might otherwise be dismissed. However, epistemological-sounding discourse not only legitimates but also obscures the other questions at stake [i.e. more ontological or metaphysical concerns]. (pp. 116, 117)

Ruitenberg (2012) claims that there are arguably two ways of framing claims about different ‘ways of knowing’: the first considers these as “shorthand for the larger worldviews of which epistemologies are a part” (p. 111), while the second treats claims about different ‘ways of knowing’ in terms of ‘epistemological diversity’ (pp. 101, 114). However, while this would enable the distinction between epistemology, on the one hand, and ontology and metaphysics, on the other, the idea of ‘epistemological diversity’ is anything but uncontroversial.

A problem with Ruitenberg’s (2012) analysis is that her favoured substitutes for ‘ways of knowing’ are every bit as problematic—if not more so. Thus, she approvingly quotes Michel Foucault’s “critique of epistemological hegemony”, his analysis of “how knowledge and truth are always part of systems of power” (Ruitenberg, p. 115):

Each society has its own regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 2002, cited by Ruitenberg, 2012, p. 115)

At least two concerns arise in this regard. The ideas of ‘regimes of truth’ and “‘general politics’ of truth’ not only indicate a category mistake (in treating epistemological matters as necessarily inseparable from matters of social justice), but they also involve relativism about truth. Is Foucault able to make these sorts of assertions consistently? If he is correct, then this is so only on the basis of his particular society’s regime or ‘general politics’ of truth—in which case the question arises as to why others (i.e. those who do not belong to his particular society) ought to find his analysis compelling. If he is saying, however, that this particular truth holds trans-societally, then he has in effect opened the door to the (strong) possibility of there being *other* truths that are not confined to the contexts of society or culture. Either way, then, this (Foucaultian) account of truth loses much of its intended force.<sup>7</sup>

The other descriptions offered by Ruitenberg (2012) may be less contentious, conceptually, but they cannot work as substitutes for ‘ways of knowing’. ‘*Sources* of

knowledge', for example, are different from '*kinds of knowledge*'. The former include observation, sensation, reasoning, testimony, memory and the like, while the latter include theoretical (or propositional), practical and acquaintance-type knowledge—clearly these are not the same. What about 'ways of learning'? 'Ways of learning' may also be, but are not necessarily, ways of acquiring knowledge. 'Learning how' may be said to lead to 'knowing how', but the same is not true for 'learning that' and 'knowing that'. What is learned may be false, or insufficiently justified. For example, *learning that* God created the universe does not imply *knowing that* he did. (In addition, assuming the plausibility of Peters's (1970) analysis previously discussed, 'learning' designates a task, unlike 'knowledge'—which constitutes an achievement; see also Ryle, 1963, pp. 28–32.) 'Forms of representation', similarly, is hardly a 'more precise' phrase than 'ways of knowing'—over and above the consideration that 'representation' and 'knowing' can hardly be treated as synonyms. Besides these problems of substitution, Ruitenberg (2012) fails to consider the empirical and logical ramifications of referring to, for example, 'women's sources of knowledge', 'indigenous ways of learning' or 'African forms of representation', let alone women's or indigenous/African regimes (or 'general politics') of truth.

One's response, then, could simply be the following. It appears to be possible to understand the admittedly awkward phrase 'ways of knowing' in an extra-epistemological (and extra-ontological), more practical way—especially given the fact that 'ways of knowing' and 'knowledge (systems)' are usually treated as conceptually distinct, mentioned separately.<sup>8</sup> 'Ways of knowing' would then refer not to 'systems/forms of belief', 'world views', 'ways of being' and the like, but to 'ways of doing', practices, skills, etc. Either that—or one might simply refer to 'African knowledge (systems)' and, if need be, distinguish between practical and theoretical knowledge.<sup>9</sup> This distinction would be between skills or practices, on the one hand, and knowledge proper, on the other—where the latter also appears to underlie claims about 'epistemological diversity'. If one opts for this interpretation, however, there are additional problems, as discussed below.

#### SOME ESSENTIAL DISTINCTIONS

Jon Levisohn and Denis Phillips explain that, especially in the educational literature on multicultural reforms, the language of epistemology has been employed in some kind of rhetorical inflation, thus obscuring rather than clarifying important issues and distinctions (Levisohn & Phillips, 2012, p. 40). Traditionally, 'epistemology' refers to 'theory/logic of knowledge' (*episteme*—knowledge; *logos*—word). Over the centuries, beginning with Socrates and Plato, epistemologists have reached a general agreement about a basic division, that between knowledge and belief. A related distinction has been made between descriptive and normative inquiry, regarding beliefs and knowledge. "If these distinctions are blurred", Levisohn and Phillips (2012) write, "then all rational argument is potentially undermined, including the

very arguments multiculturalists employ” (p. 42). In order to establish some kind of conceptual clarity, they draw the following distinctions:

1. an epistemology as a normative field of inquiry;
2. an epistemology as a normative theory of knowledge;
3. an epistemology as a descriptive account of how people acquire beliefs; and
4. an epistemology as a description of a set of beliefs.

The first of these refers to the classical philosophical understanding of knowledge. According to Socrates, in Plato’s *Meno* (Plato, trans. 1970, p. 65),

True opinions, as long as they stay, are splendid and do all the good in the world, but they will not stay long—off and away they run out of the soul of mankind, so they are not worth much until you fasten them up with the reasoning of cause and effect. ... When they are fastened up, first they become knowledge, secondly they remain; and that is why knowledge is valued more than right opinion, and differs from right opinion by this bond.

And in Plato’s *Theaetetus* (Plato, trans. 1978, p. 909) the (rhetorical) question is, “... how can there ever be knowledge without an account and right belief?” Relevant distinctions are made here between knowledge and belief, between mere belief and well-warranted (or adequately justified) belief, and between true belief and justified true belief. The inquiry is essentially normative, for example, evaluating beliefs and belief strategies, investigating what beliefs are trustworthy enough to be acted on, how researchers should validate their findings, what forms of argument and what kinds of justification are acceptable, who (if anyone) counts as an epistemic authority, etc. It should be noted that among the Yoruba people, pertinent distinctions are made between *gbàgbó* (belief; the subjective/private/personal component of knowledge) and *mò* (knowledge in the sense of ‘knowledge-that’). Hallen and Sodipo (1997) observe that

... *gbàgbó* that may be verified is *gbàgbó* that may become *mò*. *Gbàgbó* that is not open to verification and must therefore be evaluated on the basis of justification alone (*àlàyé, papò*, etc.) cannot become *mò* and consequently its *òótó* [truth] must remain indeterminate. (p. 81)

It ought to be acknowledged further that in isiXhosa, ‘knowledge’ is rendered as *ulwazi*. The Nguni language root is *ulwa*—‘s/he is fighting/struggling’.<sup>10</sup> Knowledge, then, is something one struggles or fights for—unlike belief, which usually happens to us, with little or no control on our part.

The second point concerns different epistemologies within the philosophical tradition. Levisohn and Phillips (2012) distinguish between foundationalist (e.g. empiricist, rationalist, and positivist) and non-foundationalist (e.g. pragmatist) epistemologies. Here, too, the inquiry is normative. As the authors inform us, all these epistemologies coexist, because philosophers still disagree about them, even

though they agree that only one position can be right. This is not the case with appeals to ‘multicultural epistemologies’—which (as their defenders contend) are all equally respectable and valid.

The third general use of the term ‘epistemology’ serves an essentially descriptive function—and belongs less in philosophy than in the so-called ‘sociology of knowledge’ (what might be called, more fittingly, the ‘sociology of belief’), and perhaps in the psychology of learning. The fourth sense of ‘epistemology’ is also descriptive, in that it is

... sometimes extended to ... encompass description of the specific *content* of beliefs that are held, or are accorded the status of being knowledge, by ethnic or cultural groups ... multicultural epistemologies, in this usage, are *simply those differing sets of beliefs held by different communities*. (Levisohn & Phillips, 2012, p. 54)

The authors point out, plausibly I think, that within the *descriptive* senses, the notion of multicultural epistemologies is unproblematic—given the interpretation of ‘epistemologies’ as ‘beliefs’/‘belief systems’. There is, however, no coherent *normative* sense in which the existence of diverse epistemologies (multicultural or otherwise) can be affirmed. (This is also the argumentational thread that runs through Phillips (2012), who provides a critical review of several representative accounts of ‘multicultural epistemology’ that actually constitute misuses of the term ‘epistemology’.)

#### WHAT IS ‘EPISTEMOLOGICAL DIVERSITY’?

Harvey Siegel (2012) examines a number of senses in which ‘epistemological diversity’ is often used:

- beliefs and belief systems
- methodological diversity; diversity in research method(ology)
- diversity of research questions
- diversity of researchers and their cultures
- epistemologies and epistemological perspectives.

Although the application of the term ‘epistemology’ to the first four of these examples is arguably inappropriate (in that philosophers do not understand ‘epistemology’ in any of these ways), the use of ‘diversity’ is uncontroversial. Beliefs and belief systems vary, as do research methods (although Siegel is quick to point out that this should not be taken to imply some kind of methodological relativism, as advocated—for example—by Nabudere<sup>11</sup>) and research questions. Similarly, there is considerable variation in researchers’ backgrounds, their individual and cultural identities, interests, and objectives. The ‘diversity’ in question becomes more controversial, and indeed problematic, in relation to ‘epistemologies and

epistemological perspectives'. This, says Siegel (2012), goes to the "heart of the matter" (p. 73).

According to Pallas (2001) and others (like Odora Hoppers, *passim*), critical evaluation of these different epistemological perspectives is impossible, undesirable or inappropriate. The question is *why* this should be so. Siegel (2012) examines this claim from a variety of angles.

- Is it *epistemologically suspect* to criticise the epistemology of a particular community of practice, approach to research, or subordinated group? (p. 75) This is not obviously the case. According to Siegel (2012), epistemologies

... that deserve to count as legitimate epistemological alternatives must prove their mettle in the give-and-take of scholarly disputation. Some will survive such disputation, others will not. (p. 75)

Furthermore, it is doubtful whether epistemologies can be ascribed to such communities or groups in a straight-forward one-to-one fashion, given the considerable variation within these communities, groups and subgroups. Siegel (2012) perceives a "problematic essentialism" in any such mapping. (p. 78)

- Is it *morally suspect* to criticise the epistemology of a particular community of practice, or approach to research, or subordinated group? (p. 78) Even if we could ascribe epistemologies to different communities, groups and subgroups, Siegel (2012) does not consider criticism to be morally problematic: treating members' ideas with respect means taking them seriously, by subjecting them to due critical consideration and interrogation, rather than ignoring them. Moreover, if disputation and evaluation follow relevant moral principles, are fair-minded, non-question-begging, neutral (in the sense not of 'global' but of 'local neutrality') and rational, then it is difficult to see how such criticism could be morally suspect.
- Is it inevitably an *abuse of power* to criticise? (p. 79) In other words, aren't these moral principles or criteria themselves the creation and stipulation of the dominant social group? According to Siegel (2012), hegemonic abuse of power is rejected on the basis of critical evaluation and compelling argument. It is not clear how any rejection of hegemonic imposition, any critique of dominant social power (for an example of such rejection and critique, see Code, 2012, p. 93), can be coherent and consistent without advocates of alternative epistemologies employing these "tools of mainstream philosophical thought" (Siegel, 2012, p. 80).
- Is it *pragmatically suspect* to criticise the epistemology of a particular community of practice, or approach to research, or subordinated group? (p. 81) Shouldn't education researchers, to the greatest extent possible, be able to interact with all available research—mainstream and alternative alike? Siegel (2012) considers such all-inclusive engagement worth rejecting for "equally pragmatic" reasons—lack of truth-content, lack of relevance, time constraints, etc. The call for

epistemological diversity becomes problematic when it conflates epistemological pluralism and epistemological relativism, “which can only hamper the important project of rethinking the graduate education of future education researchers” (p. 83).

#### SUBJECTIVITY AND FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Lorraine Code (2012) asserts that “[f]eminist critiques of epistemology, of the philosophy of science, and of social science have demonstrated that the ideals of the autonomous reasoner—the dislocated disinterested observer—and the epistemologies they inform are artifacts of a small, privileged group of educated, usually prosperous white men” (p. 91). This is not at all obvious, one might respond: first, there is no such homogeneous group, nor has there ever been one; second, one of the few matters (if not the only matter!) epistemologists have reached agreement about is the basic distinction between knowledge and belief, where the former (propositional knowledge or ‘knowledge-that’) is anchored by the objective component of knowledge, i.e. the truth condition. Could feminists coherently and consistently reject this distinction?

Code (2012) presents the case against “traditional ‘S-knows-that-*p*’ epistemologies, with their ideals of pure objectivity and value-neutrality” (pp. 85, 86), on the grounds that epistemology would look quite different if it took as its starting focus cases of ‘knowledge by acquaintance’, where the subjectivity and positionality of the knower might turn out to be epistemically relevant. But *are* subjectivity and positionality really relevant in most epistemologically important inquiries? Without wishing to belittle the sometime significance of ‘knowing a person’ etc., I suspect not.

According to Code (2012), “[a] realistic commitment to achieving empirical advocacy that engages situated analyses of the subjectivities of both the knower and (where appropriate) the known is both desirable and possible” (p. 97). Code’s own case study, Philippe Rushton’s empirical investigation into the purported superiority of Orientals over whites, and of whites over blacks, arguably fails to illustrate what she intends. Contrary to what she asserts, “Rushton knows that blacks are inferior” (p. 97) does *not* invalidate the ‘S-knows-that-*p*’ formula. ‘Rushton *claims* to know that blacks are inferior’ would be a more appropriate rendition. It is a knowledge claim that is fairly swiftly disposed with, on the grounds of adequacy of evidence (or lack thereof), as well as the arbitrary construction of a scale of superiority/inferiority.

#### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: THE ARGUMENT FROM EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

Makgoba’s (2003) account of “the changing and competitive world of knowledge, values and norms” and “the knowledge, values and ideals of (a particular) society” (p. 1) betrays a comprehensive relativism, epistemological, cultural and moral. As it stands, it is logically questionable and epistemically inconsistent. Most



significantly, Makgoba's (2003) assertions about the 'changing' world of knowledge and knowledge being societally relative are presented as knowledge-claims and—as such—presumably as unchanging and as universal, or at least as trans-societal.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, if values and norms are essentially subject to change as well as being relative to particular societies and cultures, then one could not consistently condemn human rights abuses, racist and sexist attitudes, let alone unjust legislation, in societies other than one's own. On the other hand, the moral injunction to respect other cultures' values and norms is clearly transcultural and *unchanging*, and therefore contradicts Makgoba's account.

But does the account of knowledge and epistemology I endorse here not amount to a denial of epistemic justice? Take, as a further possible example, Siegel's no-holds-barred response to Ruitenberg's question regarding 'indigenous African women's epistemologies' (during a roundtable discussion held in San Francisco in April 2010; see Code, Phillips, Ruitenberg, Siegel, & Stone, 2012, p. 137):

They're not epistemologies. If students don't understand that by the end of their graduate education, they haven't been well educated. (p. 138)

Could this possibly constitute some kind of epistemic harm *vis-à-vis* indigenous African women?

'Epistemic injustice', argues Miranda Fricker (2007), is a distinct kind of injustice. She distinguishes between two kinds, 'testimonial injustice' and 'hermeneutical injustice', each of which consists "most fundamentally, in a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower" (p. 1; see also p. 21). Central to Fricker's (2007) analysis is the notion of (social) 'power', which she defines as "a socially situated capacity to control others' actions" (p. 4). Power works "to create or preserve a given social order" (p. 21), and is displayed in various forms of enablement, on the one hand, and disbelief, misinterpretation and silencing, on the other. It involves the conferral on certain individuals or groups, *qua* persons of that kind, "a *credibility excess*" or "a *credibility deficit*" (p. 21).

Fricker's interest resides specifically in 'identity power' and the harms it produces through the manifestation of 'identity prejudices'. The latter are responsible for denying credibility to, or withholding it from, certain persons on the basis of their being members of a certain 'social type' (p. 21). Thus, testimonial injustice involves rejecting the credibility of their knowledge claims, while hermeneutical injustice involves a general failure to marshal the conceptual resources necessary to understand and interpret these knowledge claims. The result is that those at the receiving end of these identity prejudices are hindered in their self-development and in their attainment of full human worth: they are "prevented from becoming who they are" (p. 5). In white patriarchal societies, these "epistemic humiliations" (p. 51) carry the power to destroy a would-be knower's (black or female) confidence to engage in the trustful conversations that characterise well-functioning epistemic communities (pp. 52–53). As Fricker (2007) suggests, they can "inhibit the very formation of self" (p. 55). Although they are experienced (and may be performed)

individually, testimonial and hermeneutical injustices constitute not only individual harms—they originate within a social fabric of which the biases and prejudices that enliven and perpetuate them are a characteristic part. Contesting such injustices and harms, according to Fricker, requires “collective social political change” (p. 8).

Considering how prejudice affects various levels of credibility, and also that scepticism about ‘African ways of knowing’ has sometimes been part of a hegemonic discourse and has constituted epistemic injustice, the question might now be raised as to whether my critique of this notion (and its affiliates, like ‘indigenous knowledge’ or ‘diverse epistemologies’) is not part of this discourse. I do not think it is. If ‘credibility deficit’ is a matter of epistemic injustice, then why should ‘credibility excess’ (giving previously ‘epistemologically humiliated’ people or groups excessive credibility) not also constitute epistemic harm? More fundamentally, and this point pertains to Siegel’s response to Ruitenberg (concerning ‘indigenous African women’s epistemologies’), surely there is a difference between criticising someone’s view on the mere grounds that she is black, or a woman, and criticising the views held or expressed by someone, who happens to be black or a woman, on the grounds of faulty or fallacious reasoning. Nonsense is not culturally, racially or sexually specific. Indeed, although she gestures in the direction of a basic “do no harm” principle (p. 85), Fricker (2007) herself insists that a “‘vulgar’ relativist” resistance to passing moral judgement on other cultures “is incoherent” (p. 106).

If what has been established above is cogent, it follows that the focus on indigenous knowledge systems and on ‘diverse or subaltern epistemologies’ has at best limited plausibility and value in driving the transformation process in South African higher education. Insofar as ‘knowledge’ is indeed ‘indigenous African’, and distinctly and uniquely so, it refers either to ‘indigenous African *practices* (or *skills*)’ or to ‘indigenous African *beliefs*’. In other words, if the emphasis is on ‘African’ or ‘indigenous’, one might readily conceive of instances of acquaintance or skill-type knowledge—but not of propositional knowledge. If the emphasis is on ‘knowledge’—in the propositional sense—then the qualifiers ‘indigenous’ and ‘African’ are redundant. To conclude, then: if the present analysis (of the place of knowledge in debates about higher institutional transformation, and indeed of the idea of knowledge itself) is compelling, then the ‘Africanisation of higher education’ is hardly ‘beyond debate’ (see note 1). If anything, the debate must continue.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This was indeed the opinion of contributors like Catherine Odora Hoppers and Lesiba Joe Teffo expressed in the course of a colloquium on the theme of *Africanisation of the curriculum: Beyond debate?*, held at UNISA (University of South Africa) on 26 September 2008.
- <sup>2</sup> Pitika Ntuli locates his treatment of the “search for an African identity through higher education” within the context of, *inter alia*, “an African Renaissance” and “the development of Indigenous Knowledge

Systems” (Ntuli, 2004, pp. 171, 172). Kgabo Masehela (2004) presents a similar conception of an African essence, in terms of knowledge and identity:

[w]e have to construct our own epistemological framework from which we can explore ideas and build our own knowledge. ... Africans must create our own paradigm from which we can also dialogue meaningfully with Europeans. (p. 11)

- <sup>3</sup> This notion was first articulated by Kenyan author and activist Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, and later adapted and deepened by Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu (Wa Thiong’o, 1986; Wiredu, 2008).
- <sup>4</sup> I use this phrase to refer to an unwarranted generalisation that fails to do justice to the richness and multitude of, for example, African religious and cultural perspectives, traditions, social practices, identities and ways of thinking.
- <sup>5</sup> Given that Dei (2004) is referring here to *traditional* African forms of knowledge, I am unsure to what extent they could contribute towards *transformation* – i.e., as opposed to ‘*retroformation*’.
- <sup>6</sup> Ruitenberg (2012) uses the words ‘hides’ and, elsewhere, ‘masks’. I am not sure whether these apply to the accounts of ‘African ways of knowing’ provided by Asante, Dei and others. I suspect not—hence my preference for the broader (and perhaps more equivocal) term ‘covers’.
- <sup>7</sup> A similar problem arises with Lansink’s (2004) account when she borrows from Michel Foucault: “Each society has its regime of truth” (p. 134): “The postcolonial critique of Western knowledge systems operates to deconstruct the ‘truth’ of Western knowledge systems by exposing the arbitrariness of what is true scientific knowledge” (Lansink, 2004, p. 135). What about the status of this particular ‘truth’, then? Is it any less arbitrary? And if it is not, why should anyone wish to endorse this view? An objection may be that this reading of Foucault and Foucaultian argumentation is mistaken for the following reasons. First, neither his theory of knowledge, nor his conception of power, is overtly normative. They are, rather, empirical or descriptive. Second, insofar as Foucault never targeted the ‘hard’ (or natural) sciences, apart from perhaps biology, his conception of truth derives its force from the very nature of the ‘soft’ (social or human) sciences. I do not think that this objection is successful. If there is no objective knowledge, if there is no truth, no objective fact, in social and human matters, then there is nothing to argue about. All that remains is statements of personal taste or preference. Apart from raising the kinds of logical problems I highlighted above, this view contradicts scholarly endeavour and is plainly mistaken.
- <sup>8</sup> Dei (2004), for example, speaks of a transformation of education and schooling that includes “diverse forms of knowledge and ways of knowing” (p. 339).
- <sup>9</sup> It should be noted that so-called ‘experiential’ knowledge—which is the subject of many discourses on decolonisation—could be either practical or propositional, or indeed acquaintance or familiarity-type knowledge. It is not a separate or distinct kind of knowledge.
- <sup>10</sup> I am indebted to Ntuli for alerting me to this idea in a personal conversation.
- <sup>11</sup> Nabudere (2003) asserts that the “establishment of the Pan-African University should have as its overall goal the provision of opportunities for higher and advanced education for students and adult learners in the context of a new African-based epistemology and methodology” (p. 1; see also pp. 8ff. and 23).
- <sup>12</sup> When Lansink (2004) argues, following Sandra Harding (1996), that “it should be acknowledged that all knowledge is culturally local” (p. 133; Harding 1996), the obvious rejoinder is: “What about this particular piece of knowledge, then? Is it also ‘culturally local’?” If so, why should anyone who is not a member of Lansink’s (or Harding’s) ‘culture’ be impressed by this claim? If it is not, i.e. if this is indeed a translocal knowledge claim, then why should there not be other knowledge that transcends culture and locality?

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## 8. HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we consider developments in higher education against the promise of transformation. We make visible the challenges and experiences of the last 21 years. Drawing on research data, discursive practices and developments in the sector, we argue that the system remains by-and-large untransformed. We then attempt to provide an insight as to why the system tends to reproduce itself. We argue that higher education institutions are extensions of the societies in which they are located. As social institutions, they are not only influenced by their contexts, but are in the main, products of their social and cultural contexts. To this end, the pace of transformation in higher education tends to mirror changes in the socio-political and cultural landscape. The chapter concludes by arguing that, for as long as power relations in knowledge production persist, the promise of a transformed higher education system will remain a pipe dream. To resolve this challenge, we call for the establishment of a scholarship that speaks directly to socio-economic and cultural challenges faced by the African majority. This scholarship would serve as a countervailing force to the current and dominant paradigm that not only mimics, but is “intended to meet the theoretical needs of our Western counterparts and answer the questions they pose” (Hountondji, 2009), instead of addressing national challenges.

### TRANSFORMING THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Education White Paper 3: *A Programme for the Transformation of the Higher Education System* (DoE, 1997) and the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2001) are unambiguous with regard to the challenges facing higher education in South Africa.

The challenges include concerns regarding:

... the overall quantity and quality of graduate and research outputs; management, leadership and governance failures; lack of representative staff profiles; institutional cultures that have not transcended the racial divides of



the past; and the increased competition between institutions which threatens to fragment further the higher education system. (RSA, 2001, p. 5)

Both policy documents emphasise the need “to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities” (DoE, 1997, p. 3).

It is envisaged that a transformed higher education system should:

- “promote equity of access and fair chances of success to all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities” and
- “contribute to *the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship* [emphasis added] and in particular address the diverse problems and demands of the local, national, southern African and African contexts, and uphold rigorous standards of academic quality” (DoE, 1997, p. 6).

Transformation and redress are thus conceptualised as going beyond issues of broadening access, representation, and the eradication of discriminatory practices, to include epistemological issues that address ideas and knowledge formulation. In other words, knowledge production and dissemination are central to the project of transformation, redress and the restoration of human dignity. This point is ably articulated by Zondi (2014):

The power dynamics of an apartheid state were linked to the matrices of power globally that produced hierarchies of races, hierarchies of identities, hierarchies of economies, hierarchies of knowledge, hierarchies of gender and hierarchies of religions, and others...the construction of power has been premised on the assumption of the superiority of all things Western, from language to knowledge, culture to science, etc.... (p. 16)

Framed in this fashion, transformation in South Africa is also about dismantling white supremacy—a thought system that was at the heart of apartheid. The architects of apartheid colonialism were unwavering in their supremacist beliefs. No-one expresses this better than the former Prime Minister, General Smuts in 1906, who observed (Hancock et al., 1966):

When I consider the political future of the natives in South Africa I must say that I look into shadows and darkness, and I feel inclined to shift the intolerable burden of solving that sphinx of a problem to the ampler shoulders and stronger brains of the future.

In case Africans were left in any doubt about their future, General Smuts’ ideas on race relations were taken to the next level by the then Minister of Bantu Education, Dr Verwoerd, who cautioned against creating ‘false expectations’ amongst the natives. In a no-holds-barred address to the Apartheid Parliament in 1953, he promised:

When I have control of native education, I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them. There is no place for him (the black child) in European society above the level of certain forms of labour ... What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?

Since then, whites have, by and large, considered themselves to be the “stronger brains of the future” (Hancock et al., 1966), and have in various ways, persistently reminded all and sundry that had it not been for them, South Africa would have disintegrated.

Given this background, it is not difficult to appreciate the link between higher education policy and the country’s historical struggles against white domination. In a sense, the White Paper (DoE, 1997) and the NPHE (RSA, 2001) are South Africa’s attempts to address the historical and socio-economic challenges that bedevilled the country during the apartheid and colonial eras.

Perhaps no higher a figure than the country’s beloved former President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela articulated these ideas sharply. Addressing the court during the now infamous Rivonia trial (20 April 1964), Mandela addressed three issues—the fight against white supremacy, the resultant lack of human dignity of African people, and equality of opportunity. These points are worth re-stating.

On white supremacy, Mandela (1964) argued

[We] felt that without violence there would be no way open to the African people to succeed in their *struggle against the principle of white supremacy* [emphasis added]. All lawful modes of expressing opposition to this principle had been closed by legislation, and *we were placed in a position in which we had either to accept a permanent state of inferiority*. [emphasis added]

On the lack of human dignity, Mandela (1964) continued

*The lack of human dignity experienced by Africans is the direct result of the policy of white supremacy*. [emphasis added] White supremacy implies black inferiority. Legislation designed to preserve white supremacy entrenches this notion. Menial tasks in South Africa are invariably performed by Africans. When anything has to be carried or cleaned the white man will look around for an African to do it for him, whether the African is employed by him or not.

Concluding his statement, Mandela (1964) graciously stated:

I have cherished the ideal of *a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities*. [emphasis added] It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

The question still crying out to be answered is whether South African institutions of higher learning have what it takes to rise to this historical call for transformation.

This question has become even more pressing 21 years into the new political dispensation. Indeed, expectations and assumptions were, and continue to be that higher education institutions would be at the forefront of transformation. After all, it is in this sector that the most educationally privileged are found. It was assumed that the educationally privileged would use their skills and knowledge to appreciate the folly and injustice that apartheid wrought, and would by extension of that logic, work tirelessly to undo its damage. However, this assumes that South Africa is a normal society—which it is not. It is a country that is still trying to come to terms with its past of social strife and racial conflict.

Another school of thought argues that higher education institutions are extensions of the societies in which they are located. As social institutions, they are not only influenced by their contexts, but are, in the main, products of their social and cultural contexts. As such, the pace of transformation in the higher education sector necessarily mirrors changes in the socio-political and cultural landscape. Whether South African institutions have responded adequately to the new policy agenda would require them to be measured against the expressed objectives of transformation, and also against developments in the broader socio-political and cultural space. Such measures would help to ascertain whether higher education have risen to the call for transformation or have remained untransformed and reflective of the socio-economic reality in which they find themselves in.

#### SOCIO-POLITICAL DYNAMICS: POST-1994 SOUTH AFRICA

As expressions of the will of the people, national elections are perhaps the most reliable barometer regarding socio-cultural relations in any country. In South Africa, the 7 May 2014 national elections are a useful measure of how far the country has come since the first inclusive national elections (1994), with regard to the country's social and cultural fabric and societal institutions. Perhaps few are more objective and authoritative on the subject than the former leader of the opposition, and former South African ambassador to Argentina Mr Tony Leon (2014) who observed that:

[The ANC] had never headed into an election since 1994 with so many negatives against it, from the broken unity of the alliance, the clouds of corruption, community dissatisfaction engulfing its administration. Despite these hurdles, it swept the boards by a distance of 40 percentage points from its rising challenger, the Democratic Alliance (DA). (n.p.)

Although [the ANC's] voter share is fractionally lower than it was in 1994, *the combined opposition total vote has barely budged in 20 years [emphasis added]*, even though the forces of opposition have dramatically rearranged themselves since then.

Broadly speaking, the outcome of the 2014 general elections suggests that little progress has been made in changing racially tinted social and political attitudes.

South Africans remain by and large trapped in the Gramscian interregnum in which the old is dying but the new is struggling to be born. The interregnum suggests that some historical issues remain unresolved. These unresolved issues are at the very core of why the narrative of the ruling African National Congress continues to hold sway. Racially skewed participation rates in higher education and representation in management (Webbstock, 2016, Webbstock & Schoole, 2016), and workforce and management profiles (Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report 2012–2013) indicate that the challenge of access and equality of opportunity remains but a pipe dream for the African majority. It is this stubborn reality that occasioned former President Thabo Mbeki to describe South Africa as a “country of two nations”. President Mbeki could not have been more definitive in his description. In a characteristically unapologetic and strident fashion, President Mbeki (29 May 1998) observed:

South Africa is a country of two nations. One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. This enables it to argue that, except for the persistence of gender discrimination against women, all members of this nation have the possibility to exercise their right to equal opportunity, the development opportunities to which the Constitution of ‘93 committed our country. The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general, and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. It has virtually no possibility to exercise what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity, with that right being equal within this black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of realisation.

This reality of two nations, underwritten by the perpetuation of the racial, gender and spatial disparities born of a very long period of colonial and apartheid white minority domination, constitutes the material base which reinforces the notion that, indeed, we are not one nation, but two nations. And neither are we becoming one nation. Consequently, also, the objective of national reconciliation is not being realised. (n.p.)

The outcomes of the 2014 national election and both Mbeki and Leon’s observations are consistent with recently undertaken surveys (discussed below) regarding race relations. The surveys come to one unmistakable conclusion—that race and racism remain the defining features of social and cultural life in South Africa, and that the level of trust between blacks and whites is diminishing year on year. For instance, the study undertaken by the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO, 2014) revealed the hardening of racial attitudes between races. The study, involving over 27,000 respondents, focused on social attitudes of residents in Gauteng. South Africa’s

News24 correctly paraphrases the report to have found that the “number of Africans saying they would never trust whites increased from 68% in 2009 to 73% in 2013. Over the same period, the perception by whites had increased from 40% in 2009 to 44% in 2013” (n.p).

In predominantly black townships, this number increases: “77% to 100% of the respondents believed that blacks and whites would never trust each other” (n.p.); 55% of Indians and 61% of coloureds also said they would never trust whites. Key findings include high levels of satisfaction with many areas of service delivery, coupled with:

- very low levels of satisfaction with government and governance, indicating that service delivery alone is not enough;
- a hardening of racial attitudes, with 73% of Africans agreeing or strongly agreeing that they will never trust white people; and
- growing levels of xenophobia.

Soon after the GCRO survey, the annual survey by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) also raised questions around the ‘rainbow nation’ project as a whole. The South African Reconciliation Barometer Briefing paper 2015, a publication of the Institute of Reconciliation and Justice (IJR) found that most South Africans believe that the objective of national reconciliation “will remain impossible for as long as those who were disadvantaged under apartheid remain poor. Inequality remains the most frequently mentioned source of social division within South Africa. A majority of respondents (61.4%) feel that race relations since 1994 have either stayed the same or deteriorated. Only 35.6% of the sample indicated that they experience no racism in their daily lives. Moreover, trust between the country’s historically defined racial groups remains low – 67.3% of all respondents noted that they have little to no trust in their fellow citizens of other racial groups” (p. 9)

#### HAS HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGED TO RISE ABOVE THE SOCIAL CRISES?

It would seem that institutions of higher education have failed to reverse the historical patterns of apartheid. If anything, these institutions continue to reproduce apartheid’s historical legacies, including racial patterns of knowledge production. Understandably as members of their own societies and communities, academics are not immune to societal realities and influences. To expect otherwise would require them to be largely schizophrenic. Thus it comes as no surprise that worrying incidents of racism that plague society continue to rear their ugly head at the country’s institutions of higher learning. Commenting on this trend, a Sunday Independent columnist, Pinky Khoabane (28/09/2014), stated: “What kind of universities churn out students who are ignorant to issues of racism and the offensiveness of concepts such as ‘blackface’?”

As if to make her case, Khoabane (2014) catalogues incidents that should have sparked a debate on racism in our institutions, but seemingly did not:

Yet another bunch of white university kids who have their faces painted black! And yet another incident at a South African tertiary institution in which white students use black people for their amusement. If it wasn't the infamous Reitz Four students at the University of Free State, who forced cleaners to eat food laced with their urine and recorded it, or the two University of Pretoria students who just last month painted themselves black and dressed up as domestic workers, we have this week two University of Stellenbosch students who painted themselves black and dressed up in tennis gear in an attempt to caricature tennis stars Serena and Venus Williams. Now why would these two white boys choose to be black when there is a pool of white tennis stars from which they could have chosen?

Struggling to give the students the benefit of doubt, Khoabane (2014) continues:

If we are to assume they were simply ignorant of the racist connotations attached to whites painting themselves black, and genuinely admire the Williams sisters for their prowess on the tennis court, which is a possibility, where were they a month ago when there was an outcry over the Pretoria University students who painted themselves black? While these sporadic acts elicit a public outcry which is often followed by some punishment by the universities concerned, the real questions must be directed at the management of these universities and the quality of education that comes out of them. (n.p.)

Khoabane is in good company with the views and observations of many African scholars (Vilakazi, 1998; Odora-Hoppers, 2002; Nkondo, 1998; Popkewitz, 1984; Zondi, 2014). She writes:

The question of the quality of education that comes out of our universities forms part of the bigger question of the transformation of these institutions. It is not good enough to count black students and think this alone is the end of transformation. The numbers of black entrants is but one of the steps towards transforming universities. The curriculum, among others, is crucial in informing and shaping the adult that will leave our universities, hence the need to have it scrutinised.

We must ask questions. What history, for example, is being taught that enforces stereotypes about the inferiority of black people and superiority of white people to the extent that children born after the ushering-in of a democratic South Africa can harbour such prejudice as to come to social media platforms and vent the most hateful and racist vitriol? Are these children still being taught that there was no civilisation on African soil until the Europeans arrived? Is that why these children come to social media platforms and declare that Africans would still be in huts were it not for them? ... If an individual walks into a university with a view that blacks are inferior and whites are superior and leaves the institution without shifting their world view, it can

only mean they haven't learnt anything about early achievements on the continent. (n.p.)

Interestingly, each time incidents of racism rear their ugly heads, they are usually followed by condemnation from every sector—student organisations, unions, political leaders, government, society, but hardly any voice emerges from within the realm of higher education leadership. If anything, within higher education, there is a refusal to deal with racism. It is worth stating that it is also from this sector that apartheid masters sought theoretical and theological justification for their policies (Seepe & Lebakeng, 1998). The failure of higher education leadership to speak in one voice against racism and white supremacist ideas and practices reflects the enduring legacy of apartheid and the absence of courageous leadership.

It is important to remind ourselves that the apartheid curriculum was used not only as a tool to reproduce and promote the values, cultural norms, and beliefs of apartheid society, but also as an instrument to maintain and legitimise unequal social, economic and political power relations. By controlling and maintaining dominant beliefs, values and oppressive practices, the curriculum shaped the mind-set of the population to sustain the apartheid system. This point is eloquently stated by Professor Malegapuru Makgoba (1997):

... what is common between a judge, a doctor, a politician, a policeman, a priest, a journalist, or editor and the ordinary citizen is the type of education they received or the curriculum that provided the foundations of their education.

Making a similar point, Jonny Steinberg (2014) observed:

The freedom South Africans acquired in 1994 was mercurial and slippery. Politically, the changes were dramatic. The electorate expanded overnight to include every adult. But the structure of society stayed much the same. And white people remained white people, doing what white people had always done: running the professions, the corporations, the universities. Expertise, wealth, technical knowledge, social confidence—all of these remained deeply associated with whiteness.

Steinberg's (2014) insightful observation of the behaviour patterns of South African whites is corroborated by the Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report 2012–2013. The report examined workforce and management profiles, movements and population distribution in terms of race, gender and disability. The report found that at "the top management level, whites at 72.6%, particularly males, still continue to enjoy preference over other race groups in terms of representation, recruitment, promotion and skills development at this level" (p. 27). Trend analysis over the period 2002–2012 also indicates that whites and Indians are more likely to be appointed, promoted or exposed to training at the senior management level, particularly when their economically active population numbers are taken into account. The report suggests that unless drastic action is taken, the "existing patterns only indicate that



inequities in the representation in terms of race, gender and disability at this level will remain for a number of decades to come” (p. 29). The report reveals, rather disturbingly, that transformation of the higher education sector also remains a huge challenge. Institutions of higher education “tend to have an over-representation of white females and white males at their top management and senior management echelons. In fact that sector has the largest percentage of white females in top management” (p. 7).

Linking the results to behaviour patterns, the Chair of the Commission observed:

The ‘workforce movement’ statistics are particularly worrying because they reflect decisions that were taken by senior and top managers during 2011 and 2012... We seem to be locked into the old patterns of behaviour in terms of recruitment, skills development and promotion, and we have become ‘path-dependent’ as a result. We keep walking on the same path of the past and yet we expect to arrive at a different destination. (p. 7)

The report does, however, acknowledge that great progress has been registered at the lower levels. Unfortunately, the recruitment of increasing numbers of Africans and coloureds at lower levels has not translated into a corresponding effect on their representation at senior and top management levels. Perhaps more damning is the conclusion that “the ‘movement statistics’ indicate that there is no evidence of an effort to train more designated groups. Instead, the opposite is happening. The Report refers to the ‘deep hole’ phenomenon, whereby things get darker as one goes deeper” (p. 7).

Given this experience, any honest appraisal of the apartheid educational system should not only centre on the material and economic aspects thereof, but should, as a matter of priority, address the social, cultural and spiritual devastation visited on the African community. Failure to do this will lead, and indeed has led, to the advancement of technicist approaches and solutions to combat the legacy of apartheid colonialism. The focus on technical aspects is often narrowed to issues of material provision. Put differently, African students were not only subjected to systemic and material dispossession but they were also subjected to social, cultural and political alienation in South Africa’s institutions of higher learning—this alienation cuts across the spectrum of ‘formerly’ white and black institutions. Alluding to this phenomenon, Mahmood Mamdani (1999) commented:

Both the white and black institutions were products of apartheid, though in different ways. The difference was not only in the institutional culture, that the former enjoyed institutional autonomy and the latter were bureaucratically driven. The difference was also in their intellectual horizons. It was the white intelligentsia that took the lead in creating apartheid-enforced identities in the knowledge they produced. Believing that this was an act of intellectual creativity unrelated to the culture of privilege in which they were steeped, they ended defending an ingrained prejudice with a studied conviction. The irony

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is that the white intelligentsia came to be a greater, became a more willing, prisoner of apartheid thought than its black counterpart.

#### TRANSFORMATION ON HOLD—A TALE OF TWO UNIVERSITIES

The higher education sector is supposed to reflect the apex of thinking in our society. It is expected to take a lead in the identification and resolution of our social and political problems. In this regard, it has been found to be woefully wanting.

##### *Hope at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)*

But it is not all doom and gloom. The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) provides a glimmer of hope. Its achievements are salutary (see accompanying figure). As of 2011, 33% of academic leadership at UKZN was female, compared to 0% in 2004, and 67% of academic leadership was black, compared to 38% in 2004. Accompanying this unrivalled performance is an improvement in research and knowledge production, with 81.3% staff being active in research. The research productivity level rose from 46% in 2004 to 61% in 2011. Evidently this performance is not simply about ‘pushing numbers’, it is also about guaranteeing that the improvement is qualitative.

In an age when many students graduate to unemployment, it is heartening that 84% of UKZN graduates are employed within six months of graduation. In other words, UKZN has ensured that its curriculum is aligned with the requirements of the economy. This strategic change sets the institution on a solid path for the future. The fact that this change took only seven years to achieve is a remarkable story on its own. It certainly required galvanizing the entire institution around a compelling vision. UKZN’s achievements shatter popular myths and national narratives about transformation.

The first shattered narrative, commonly advanced with predictable and monotonous frequency by those opposed to institutional transformation, is the notion that you cannot find blacks and women to assume positions of academic leadership. The UKZN numbers speak for themselves. In 2010 the percentage of professors, associate professors and senior lecturers at UKZN with doctorates were 87%, 78% and 59%, compared to the national figures of 84%, 70% and 41% respectively.

The second shattered narrative is that the appointment of blacks and women translates into the lowering of standards. This notion is easily disproved if one considers the fact that 81.3% of UKZN staff is research active and that there has been a concomitant improvement in research productivity.

Third, UKZN disrupts ‘the only black person’ or ‘the only woman’ syndrome—a tendency by appointees from the previously excluded groups to be used as new gatekeepers. Such new appointees often quickly forget that were it not for the many struggles and sacrifices that were waged on their behalf, it would have been impossible for them to rise to those positions. They assimilate and become defenders

of the status quo. As a reward for their efforts, they are held up as role models precisely because they render themselves as useful tools in promoting a white supremacist agenda. Interestingly, in their new role of gatekeeping, they end up being despised by everyone. They fail to see through the feint praises and become useful idiots against their own kind.

The UKZN experience stands in glaring contrast to developments at other historically white institutions that are, or were, black led. Despite being led by two black vice-chancellors for more than a decade, the University of Cape Town failed to attract a significant number of black scholars. At the last count in 2010, 90% of professors were white and male. Other universities such as the University of the Witwatersrand, with a black leader at the top for ten years, have not fared any better. Evidently, UKZN is exemplary in its efforts to disrupt the apartheid logic of knowledge production.

The UKZN experience also indicates that however stubbornly resistant and pervasive white supremacy may be, it can be defeated by courageous, politically conscious and committed leadership. The UKZN case study shows that transformation of our society can be achieved in less than 10 years, provided we have leadership that is committed to change in both public and private sector institutions. Imagine what could be accomplished if we had 100 leaders of Professor Makgoba's calibre! The UKZN leadership is the kind that makes things happen.

Instead of supporting historically marginalised individuals, most historically white institutions have become slaughter houses for black talent. UKZN presents a business case for successful transformation and lays a foundation for deeper research to analyse the factors that have led to its success.

#### *The University of Cape Town (UCT) Derails Transformation*

It is instructive to contrast the UKZN experience with the arguments and excuses that have been advanced by the University of Cape Town (UCT). Explaining the paucity of black professors at UCT, the Vice Chancellor Dr. Max Price had this to say;

the University of Cape Town began years ago to put interventions in place to accelerate the pace of new academics up the career ladder....Very often we find they just do not know how to work the system...we try to recruit and mentor likely candidates for current or future vacancies. UCT search committees are routinely appointed to seek out promising candidates. But ultimately there is a structural problem of the size of the current candidate pool, which will take years to address. (2014)

Fortunately, academic staff members at this university have not taken his excuses lying down. If anything, they have sought to challenge the very arguments he has advanced.

Elsewhere UCT's Vice Chancellor Dr Max Price could be interpreted as advancing the usual arguments. The first one is that demographic transformation is difficult to

achieve because of UCT's commitment to quality. The second argument is that black scholars are difficult to attract because they are easily poached by better paymasters in the private sector. Price is wrong on both accounts. Responding to Price, Seán Muller (2014), a former economics lecturer at UCT (21 November 2014, *Mail & Guardian*) debunks Price's excuses:

The claim that UCT has been making concerted efforts to transform is, as far as I can ascertain, false. Pinning UCT's failures on a concern for quality is disingenuous and damaging. Of course there are thresholds above which trade-offs occur ... The uncomfortable truth is senior management at UCT has failed to make transformation a priority.

Even more disturbing is Muller's further observation, which is rarely highlighted:

It is galling to see young academics, most of whom are black, struggling to get junior positions for which they are formally better qualified than members of their hiring committees. One cannot, as Price appeared to imply, neatly separate transformation from the application of hugely inconsistent standards across generations.

Regarding the mantra about salaries being too low to be attractive for black scholars is unpersuasive. Muller (2014) observes:

Last year I examined some of the literature and data on academic hiring as part of a task team on academic staffing; I found no rigorous evidence to support this claim. To be clear: salaries are lower in academia than in the government or parts of the private sector, but that is the case in most countries. Many other factors that might lead such individuals to exit higher education are, I believe, being conveniently ignored or understated. Furthermore, salaries at South African universities appear to be quite competitive by international standards.

On the university policy of recruiting promising black academics, Muller's (2014) observations are even more damning:

Price has made other claims about UCT's supposed efforts at transformation that I feel are misleading to outsiders. The implication that UCT has a standing policy to identify potential young black academics at the undergraduate level is not something I have observed in my 10 years at the institution, nor am I aware of any evidence relating to such a policy or its success. (n.p.)

Dr Siona O'Connell (2014), a UCT lecturer in the School of Arts echoes the frustration and experience described by Muller. She puts the blame firmly on the institution's inability to break with the past. She observes:

[W]ithout some eye-squinting and giant leaps of the imagination, it is quite easy to believe that this university isn't on the African continent at all. By 2013, the number of black academics at UCT was 48 out of a total of 1405.

## HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Of the 174 South Africans who are full professors at UCT, there are only five black South Africans. Black women fare particularly badly. We can examine the lives of black South Africans as lives on the periphery by looking to the UCT experience...[UCT] has yet to consider what transformation means in terms of the politics of knowledge and, in this light, has yet to grasp or imagine what freedom may mean for all. (n.p.)

More pointedly,

The question of black academics runs far deeper than numbers and promotions because it speaks to the kind of university that UCT wants to be, the knowledges it deems important and the constituencies that it values. On a more crucial note, it is failing to see the disservice it is doing to its student body, largely setting up students of colour to falter by failing to foster an institution of learning that nurtures and protects speaking by all, to all. It is no coincidence that in the past few months there have been increasing reports by students of colour, voicing their acute sense of alienation.

The inability to attract and retain scholars of colour creates another crisis—the knowledge crisis. O’Connell (2014) puts it rather elegantly:

How does one move from representation to a politics of knowledge, and what is the future for UCT and other similar institutions if we do make this move?

The question raised above brings into sharp focus another crucial issue in higher education, that is, the issue of knowledge production and dissemination.

## THE CHALLENGE OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The contribution by African scholars to the knowledge production arena is miniscule. According to the Annual Report 2002/3 of the National Research Foundation

Rated black and female researchers in the natural sciences and engineering have only increased marginally (3,2%) from 2001 to 2002. Figures for the social sciences are not much better and only 10 black and 65 female researchers obtained a rating of the 242 rated researchers within these disciplines. (p. 7)

The dominance of whites in research and development remains. The latest report of The South African National Survey of Research and Experimental Development (Human Sciences Research Council [HSRC], 2013/14) records the continued dominance of whites regarding knowledge production. White researchers accounted for 56% of the total headcount of researchers followed by African researchers at 29%, Indian researchers at 6% and coloured researchers at 9%.

If these figures are disaggregated further, the picture is still not encouraging. For researchers at doctoral level or equivalent, whites constitute 53%, Africans 32%, Indians 8%, and coloureds 6%. This is poor performance, considering that Africans

constitute almost 80% of the population. Although these figures give an insight into the participation rate, they do not give an understanding of publication rates which, as a rule, are much lower than participation in research.

In many cases, black scholars are dependent on the generosity of white scholars and are placed “in the pathetic position of beggars for participation in the white academic world” (Jansen, 1991). And as I have indicated elsewhere, the whiteness of the social and cultural location, which may be alienating to black researchers, remains unproblematised.

Jansen (1991) argues for a “dignified and incisive vocation for the black scholar that does not simply seek participation in an established structure, but seeks to redefine the racial terms and the territory on which research takes place.... It is about the grounds for knowledge, about epistemology, and about objects of intellectual inspiration” (Jansen, 1991). So far, the whiteness of institutions and research practice has alienated black scholars and has, as a result, limited scholarship from advancing and incorporating multi-faceted dimensions. And the fact that whites dominate the research process may itself be regarded as one of the objective mechanisms that sustain racial domination (Evans, 1990). Invariably, some of the inequalities spawned by apartheid remain intact. If anything, our institutions continue to reproduce apartheid spatial patterns characterised by dominance of whites and historically white institutions with regard to access and participation in knowledge production.

In many discussions about racism, common approaches tend to focus on how blacks are disadvantaged by racism. An incisive approach should, however, include a focus on the advantages and privileges that whites gain from blacks’ disadvantage. The dominance of privileged social groups cannot be reversed without addressing the ideological and institutional mechanisms that are used to maintain the status quo. In turn, racial inequalities in the academy cannot be addressed without making visible and unpacking the architectural structure and infrastructure mechanisms that sustain them. This includes the need to reflect on the symbiotic relationship between knowledge and power.

Michael Ortiz (2012) reminds us:

A dominant racial system reveals itself as an ideological and systemic arrangement of various institutions, policies and procedures that constantly aim to maintain the racial status quo. The prevailing system of racial supremacy is also characterized by the social and material benefit it affords to those who are members of the dominant racial group. Racism is then described as a form of discrimination that may systemically, institutionally, or ideologically disadvantage those groups of subordinate status, while those of the dominant group gain disproportionate advantage. Racial privilege then describes all the ways in which dominant group members actualize their disproportionate social and material benefit (i.e. increased access to resources, better hiring potential, elevated social desirability etc.).

## THE KNOWLEDGE AND POWER DYNAMIC

The corrective process starts with an appreciation that, like all human endeavours, knowledge is produced within, and for specific socio-political and cultural contexts and cultural dominance. This relationship, between knowledge and context, is however, dialectical. The two are mutually reinforcing. On the one hand, context influences the kind of knowledge produced and also determines the contours in which it is produced. Knowledge, on the hand, tends not only to affirm, but also to reproduce context. A system of racial domination invariably produces racial hierarchies in knowledge production, the consequences of which are far reaching. Weiler (2009) is blunt:

Hierarchies are the quintessential manifestation of power. They signify higher and lower ranks in a given order, domination and subordination, greater and lesser value, prestige and influence. Wherever they occur, they reflect structures of authority and power, and thus the essence of politics. (n.p.)

Specifically, in the world of knowledge, hierarchies are pervasive and serve to “organize the order of knowledge in terms of prestige, resources, and influence” (Weiler, 2009). The natural sciences are, for instance, placed at the apex of the knowledge pyramid. Hierarchical structures extend to higher education institutions. Some are prestigious and others are not. In South Africa, thanks to apartheid ideology this hierarchy is racially determined. However, a more insidious aspect of knowledge production is the reciprocal legitimation between power and knowledge. For one, political decisions are made on the basis of certain bodies of knowledge or knowledge experts (Weiler, 2009). At the same time, knowledge

... derives a great deal of its own legitimation from decisions of the state—decisions on, for example, what is to be learned and taught at schools, what sort of knowledge is required to qualify candidates for public offices and careers, what sort of research should enjoy public funding, etc. In all these and many other decisions that are subject to state authority, *one* type of knowledge is typically given priority over *another* and is accorded special standing and legitimacy. (Weiler, 2009)

The symbiotic relationship between knowledge and power extends beyond national borders. The knowledge enterprise is characterised by “extreme global disparities in access to both the production and consumption of knowledge”.

Weiler (2009) explains:

Indeed, one of the most salient features of the international knowledge system is its peculiar division of labor, in which key intellectual tasks, such as setting theoretical agendas and methodological standards, are the prerogative of a relatively small number of societies and institutions that play a disproportionately important role in this system—societies and institutions



which are, almost without exception, located in the economically privileged regions of the world. This particular type of hierarchy ... reflects quite faithfully the international hierarchy of economic influence and political power with which the international knowledge system maintains a thoroughly symbiotic relationship. (Weiler, 2009)

It is this power differential that has enabled Western-based institutions to impose an “orthodoxy of knowledge to which all countries and institutions that wish to enter into negotiations on financial support with the World Bank must subscribe” (Weiler, 2009). African scholars enter the system with the odds already and infinitely stacked against them. Indeed, some scholars (Gran, 1986; Hountondji, 1997, 2006; Taiwo, 1993) have argued that “the dismal failure of development policy in Africa is principally due to an externally imposed knowledge system that has summarily ignored the legitimacy of local, grassroots knowledge” (Weiler, 2009). In this artificially created and enforced scheme, Africans are in the main reduced to consumers and the objects of white scholarship. They are neither custodians of knowledge, nor experts even of their own experiences. Not surprisingly, they remain on the margins of the edifice of knowledge production. The result is that scholarship in Africa is “massively extraverted, i.e. externally oriented, intended first and foremost to meet the theoretical and practical needs of Northern societies” (Hountondji, 2009).

Hountondji (2009) could not have expressed this capitulation to Western scholarship any better (see also Taiwo, 1993; Hountondji, 1990, 1995, 2006):

Too often do we tend to investigate subjects which are of interest first and foremost to a Western audience. Most of our articles are published in journals located outside Africa and are meant therefore for a non-African readership. Even when we happen to publish in Africa, the fact is that African scholarly journals themselves are read much more outside Africa than in Africa. In this sense, our scientific activity is *extraverted*, i.e. externally oriented, intended to meet the theoretical needs of our Western counterparts and answer the questions they pose. The exclusive use of European languages as a means of scientific expression reinforces this alienation. The majority of our country people are *de facto* excluded from any kind of discussion about our research outcome, given that they don’t even understand the languages used. The small minority who understands knows, however, that they are not the first addressees but only, if anything, occasional witnesses of a scientific discourse meant primarily for others. To put it bluntly, each African scholar has been participating so far in a vertical discussion with his/her counterparts from the North rather than developing horizontal discussions with other African scholars. (Hountondji, 2009)

A South African black scholar is faced with similar and other challenges. First, s/he has to contend with the ingrained racism and racial prejudice in the academy;

and second, s/he must grapple with an acquired sense of self-doubt that apartheid, colonialism and accompanying systemic disadvantage have induced over time. Biko (Stubbs, 2004) could have been describing the impact of apartheid on the psyche of black students and academics when he wrote:

[T]he type of Black man we have today has lost his manhood. Reduced to an obliging shell, he looks with awe at the White power structure and accepts what he reads as the 'inevitable position'. Celebrated achievements by Whites in the field of Science—which he understands only hazily—serve to make him rather convinced of the futility of resistance and to throw away any hopes that change may ever come. All in all, the Black man has become a shell, a shadow of a man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity. This is the first truth, bitter as it may seem, that we have to acknowledge before we can start on any program designed to change the status quo.

## MAINTAINING THE ACADEMY AS A BASTION OF WHITENESS

Institutions of higher learning have not escaped the scourge of racism that afflicts their own communities. The marginal status of black scholars, on the one hand and the preponderance of whites in the academy on the other, are thus part of a system design (Lichtig, 2015). Success is predicated on deference to those in power who are, in the main, white. Harsh penalties are meted out to those who choose not to conform. Penalties include academic ostracism and marginalisation, non-renewal of teaching and research contracts, and non-promotion, all of which can lead to disillusionment and ultimately involuntary resignation.

Editorial policies and discursive practices also serve as gatekeeping mechanisms. The history of racial privilege and advantage mean that gatekeepers dictate that blacks are on the receiving end of inequitable treatment. Blacks inhabit a world that does not reflect their lived experience, and in which black scholarship is underrepresented, if not virtually absent. At the same time, publishers are reluctant to take risks on those not recommended by the traditional gatekeepers. The commissioning of articles or research work favours those who have been vetted. Invariably, the dice are loaded against new entrants, who tend to be people of colour, in the main. In such a situation, the racial and gender divide is clearly reinforced.

## THE DILEMMA OF AFRICAN/BLACK SCHOLARS

The academy's racist orientation creates a dilemma for a black scholar. S/he is expected to navigate spaces of institutional racism, assumptions of deficiency and inferiority, and other forms of racial prejudice. The situation is not helped by the fact that there are few, if any, resources and intellectual infrastructure outside the academy to provide the necessary support. This in itself makes both academic

and intellectual work unattractive—almost a luxury as evidenced in the following quotation.

In communities still grappling with economic and political disadvantages, there is far greater appreciation for those actively involved in struggles against racial oppression and economic exclusions than those scholars who have chosen to live the life of a mind. For a person of colour being an intellectual or scholar becomes an ‘act of self-imposed marginality’. (Harrell, 2009)

Since the mainstream academy bears little relation to their everyday experiences, the success of black scholars depends on a disconnection from the interests of their toiling communities. However, they cannot afford to remain silent in the midst of pervasive racism and forms of discriminatory practices in the academy and society in general. Given their acquired skills, they are expected to speak out against injustices, inequalities and the unjust distribution of wealth.

In the final analysis, black scholars are faced with a stark choice. They can either remain organically linked to the daily struggles of their own folks, or adopt a self-imposed exile in the “white intellectual world” (n.p.) (Steigerwald, 2007). The consequence of this dilemma is a decline in both the quality and quantity of the work produced by black scholars (Harrell, 2009; West, 1987; Steigerwald, 2007).

#### HOW TRANSFORMATION GOT SIDE-TRACKED

Given South Africa’s apartheid history, social and political expectations were that the advent of democracy would usher in a new intellectual dispensation. This dispensation would address the trauma inflicted on the psyche of black people and also reorient the type of scholarship produced; a scholarship that would focus on addressing socio-economic challenges faced by local institutions of higher learning, as opposed to mimicking the West. Indeed, bold steps were required to address the inequalities that had been spawned by decades of deliberate underdevelopment of black institutions.

At the time of the transition, these unequal realities were apparent and were commented upon, both publicly and in scholarship. However, instead of taking every effort to level the playing field, the new government lost the opportunity and allowed itself to be side-tracked by other considerations. The most prominent consideration revolved around the challenge of nation building. Given our fractious history, and consistent with the constitutional objective of creating a non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society, nation building assumed political prominence. The imperative of nation building and the discourse of the ‘rainbow nation’ became hegemonic. This led to a light touch on the transformation agenda and a failure to challenge both individual and institutional racism.

Secondly, the prospect of a black government had long triggered apocalyptic visions of an internecine racial bloodbath. These visions were born out of ingrained beliefs that black people are prone to acts of brutality. Expectations were that

sooner or later they would resort to bloody acts of revenge. Allaying white fears became an obsession for the new Mandela administration. Any discussions that remotely mentioned or hinted at radical transformation were quickly jettisoned from the national agenda.

Thirdly, having been told that they were nothing but third or fourth class citizens, the new mandarins were eager to prove that this was not the case; being affirmed by their erstwhile political masters became a sought-after endeavour. The process of integrating themselves and their children into historically white institutions was accelerated. For their part, historically white institutions opened their doors to a few black students and a miniscule number of black academics. The newly affirmed incumbents quickly became apologists and defenders of the status quo.

Not long thereafter, attention shifted from redress and the levelling of the playing field, to preserving the historical privileges enjoyed by these institutions. Save for minor changes here and there, the established funding formula—a financial instrument used to underdevelop historically black institutions—remains largely intact. New arguments were marshalled for maintaining this discrepancy. The focus shifted to getting more black students into historically white institutions. However, the historic racial disparities and inequalities between historically privileged and historically disadvantaged continue to be reproduced, even today.

Underpinning all this, is the ‘elephant in the room’. Apartheid and colonialism had etched in the mind of the African person the Verwoerdian prescription that ‘equality with Europeans is not for them’. The result was to nurture and cement a sense of self-doubt among Africans. Africans continue to invest a lot of energy and time in their endeavours simply to be recognised and included. Inclusion is read as an affirmation of their equal status. Having internalised the logic of exclusion, the newly included have become active participants and apologists for keeping their brethren and sisters out of their new environment. For their efforts, they are heaped with praise and given all sorts of awards to encourage their buffoonery. They start believing that they are a blessing to their race. The co-option of the subordinated groups into the logic of the dominant group has played itself throughout history. It is a phenomenon that has also played itself in the academy. Commenting on this Cornel West writes;

For most

intellectuals are in search of recognition, status, power, and often wealth. Yet for black intellectuals *this search requires immersing oneself in and addressing oneself to the very culture and society which degrade and devalue the black community* [emphasis added] from whence one comes...Therefore, *the “successful” black intellectual capitulates, often uncritically, to the prevailing paradigms and research programs* [emphasis] of the white bourgeois academy, and the “unsuccessful” black intellectual remains encapsulated within the parochial discourses of African-American intellectual life. (n.p)

Self-doubt also plays itself out in government in its disproportionate reliance on white experts and consultants.

#### WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Political struggles waged throughout the continent provide useful lessons for scholastic independence. Importantly, this includes the challenge of becoming one's own liberator and setting one's own agenda. Liberation and intellectual independence are responsibilities that cannot be outsourced to anybody other than those who stand to benefit. In a sense, most African scholars have used this as a template. African scholars cannot rely on other beneficiaries of any system that enslaves and/or marginalises them. Biko articulates this sharply (Biko, 2004):

It becomes more necessary to see the truth as it is if you realize that the only vehicles for change are these people who have lost their personality. The first step therefore is to make the Black man come to himself; to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth. (Biko, 2004)

In the academy, this would require, in the first instance, an intense mobilisation so as to increase participation of African/black scholars. Numbers provide the necessary psychological comfort in knowing that one is not alone. Second, African/black scholars will be unable to change their current marginal status “without a deconstruction of the logic of the dominant paradigm” (Seepe, 2015). For Hountondji (2009), this calls for an

... autonomous, self-reliant process of knowledge production and capitalisation that enables us to answer our own questions and meet both the intellectual and the material needs of African societies. [It is about developing] first and foremost an Africa-based tradition of knowledge in all disciplines, a tradition where questions are initiated and research agendas set out directly or indirectly by African societies themselves. Non-African scholars will then be expected to contribute to solving these questions and implementing these research agendas from their own perspective and historical background. (Hountondji, 2009)

Zambakari (2014) is unequivocal:

The challenge for Africa is that it must first take hold of the intellectual battle before it can wage a physical battle against violence and poverty and all other problems that it is currently facing. The battle against violence, underdevelopment, poverty, does not begin by looking to the outside, it begins with a sustained debate on the inside. Without winning the intellectual battle, Africa cannot pull itself out of its current morass.

In this regard, “the appropriation of the intellectual space will enable African scholars to reclaim the responsibility of defining their own narratives” (Seepe, 2015). This will require not only the establishment of the appropriate knowledge production but also an Africa-focused intelligentsia. Zambakari joins a group of

scholars (Hountondji, 1995; Taiwo, 1993; Mamdani, 1999; Zambakari, 2014) who argue that Africa's economic underdevelopment and social crises are directly linked to its intellectual underdevelopment.

Zambakari (2014) concludes:

Poverty in the field of knowledge production poses a greater danger to the future of the African people than any other problem; it affects all fields of inquiry and thus directly affects the current generation of Africans and future generations. What seems to be lacking is the ability to produce more thinkers; people who can come up with original ideas capable of uplifting the continent and moving it forward.

In the final analysis, Africa 'needs to grow its own local timber' if it is to craft durable solutions to address its challenges. This growing of its own timber begins with the urgent tasks of overhauling the discourse of white supremacy and transforming the higher education sector and the knowledge enterprise.

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## 9. INTERROGATING THE CIVIC ROLE OF SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

There is a tendency to think that it was colonisation that brought higher education onto the continent. However, the works of Ajayi, Goma and Johnson (1996) and Assie-Lumumba (2006) trace the origins of university life on the African continent back to ancient traditional centres of civilisation, such as Egypt, and in particular to the notions of ‘being’ and ‘knowledge’ – which were conceived within traditional African societies.

In revisiting these origins, this chapter highlights some of the directions and purposes that higher education institutions took on the continent. Ajayi et al. (1996, p. 5), states that the pre-colonial “indigenous higher education produced and transmitted new knowledge necessary for understanding the world, the nature of man (sic), society, God and various divinities, the promotion of agriculture and health, literature and philosophy” (p. 25). Ajayi et al.’s (1996) descriptions of higher education that Assie-Lumumba (2006) draws on have close similarities with elements of African philosophic sagacity. Assie-Lumumba’s (2006) view shows that, despite a lack of technological advancement or formalised institutions of higher education, “African societies developed forms of knowledge that superseded what an ordinary person needed to know in order to be and survive as a member of a particular society” (Divala, 2008, p. 36). Such knowledge did not rely only on repetition of traditional norms, as others tend to assume, but went further to give rational explications of certain bodies of knowledge and their justifications and refutations (Odera Oruka, 1990).<sup>1</sup>

While the system of higher education in Africa remained “predominantly oral, eclectic and even esoteric” (Ajayi et al., 1996, p. 4), its forms of knowledge ranged from metaphysical to epistemological and social. The same authors argue that such higher forms of knowledge held by specific individuals were recognised and promoted by the society, by rewarding such individuals with various gifts and even pieces of land. Although philosophic sagacity naturally operated outside the confines of the communal pool of knowledge, it was highly treasured by the community and considered to be part of their communal assets. Individuals capable of engaging in higher order thinking were able to provide explanations of things or events beyond the ordinary pool of explanation available in the community. But due to the communitarian nature of traditional African societies, individual

philosophical explanations become embedded in the community framework, despite the fact that in most cases they were critical of common sense community traditions and practices. Traditional wisdom contributed mainly to the development of personal character, enabling a person to understand how to live better with nature and others in the society. The development of character did not necessarily exclude the idea that traditional forms of knowledge were valued in the community for the practical insight they offered. Higher forms of knowledge provided an exceptional source of solutions for the advancement of societies and to address the problems they faced.

#### PRE-COLONIAL FORMAL HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN AFRICA

A number of centres for higher education were established on the African continent before Africa became colonised by western countries. These centres of higher education were influenced mostly by religious structures, such as Islam, Christianity and African traditions. Ajayi et al. (1996) also state that in the pre-colonial system, "Scientists and men of letters lived in the institution. They were housed and fed, and were also able to give themselves up entirely to their research and students, with no menial duties to perform" (p. 6). This depiction of the nature and function of the formal university as a centre for higher education, as well as of the roles of people at the centre of these institutions in the period before independence from colonial rule, show that universities in Africa existed and were designed for the promotion of knowledge. As much as the practices and modes of communal living were favoured and perpetuated, the search for knowledge became a joint enterprise between individuals and the community at large (Ajayi et al., 1996, p. 7). In other cases, like that of the University of Timbuktu, the university, in the time space under scrutiny became prominent due to its quest for autonomy, piety and learning (Ajayi et al., 1996, p. 10).

Following the above examples of the nature, functions and understanding of the African university, it is clear that the pre-colonial university in Africa was a centre engaged in the pursuit of knowledge and the development of autonomy and piety, irrespective of whether its background was predominantly Islamic or Christian. Such higher education systems tended to develop from informal education opportunities which became formalised ways of conducting the search for knowledge. In this regard that traditional African systems reveal a level of independence of thought, which communal societies accepted as part of their normal way of life. Independent thought was accommodated and taken up as part of their communal pool of thinking. Such contributions made by philosophical sages were acknowledged and valued, irrespective of whether the ultimate end was a deeper quest for knowledge, or a practical explanation of puzzles confronting the human community and aspects of nature. In my view, it was the traditional perspective of sagacity that played a leading role in the formation of higher forms of knowing and higher education systems.

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE FIRST INDEPENDENT AFRICAN  
STATES AFTER THE END OF COLONIALISM

The development of knowledge from informal transmission to formal transmission is closely related to how knowledge itself has transformed from lower forms to more sophisticated forms in both traditional societies and religious communities. From the middle of the 20th century, education in general on the African continent, and higher education in particular, clearly became a symbiosis of two functions. On the one hand there was the need to use (higher) education for national development and administration. On the other hand, the quest for contemplation also took root post-independence, although this was largely associated with the scarce monastic forms of life.

It is important to note that although ancient African civilisation has been noted as the core of the early university, many formal universities on the continent were created only after 1960. The need for higher education to contribute to national development was echoed in a number of sectors after independence, in particular a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) conference on higher education in Africa held in Tananarive in 1962 (UNESCO, 1962, pp. 17–19). The conference articulated higher education and its functions in the post-independence era as essential for forging unity through the promotion of the African character of the independent states, a character largely commensurate with a specific ideal of ‘civilisation’ in the world. The African university was expected to “encourage and support elucidation of and appreciation of African culture and heritage, thereby liberating the African mind socially and culturally”, with a holistic approach to the development of the human person (UNESCO, 1962, p. 18).

This development confirms the notion that the real need that gave rise to the origin of the formal African university was an indigenous aspiration towards independence from colonial rule. There was a need to establish African institutions that would not just train African people to work as interpreters of the colonisers and evangelists of the various established religious institutions, but would create “an African elite that could work side by side” with the Europeans (Ajayi et al., 1996, p. 30). There was a perceived connection between university education and national development, which gained momentum alongside the growth of nationalist movements in many African states. In effect, access to higher education and the attainment of higher educational qualifications were seen as ways to bring the African person on a par with the Western person. Consequently Ajayi et al. (1996) note that “by the 1930s, perceptive observers began to see that future constitutional development in Africa depended more on the educated elite than on traditional leaders” (p. 49).

The historical perspective on the development of the African university emphasises two central motifs. On the one hand, it was seen as a means of steering national development by means of providing adequately trained human resources. On the other hand, the university played a critical role in creating higher forms of knowledge that could bring the African person on a par with the coloniser.

Nevertheless, in spite of these goals, the role of the postcolonial university in Africa as an institution with a social mission in economic development and national building, alongside the general development of the person, has not been an easy one as we explain below.

#### THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN THE FACE OF GLOBALISATION

The global tide within which the African university has progressively found itself in towards the end of the last century till now presupposes that the African university should exist and function as part of the global university space in the same way that other universities exist and play out their global roles, especially those universities that are situated in the global North. Most institutions, particularly universities, perceive globalisation and neoliberalism as inevitable consequences of ‘being-in-the-world’. The concept of ‘being-in-the-world’ taken loosely implies that forms of existence such as the university, my own individual life and all others do not exist independently of the world or the external environment as such. In this regard, the larger world is an essential part of what and who I am. My life only gets a meaning in reference to other existing things in the universe. That being the case, the argument is that most people perceive globalisation and neoliberalism as automatically linked together. Such automatic association remains vague and ambivalent in most cases. Our conceptualisation of ‘globalisation’ refers to an extension of networks that people build so that the limitations of space, or its authority, have little influence on the course of events (Apple, Kenway, & Singh, 2005; Burbules & Torres, 2000). One of the basic characteristics of the globalisation trend is the advancement of technology, which has broken national and regional boundaries of connectivity that could otherwise have limited the process of development.

Despite being initially conceived as centred on how time and space are imagined (that is, not constrained nor constraining the activities of people), the interpretation of globalisation has gradually gravitated towards free market values and their promotion. Similar to this understanding, Newson (1998) argues that “the term globalization identifies a package of coinciding and converging social, political, and economic changes that are increasingly exhibited in various ... advanced societies... [which] include macroeconomic choices and microeconomic reforms” (p. 71) – such reforms are imposed on both public and private entities, including higher education institutions. Newson’s (1998) understanding is more indicative of, and close to what is generally referred to as ‘neoliberalism’. Biebricher and Johnson (2012) define neoliberalism as “a body of ideas and practices that emphasise individual responsibility and freedom (to choose); supports deregulation, privatization and fiscal discipline; and assumes that the more tasks are allocated and done by or through markets rather than states, the better” (pp. 202–203).

The theoretical base on which globalisation and neoliberalism are founded is essentially economic, rationalistic and liberal in character. In a neoliberal and globalised environment, the processes are considered to be inherently capable of

creating conditions of freedom, resulting in the development of human lives and societies by restricting the powers of the state and allowing private enterprise to flourish. Furthermore, the environment assumes that private enterprise, which operates in many ways through the market dynamics of supply and demand, has the capacity to improve the human condition by virtue of allowing people to source expertise from wherever possible, in order to manage their life and livelihood opportunities, thereby enabling each person to develop to their full potential.

The neoliberal mind-set is exhibited mostly by an increasing emphasis on performance management for faculty members; rationalisation of courses; regulating faculty size and functions, mostly in relation to the value-for-money logic; expecting faculties in higher education to operate with the same market performativity indicators as is the case in the corporate world; among other trends. The use of these market look-alike performative indicators within African universities, which is negative on the civic role of the university, is a clear indication of the influences brought about by the growing impetus of globalisation. The neoliberal mind-set, due mainly to its assumption of its *modus operandi* as inevitable and obvious, represents a new form of public management in many instances.

## FLAWS IN THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT LOGIC

In many respects, the new public management logic has been perceived and adopted as the saviour for failing or under-performing public enterprises, including public higher education systems. African states were advised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, among others, in the 1980s and 1990s to relinquish some sectors to be run by private corporations as private entities. Some nations were advised to terminate heavy subsidies for their university systems and introduce economic fees for services rendered. In recent times, many African governments have proclaimed and instituted operational cultures that fundamentally adopt the new public management logic as the standard norm guiding the running of public institutions. This trend is evidenced by a number of operational workplace practices guided by, among other things, themes such as ‘effectiveness’, ‘productivity’, ‘value for money in rendering services’, ‘human freedom in determining how each person decides to work and for what value’ and many more such themes.

For many, neoliberalism is the linchpin for modern forms of both individual and corporate autonomy, yet this very logic is troublingly suspect. I concur with Biebricher and Johnson (2012) that neoliberalism essentially “turns individuals into subjects who consider themselves as free and responsible for their own actions as well as the respective outcomes” (p. 205), yet it is virtually impossible that the same individuals could operate outside the logic of the new public management regime. The neoliberal mind-set believes that what each person obtains from life is a direct result of how much they have taken responsibility for the way they live their own life. According to this thinking, the market economy cannot be blamed for the malaise evident in negative forms of the very human existence it seeks to promote.

In part, this thinking is dependent on the idea that individuals in the new found order see themselves as “enterprising subjects that consider themselves completely free; masters of their own destiny, they are simultaneously responsible for the effects of their behaviour on themselves and others” (Biebricher & Johnson, 2012, p. 205).

In the management of higher education and in one’s existence in higher education, many more issues come to affect life besides one’s freedom, no matter how this sense of freedom might be interpreted. In the face of “subtle forms of inculcation, subjectification and internalisation of certain attitudes, norms, and identity” (Biebricher & Johnson, 2012, p. 205), factors which are critical to the functioning of neoliberalism itself, the normalisation of neoliberalism as inevitable is deeply troubling, at best naïve. In many respects, neoliberalism forms of being-in-the-world create inevitable inequalities that come about because of its propensity to imagine unfettered freedoms which eventually increase an international bourgeois class at the expense of the global poor majority.

The problems identified in a neoliberal/globalised framework are exacerbated when this logic is interfaced with the operations of the university in an African context. One such problem is the assumption that a neoliberal mind-set is the solution for all higher education problems, and that by operating in such a manner, human development needs will be taken care of. In the discussion above, I have alluded to the idea that neoliberalism and globalisation would have us believe that it is the very logic at play in this mind-set that is essential to enabling human freedom and liberating the human condition. But I have also observed that despite this logic, it is not possible for the neoliberal world to operate in such a disinterested manner that it eventually loses its own identity. To this effect, the neoliberal at heart tend to depict salient and nuanced forms of being-in-the-world that perpetuate the professed belief that all lies within the reach of the individual. Furthermore, this view holds that everything else depends on how each individual actualises one’s own freedom and develops one’s potential, while at the same it perpetuates a hegemonic ‘bystander’ that endorses forms of structural violence. For instance, the very idea that one’s chosen actions are in the context of, and operative in a neoliberal logic does not leave any much room to argue that individuals are free to develop their potential in general. This potential can only be developed as far as the neoliberal logic permits otherwise one would become an anomaly and a liability to the sustainability of the neoliberal world itself.

My main point is that despite the glamorous vision of life inherent in a globalised and neoliberalised mind-set, life exhibits the opposite in a number of African scenarios. For instance, policy dictates emanating from a neoliberal perspective in the African context have resulted indirectly in structural adjustment procedures and other conditions in the labour market that put aside the value of the person and community in preference for bottom-line market profitability. This approach considers market viability to be the ‘in-thing’ in most public ventures, including the provision of public higher education. The idea that governments on the African continent cannot subsidise higher education is part of that logic. The main outcome



of structural adjustment programmes under a neoliberal approach has been to shift the focus of national governments regarding the allocation of public resources, and public management as a whole. This has included, among other things, government cuts on public spending in a bid to reduce and eliminate their own national budget deficits. In particular, there is continued lowering of funding to higher education sectors as governments tend to concentrate on other basic social service delivery sectors, such as the improvement of health services, among others. As a result, public management regimes, such as governance of the higher education sector, have become a game of balancing performativity numbers at the expense of developing human character. Such performativity operations have eroded the necessary self-reflectivity in running universities that is essential to the philosophy of being-in-the-world.

I have discussed how neoliberalism and globalisation originated from the impetus to uphold the freedom of individuals to conduct activities whenever and wherever they choose—which is central to the promotion of human autonomy. However, in view of the developments mentioned above, I argue that neoliberalism and globalisation undermine the very basis of autonomy when their principles are applied to both developed and developing worlds as if they operate on an equal footing. Specifically, I argue that higher education institutions in the developing world are particularly vulnerable because of the economic and national development mandates within which they operate, as well as the general human development needs at the core of their being-in-the-world at a particular stage in history. Similarly, I would reject views that this is essentially a defining moment to enable the higher education sector to operate within its own freedoms, limits and conditions. Such an argument is problematic in the context of African higher education systems where the idea of free choice is in many cases a mere slogan in the fight for survival either in a local or a globalised context.

#### PERFORMATIVITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Globalisation, as emanating from the economic perspective, brings into higher education issues such as institutional rating, classification and competition, all of which predominantly serve specific economic ends. Market reforms in higher education produce competitive behaviours that may result in the examination, grading and ranking of student populations, as well as their institutions, in terms of economic indicators and global market compatibility, without necessarily cultivating the potential of the individual (Nussbaum, 1997). While this appears to be inevitable to some extent in any educational process, the effects of globalisation cause such competition to become not only an aspect of educational merit, but also a system of preserving social advantage (Marginson, 1997, p. 134). Similarly, the idea of performativity echoes Bill Readings' (1996) *University of Excellence*, a notion that is generally undefinable and whose emphasis on structures and processes, rather than individuals remains vague. The different forms in which globalisation

and neoliberalism manifest themselves in the higher education sector have little connection to the civic responsibility of the university in creating ‘persons’ not professions. The creation of persons is in itself a public good which cannot be simply reduced to ‘neoliberal bottom lines’, economic performativity regimes, or other such drivers.

One might argue that higher education performativity and its methods assume that there is a certain general standard or rule against which the performance of individual higher education institutions will be judged or ranked. The idea of such a universal standard in a way requires a sense of equality, real or assumed, as a prerequisite for judgement and ranking to take place. In educational terms, this would imply that all students or higher education institutions be regarded as similarly positioned, otherwise the ranking would not work and no ideal of performativity would make sense. Such conditions force higher education institutions into policy and practice borrowing, without making sense of the autonomy and aspirations of the people they serve. Sometimes this borrowing takes place at the expense of specific identities that the higher education institutions have acquired through history and the particular human development conditions within which they exist. One main danger of this approach is that universities can turn into manpower production lines that are in tune with labour market fitness, with little regard for the imperative to create a developed and better character in the people they serve. While performativity *per se* assists in uplifting technical individual human capability, its heavy reliance on patterns reminiscent of neoliberalism and globalisation can have negative effects on higher education practices and their relationship with the promotion of justice and the common good.<sup>2</sup>

Similar to the above standpoint, Marginson (1997, pp. 207–209) argues that as educational institutions aspire to offer more and more qualifications in response to market expectations, the pressure for more and better credentials rises and the pressure to be employable, which in turn prompts the need for further education in many people. In general, higher education qualifications become stratified according to their attached economic potential as determined by labour market values. Through this whole process, I have experienced that little is done to advance and account for the university’s contribution towards developing functional and critical human beings who are able to operate competently in a multifaceted environment. This puts into question any notions of the university’s civic responsibility, since the drive to satisfy economic demands neglects the direct development of civic responsiveness in human beings.

On a secondary level, the valuing of educational goods as economic goods triggers another effect, whereby students are considered as ‘clients’ or ‘customers’ of particular educational institutions and courses, receiving educational services from the institutions in the same way that the transfer of economic goods takes place. This occurs in the form of educational subjects that are structured in a modular way as quantifiable units and evaluated and charged per module. In this regard, I posit that neoliberalism has resulted in the transfer of academic credits across

the globe between different institutions. The once renowned educational goods primarily associated with the activities of the university now exist first and foremost as economic goods and academic credits, before they are considered as essential public goods.

In today's globalised economy, the pursuit of knowledge creates competition, which contributes to, and affects the knowledge 'factory'. Higher education systems are at the centre of this knowledge production process. In South Africa, for instance, globalisation saw the development of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Policy (GEAR) (Bolsmann & Uys, 2001, p. 173). GEAR was in itself part of a neoliberal agenda, subscribing to the tenet that governments should cut spending on the public sector in order to accelerate growth in other sectors of national development. As a result, universities, especially in (South) Africa, were required to seek private sources of support, while at the same time undergoing deregulation.

The end result of this spiral process is that universities are now run as corporate magnets and managerial systems (Bolsmann & Uys, 2001, p. 173). In this process, governments often put pressure on universities to make a contribution to increased international competitiveness. In some ways, this implies that universities need to take on short-term goals, for instance carrying out research for commercial purposes, or worse, carrying out research that has little significance for the majority of the people in the context within which the university is located. Such commercialised agendas are likely to have negative effects on the broader agenda of creating educated persons that can make an impact in their local communities. Such agendas speak more to the creation of scientific artefacts for commercial gain, leading one to wonder what the whole notion of civic responsibility should really imply in (South) African universities.

The thinking being proposed here resuscitates a number of counter arguments. Should universities not be entitled to pursue 'blue sky research'?<sup>3</sup> Should philosophers stop the enterprise of generating ideas for the sake of pushing the boundaries of thinking? The NRF's characterisation of 'blue sky' research is in no way meant to portray research merely for the sake of research. Blue sky research is valuable in extending the frontiers of human knowledge, among other things. Similarly, philosophical research conducted for its own sake is often construed by many people as having nothing to do with advancing human purposes and needs. Such thinking introduces mechanistic conceptions of human activity and the goal of human endeavour life, the very thing that this chapter argues against by defending a re-imagination of the civic responsibility of the university (see next section).

In this section, I have presented a number of arguments on why globalisation and neoliberalism present a challenge to universities in fulfilling their civic role. But it should be noted that on their own, the effects of globalisation and neoliberalism on higher education governance, are not the sole contributors to the technical mind-set that has driven the focus away from promoting human values, in particular the development of the person. In view of multiple expectations from various stakeholders, universities always bear the responsibility of balancing global

imperatives and local needs. In real terms, institutions often find themselves in a position where they are more relevant to global demands than local needs, caught between bargaining liberalisation and consolidating democracy (Bolsmann & Uys, 2001, p. 174). But equally worrying is the fact that, besides national development imperatives, the true civic role of the university is under even more threat because local development needs are framed mostly in economic terms.

A global perspective in managing a university emphasises efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and streamlining of activities and core duties of the institution. However, in my opinion, such an approach prioritises systems and systems management while ignoring the real imperative of the university, which is the development of people. Pendlebury and Van der Walt (2006, p. 79) argue that the efforts of universities to align themselves with the demands of neoliberalism have had negative effects on working students and support service workers. The ‘#FeesMustFall’ movement started by students in South African universities in 2015 is a clear indication that running universities by merely considering economic viability and the ‘bottom line’ reneges on the primary civic role of the university which is to educate future generations and not offer them only skills training for the workplace. Not surprisingly, Pendlebury and Van der Walt (2006, p. 91) argue that the conception of a market university inherently contains serious contradictions and antagonisms that the managerial model itself cannot solve. These problems raise further questions about the suitability of neoliberal and globalised patterns of higher education for African higher education systems in view of enabling them to fulfil their civic role.

Lastly, although the logic of competition and market viability have taken over as driving forces for change in most African higher education systems and beyond, Reisberg (2011, pp. 136–137) contends that such drivers are inherently flawed. Quoting the OECD (2010), Reisburg (2011, pp. 136–137) argues that “competition may actually have perverse effects, where institutions divert funds to investments (or flagship programmes, in the case of a number of South African universities) that will enhance an image in the ‘marketplace’” (emphasis in the original). Such actions rest on the assumption that “competition improves quality” which in itself further assumes that “people can access good information and use that information to make rational decisions” (Reisberg, 2011, p. 136). However, such assumptions are inconclusive and at best only probable—they can only enable a university to achieve its civic role by default, if at all.

#### (RE-)IMAGINING THE CIVIC ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY

In order to map out the civic role of the African university, a few questions need to be raised. What should the university stand for? What kind of values are at the centre of university life and how should these affect the lives of human beings and their societies? How should higher education institutions prepare graduates to take their rightful place in society? What is the university’s civic role after all?

The above questions evoke a silent dilemma which needs to be addressed. This is the further question on whether what we call the ‘university’, and particularly the discourse on the university’s nature and functions, is merely for intellectual and theoretical edification? To start the discussion, Biesta (2007) considers the university’s civic role as a “particular role in democratic societies that contributes to the quality of democratic life and democratic processes” (p. 268). This is the idea of a university that pursues truth within the context of wider social and political concerns, such that its activities result in enlightening the individual, society, the state, and mankind as a whole (Biesta, 2007, p. 269 quoting Simons, 2006, p. 39). This position squarely locates the university and its activities as central to the total improvement of the human condition, and not focussing simply on knowledge for the job market.

The university is conceived and operates within the field of education. In view of this point, Carr (2006) opines that it would be difficult to consider a theory of education outside the context in which the theory arose. To be specific, Carr (2006) contends that the theory of education is tied to the practice of education. The practice of education in its fuller extent requires the development of the full person in all dimensions of human life. Such thinking implies a civic role for the university, over and above the purpose of knowledge generation.

Drawing from the above thinking, we consider whether (South) African universities might rightly be considered to be fulfilling their civic role. This may indeed be so if their attention to producing, teaching and disseminating knowledge does not artificially distinguish between the utilitarian values of knowledge and the intrinsic nature of developing and transmitting knowledge for the sake of knowledge. In a way, what knowledge is cannot be disassociated from what that knowledge is intended for. Even knowledge for the sake of knowledge—as in many philosophical pursuits—eventually is knowledge in service of the human being. In other words, it is inadvisable to consider that each of these functions should exist independently, because that would destroy the essence of the university as discussed above. That said, universities’ understanding of their purpose as being to promote national development on the one hand, and to develop human character on the other hand, does not depart from Carr’s (2006) thinking.

A better understanding of the nature of education and the categorical relationship between theory and practice according to Carr (2006) can be drawn from the German philosopher Heidegger, particularly when one begins to pursue this thinking in relation to the nature, function and purpose of the university. First, Heidegger (Stumpf, 1988, pp. 503–507) distinguishes between defining things as things and defining the person. While the existence of things in general does not involve self-awareness, understanding of the human being implies a person’s awareness of being human, since we have some feeling of what it means to be human. In terms of Heidegger’s thinking, our being-in-the-world essentially involves familiarity, self-reflection, and an understanding that what we construct or institute is a part of being human. In other words, what we call ‘the world’ is part of human existence and we

can only explain this world in relation to various forms of human existence (Stumpf, 1988, pp. 503–507). That said, the university—from its nature to its functions—embodies the human in all its self-consciousness, and its awareness of being-in-the-world.

Heidegger's thinking and that of other theorists such as Rawls (1971), is indicative of the idea that no university can meaningfully perform its mandate in any society if its system does not favour rationality and promote objectivity among its students, staff and surrounding affiliates. In other words, the higher education system should be seen to promote critical thinking, authenticity and responsibility within one's local environment. Our being-in-the-world carries an unshaken responsibility to the world and others. In other words, the university is a fusion of educational theory and practice (Carr, 2006). If both these endeavours are marked by critical self-reflectivity, it is not possible to be in the world without doing something about the world that liberates the being-in-the-world, the *Dasein* or the full human being. Similarly, the mandate of national economic development would require the development of appropriate human capabilities enabling people to live fulfilled lives, whether their purpose is utilitarian or not.

But why should the civic role be central to the university? Why is it not enough to produce science and managerial practices or economic innovation without putting being-in-the-world at the centre? Do universities really need to have a civic role, anyway? In response to these questions, and in addition to the insights I have explored from Heidegger and Carr, I argue that every education system, higher education or not, inherently aims to achieve some good, both in individuals and in society in general. No system would be called an education system if it promotes perversion of the values held by the very people who subscribe to the system. The nominal conception of *educare* (the Latin root of 'education') is useful in this regard. This notion literally means 'to carry forward'. In a sense, everything educational should promote the person, starting with the very aspect that makes a person who he or she is, namely the capacity to reason or think. As such, indoctrination is a diversion from the original meaning of 'education', while a weaker form of education would be the route of technical education alone as representative of education as a whole. It should be noted that indoctrination, from the point of view of the practitioners, is not considered as indoctrination but rather as something good, as education itself.<sup>4</sup> However, the 'good' in this sense is suspect, as I further explain below.

The 'good' from a Rawlsian perspective can be seen as every person's basic intuition about a desirable form of life. In many ways the desire for the 'good life' is believed to be brought about by an examined and autonomous life, also referred to as *self-reflectivity* in Heidegger's sense (Stumpf, 1988). As such, the good life contrasts with purported forms of good life brought about merely by adhering to performativity regimes. According to Rawls (1971), human intuition dictates that human beings seek something that is good and/or desirable in all their endeavours. This desire results in their efforts to ensure that social arrangements for attaining this good are fair to everyone (Rawls, 1971, p. 54). In proposing this view, I am not



negating the possibility of there being an “irreducible plurality of individual values or conceptions of the good” and the existence of many valuable ways of life which people may choose to pursue (Miller, 2000, p. 102). Nevertheless, there is some convergence in common values and aspirations which human beings, irrespective of context, would hold dear, such as the aspiration to live a good life, a life of freedom, and many others. As discussed earlier, performative regimes can help achieve these goals only by default since these regimes focus elsewhere, and not on common human values and aspirations at the centre of the civic role. In this regard, I propose that such performativity regimes are corrosive to the civic values amongst people.

Kymlicka (1989, pp. 12–13; 2002, p. 64) sums up the concern for civil and personal liberties as being centred on the interest in leading a good life and the commitment to do so. He argues that the good life can be lived from the inside, that is, in accordance with one’s beliefs about what is of value in life. Furthermore, living the good life entails the ability and freedom to question the very beliefs that inform one’s choices in life, in the light of any other relevant information. Kymlicka (1989) further argues that liberty and the good are intertwined; that “liberty is important not because we already know our good prior to social interaction, or because we cannot know about our good, but precisely so that we can come to know our good, so that we track our best-ness” (Kymlicka, 1989, p. 18). The same author proceeds to argue that the freedom to examine one’s ends is worthless if one cannot pursue one’s ends from the inside.

Kymlicka’s (1989) view of liberty as living the good life from inside-out has far-reaching implications for people’s understanding of the civic role of the university. For instance, viewing the university’s role as providing technical expertise for the development of a nation, or pursuing global competitiveness, without a proper assessment of the kind of human beings the system is producing, could jeopardise a person’s interest in living a good life and being able to freely revise and pursue their individual goals.

One of the aspects of the civic role of the university is to become an agent for the cultivation and promotion of personal autonomy. Such autonomy necessarily considers one’s rootedness in a community of people and is informed by the self-understanding of one’s circumstances, a fulfilment of Heidegger’s being-in-the-world philosophy. As such, the claims that I make about the civic role of the university are better understood within the context of the social, historical, economic, political and cultural factors that inform the purposes of higher education governance in Africa. Furthermore, the civic role that I am proposing promotes a new kind of being-in-the-world, where the individual and community do not exist as the antithesis of each other, but rather as complementary aspects of human existence. In this way of thinking, it becomes essential to maintain the identity of the university with all its values of academic freedom, academic excellence, and the production and dissemination of knowledge, as constituent parts of the civic role of the university. I therefore argue that this approach of being-in-the-world may enable universities to negotiate local demands and needs, while at the same time paying adequate attention



to what makes a university what it is. The position has a better chance of mitigating the negative influences of both globalisation and neoliberalism on higher education institutions on the African continent.

African universities can move towards achieving their civic role by maintaining public spaces where people can engage in a critical and reflective manner in the life of society, including its political and economic aspects. Universities can do this by incorporating critical thinking skills and other necessary rational dispositions into the various subject disciplines, as well as by recognising the fragility of human life as a whole, and that as an individual I ought to recognise that other people are equally capable of being hurt by my actions, my words or non-actions. Elsewhere, Gutmann and Thompson (2004) have shown that nations cannot be truly democratic if educational institutions do not embrace the promotion of democratic deliberation. A true deliberative culture respects the existence, conditions of life of co-deliberants as genuine and worth of respect. Hence, a country's democratic education system cannot be understood or evaluated outside the kinds of teachers or persons the system is cultivating in view of the civic virtues mentioned here. This connection puts an enormous obligation on the university system in so far as developing citizenship virtues is concerned.

Universities on the African continent conduct their activities in environments that are riddled with a number of inequalities due to colonialism, tribal politics, unequal distribution of resources and wealth, and many other social ills. Not only in Africa, but universities worldwide are also known for their potential to create economic gaps in societies between those who have a university education and those who do not. One way of resolving this paradox is for the university to first acknowledge its challenges and the relevant characteristics of life in its local context before embracing performative regimes, reminiscent of neoliberalism. The university in Africa needs to engage in an honest interrogation of its circumstances and the possible ways through which it can ameliorate the conditions of inequality and injustice in society. To this end, the civic responsibility of the university should be uncompromising in its stand against the demands to operate only like a business.

#### CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This chapter has addressed the question: How do current practices and conceptions of higher education in Africa manage or fail the civic role of the university? In trying to understand the puzzle confronting the higher education system, we have made an attempt to investigate the nature and origins of the university in Africa. This cursory mapping has revealed that universities have never been intended for the 'sake of knowledge alone', but that the development, promotion and dissemination of knowledge sit alongside the demands of national economic development, and human character development.

In contemporary times, the civic responsibility of the university can be considered as a derailed project, mainly because of how globalisation and neoliberal patterns

have entrenched themselves into the operation of higher education. Specifically, it is neoliberalism that has fundamentally affected the higher education system and its current focus. While neoliberalism starts off with an enticing promise of emancipation and responsibility, this mind-set eventually becomes first and foremost a concern about economic bottom-lines, performativity, and competition. This shift in focus has eliminated the human being, the human situation and self-reflectivity from the picture. As a result, the civic role of the university loses its intended meaning and becomes a naïve and vague reference point.

This chapter proposes a back-to-basics understanding of the civic role of the university in Africa, emphasising the centrality of cultivating the full person by adopting a human values approach, among other things. Given the limited scope of this chapter, and that human values cannot be prescribed in a democratic space, some serious introspection is required about the extent to which particular institutional practices are corroded by the neoliberal approach, and how best a human values approach can be developed in particular settings and experiences.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> An elaborate discussion of African philosophic sagacity can be found in Odera Oruka (1990).
- <sup>2</sup> The link between higher education practices and the promotion of the common good and social justice is not explored here, since it is not central to the argument in this chapter.
- <sup>3</sup> The South African National Research Foundation considers ‘blue skies’ research to be “multi-dimensional self-initiated, curiosity-driven inquiry that addresses new phenomena as well as pushes the frontiers of knowledge. It can be fundamental or basic research”. The purposes and objectives of this type of research are considered to be “pushing the frontiers of knowledge and encouraging imagination through scientific and scholarly endeavours; supporting and sustaining communities of critical and free thinkers; promoting and encouraging diversity in research for re-imagining disciplines or academics; as well as bringing about new and unpredictable scientific, technological, scholarly discoveries, interpretations, understandings and knowledge” (<http://www.nrf.ac.za/division/kfd/instruments/blue-skies>).
- <sup>4</sup> This chapter does not go into detail about the nature of technical education and indoctrination, although I hold that both technical education and indoctrination do not offer sufficient room to create and promote the good in a person.

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## 10. DECOLONISATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

### A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

From 1988 to 1992 I was a professor of education at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in Tanzania. These years formed a steep learning curve for me and caused me to experience several intellectual shocks. My first shock involved the language issue. I had read that there were 120 languages in Tanzania. Already during my first tea break, I noticed that all my colleagues spoke Kiswahili. The same was true for my students—they came into the lecture hall all speaking Kiswahili. I delivered some lectures in educational psychology, to about 200 students at a time. To increase opportunities for interactivity, I wrote some questions on the blackboard and had them discuss the questions for some minutes in buzzing groups of four to five students. I soon discovered that all the groups had switched to discussion in Kiswahili, even though I had written the questions in English. During my periods of conducting student teacher supervision in secondary schools, I noticed the lively atmosphere in the classes taught in Kiswahili (at that time, not only the subject Kiswahili, but also the subject Siasa<sup>1</sup> was taught through the medium of Kiswahili). Furthermore, I noticed the passivity of the students and aggressiveness of the teachers when the teaching was conducted in English.

My second shock came when I studied the reading list for the various courses in the department at the university (which became the Faculty of Education in 1989). All the books in the reading list came from the North and most contained theories of little use for the work and life in Tanzania. Several of the books were exactly the same American textbooks we had rejected at the University of Oslo, at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, since we felt that they were irrelevant for us. They were written in English, a foreign language, and they built on experiences, norms and culture from the United States (US). We wrote new textbooks ourselves, in Norwegian, and based on Norwegian culture. In Tanzania the textbooks were even more irrelevant, but there was no revolution against them. They were on the reading list because these were the books the professors who had studied in the US or Canada were familiar with. Often there would be only one copy of the book in the library. It had to be put on reserve and the students were able to check it out for only an hour at the time.

In my years at UDSM, I was responsible for the Master's programme in social psychology. I introduced my first seminar to my fourteen students by telling them

that we would have to work together to develop the course, since I did not know Africa well; at that point I did not even speak Kiswahili (I subsequently learnt to speak the language). I knew theories of social psychology, but they had all originated in the North, and might not apply to Africa or African people at all. Social psychology needs to be based on the society one lives in, and on the norms, ways and culture of that society. The students should be able to use their own experiences from having lived their whole lives in Africa. We would have to go into the villages, talk with the elders, find out about their beliefs and worldview, and tap into the indigenous knowledge systems. How did children who were not attending school learn? What did they learn and from whom? What role did the grown-ups in the village play in the lives of the young? What role did the ancestors play in the lives of the living? At first, my students protested. They had expected that I would lecture to them about social psychology theories. They could not see why they should use their own experiences, and even less did they see any point in going into the villages and talking with the elders. What could the elders tell them that they did not know already? How could the elders bring them forward in their academic thinking? I encouraged them to look at their own society with fresh eyes.

#### AFRICA AS A CONTINENT

In a book chapter, Kwesi Kwaa Prah and I (Prah & Brock-Utne, 2009) warn against treating all countries in Africa in the same way. British researchers, such as Crossley and Watson (2003), have long criticised the uncritical international transfer of educational policy and practice from one country to another, and from one continent to another. However, the World Bank, in its important document *Educational Policies for sub-Saharan Africa* (World Bank, 1988; Brock-Utne, 2000a, 2003), proposed the same type of market oriented prescriptions for *all* sub-Saharan African countries, regardless of their particular ideologies.

In a lecture on the detrimental effects of structural adjustment policies on the economic development of Africa, Charles Abugre (2010), the leader of the millennium development campaign for Africa, reminded the audience that within the borders of Africa one could place all of China, all of India, all of the US and most of Europe. How could anyone have the audacity to prescribe one policy for this enormous continent?

Nevertheless, there *are* some similarities between the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, which have to do with their colonial past, the policies of colonial governments, the education given before the missionaries and colonial governments introduced their schooling concepts into Africa, and the work of missionaries in transcribing African languages. Today a common theme is that donors are using the rescheduling of debt payments as a reason for imposing conditionalities that lead to greater inequality within African countries (Brock-Utne, 2000a). Except for the use of Afrikaans in some South African universities, there is not a single country in sub-Saharan Africa that uses an African language as the language of instruction at

secondary or tertiary level. Even languages with millions of speakers like Kiswahili (131 million speakers) and Hausa (53 million speakers) are not used as languages of instruction at higher levels of education.<sup>2</sup> In an article on *Africanising Institutional Culture*, Thaddeus Metz (2015) discusses the concept 'Western' and also what it would mean to Africanise institutional culture. Regarding the concept 'Western' Metz (2015) notes:

The combination of markets, science and constitutionalism is, throughout the world, routinely called 'Western', although one will find it in Japan and Australasia and will fail to find it in the Amazon jungle. (p. 244)

Metz (2015) claims that speaking of 'Africanisation' does not commit one to looking for features that are utterly distinct from Western, Chinese or any other cultural processes. Instead,

Africanisation means pointing out features characteristic of indigenous black peoples below the Sahara desert and of contemporary ways of life that are or could be informed by their worldviews and practices. (p. 244)

The same author points out that not all indigenous African culture is worth preserving, and much of it is gendered, with the content of what one may learn determined by one's sex. He notes that implicit in the discussion on Africanisation "is usually the presumption that only the (particularly) attractive features of African norms should be adopted" (Metz, 2015, p. 245). He goes on to describe five central dimensions by which a university could Africanise its institutional culture: the curriculum offered, the research undertaken, the language used, the aesthetics taught, and the way governance is carried out.

#### EDUCATION VS SCHOOLING

Departments of education in African universities are departments based on Western schooling, with lectures conducted in the colonial languages, English, French and Portuguese. Likewise, Ministries of Education are ministries based on the western schooling model. Catherine Odora (1994) discusses the need for creating a space in contemporary education discourse that is more tolerant, and more sensitive to realities other than those that are overwhelmingly Western. She finds that discussing education in Africa today compels us to come to terms with a situation in which even the social construction of the reality of people has been constantly, and is still, defined elsewhere. Discussing education in Africa, according to Odora (1994), "is about asking why the school building is always quadrangled even where the local setting around it has round huts" (p. 62).

Powerful money-lenders and donors to education in Africa have the power to define not only the type of schooling they see fit for African children, but also the concept of 'education' itself. This is demonstrated by a statement by two World Bank education officers: "Logic dictates that if the poor cannot afford schooling, then by

definition they are less educated” (Burnett & Patrinos, 1996, p. 275). This statement may be contrasted with a passage from Nyerere’s *Education for Self-Reliance*:

The fact that pre-colonial Africa did not have “schools”—except for short periods of initiation in some tribes—did not mean that the children were not educated. They learned by living and doing. In the homes and on the farms they were taught the skills of the society and the behaviour expected by its members— Education was thus “informal;” every adult was a teacher to a greater or lesser degree. But this lack of formality did not mean that there was no education, nor did it affect its importance to the society. Indeed, it may have made the education more directly relevant to the society in which the child was growing up. (Nyerere, 1982, p. 236)

The statement by the World Bank writers equating schooling with education begs the following questions: Whose logic are they talking about? Whose education? Built on whose frame of reference?

Clifford Fyle, a linguist and former head of the Department of Education at the University of Sierra Leone, who later worked at the UNESCO office in Senegal, sums up his chapter in the publication *Educational Research for Development in Africa* in these words: “In general it is best for Africa to look to herself for the development of her own curricula and teaching methods” (Fyle, 1993, p. 31). He claims that the best way by which Africa may “look to herself” is by an examination of the methods and techniques of traditional African education, for example, traditional practices for bringing up the young, for learning through play, for initiation into manhood or womanhood, for teaching skills, or for lifelong education. He suggests that such an examination may reveal practices that can be adopted directly, or with little adaptation, for use as part of an African teaching methodology. Fyle (1993) comments:

One may perhaps mention the great emphasis on education through practice generally evident in traditional African societies, and which is in line with current demands for linking education with productive work. Other examples may be of intellectual development through tales, riddles, and proverbs as in Zaire, and even the string games and tricks of Sierra Leone children which could be of much value in mathematics, science, and craft teaching. The point of emphasis here is that traditional methods and techniques have not yet received the research attention they duly deserve. (p. 31)

My students claimed, after they reluctantly went into the villages, that their studies of the education occurring there were empowering, showing them how much value there is in the teachings of village people, who were stamped by many as ‘uneducated’ because many were illiterate and had no formal schooling. The students studied informal learning around the fireplace, storytelling, joking relationships, and riddling activity (Brock-Utne, 2000a, 2000b, 2006).



J. M. R. Ishengoma (1988), himself a Mhaya,<sup>3</sup> wrote an interesting term paper entitled: *Riddles as an Agent of Socialisation and Social Learning among the Haya Children*. Having collected a vast amount of riddles still in use in Bukoba, Ishengoma analysed them as to their educational value. He found that they could be meaningfully divided into the following categories:

- Riddles that instruct children to compare, contrast and distinguish objects
- Riddles that promote mastery of Luhaya and proper communication skills
- Riddles that teach cultural norms
- Riddles that are instructive about work, agriculture, and animal husbandry
- New riddles.

Through his many examples, he demonstrates what a useful tool riddles must have been, and partly still are, in the education of the young. He argues against Western social anthropologists such as Finnegan (1970), who considered riddles as nothing more than a form of entertainment and amusement for children. This is the way riddles mostly function in the west. Ishengoma (1988) recounts that Bahaya children, both boys and girls, are normally told riddles by their mothers or grandmothers. He found in his study that children in families where riddling was still a normal practice had a better developed vocabulary in Luhaya (Kihaya) and were more sensitised to the cultural norms of the Bahaya than children in families where the art of riddling had been ignored or abandoned, for example, in devout Christian families. He claims that in many Christian families the practice of riddling is considered to be heathen. Lugoe (1989) relates that among the Wajita in the Mara region in Tanzania, all children participate in riddling up to their fifth year, but after the child turns five, boys and girls form different riddling groups. The Jita boy is taught his role at the evening assembly, commonly called *echoto* (in Kijita). Each home prepares a cow dung fire whereby the males, both elders and youth, gather while the females are busy preparing the evening meal. At this gathering, stories, riddles and narrations of events of interest to the growth of the boys are related. Most of the teaching is done by the grandfathers, as it is assumed that they have an accumulation of knowledge about the tribe. Also the grandfathers can say anything they want to, without hesitation or shyness.

#### REANALYSIS OF THE HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS EDUCATION IN AFRICA

There is a great need for studies of this kind, both the recording of educational practice such as riddling activity that continues today, and a reanalysis of the history of indigenous education in Africa. Works by Western missionaries, travellers, or social anthropologists can be used, but with caution; they are often biased and need to be reinterpreted. For instance, the European travellers whose reports are summarised by Theal (1910) have, according to Ocitti (1991), a tendency to view indigenous African education, especially of the Xhosa, as a phenomenon which was

confined to the puberty years and achieved mainly through the rites of circumcision. Ocitti (1991) mentions that, in the work of some writers from outside Africa, one encounters parochialism and prejudice toward Africans and their traditional systems of education. The information seems to have been gathered more out of curiosity than from any intention of using it as a point of departure for the construction of relevant school curricula.

#### TAKING THE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICANS INTO ACCOUNT

The so-called 'sandwich' programmes through which many Africans obtain their higher education in the US, Canada or Europe, frequently school students in Western theories, send them back home on fieldwork trips to collect raw data, and have them write up the data according to Western theories (Brock-Utne, 1999). This practice does not contribute to building up an African 'way of knowing'. Even when the African scholar is studying or working in an African university, the practice of relying on Western theories for data collection and interpretation is still prevalent.

In an article (Brock-Utne, 1996) discussing the problems of validity and reliability in qualitative research within education in Africa, I attempt to show that the African researcher knows his/her environment better than any expatriate and will be more likely to ask the right questions provided that s/he is allowed to ask them and is not forced to work with questions of concern to Western donors. It is also necessary for the African researcher to trust her/his own experiences and use those to form concepts, instead of merely transferring concepts established in the West and based on experiences in the northern hemisphere. In the 1996 article I argue for the need for secondary research which reanalyses many of the accounts written by Western travellers and anthropologists from an Afro-centric viewpoint. I further argue for the use of an autobiographical approach to secure data of high ecological validity. I mention below the example of an African scholar who set out to write a paper on albino children in Tanzania.

As a good researcher with traditional Western training, he went to do a library search since there was no time and no money for a large empirical study. The question he asked himself was: "What do the books in the library of my university have to tell us about the albino children of Africa?" In the library he found American differential psychology books which treated the phenomenon of albinism. He found some useful information about genetic causes, but the books did nothing to discuss living as an albino in the southern hemisphere. He had no sources that covered such experiences, so he did not put anything about that into his paper. He tried to introduce Africanness into the paper through the sources he could find about the phenomenon of albino children in Africa. However, these sources were written by Western anthropologists from their viewpoint, and described how albino children had been considered either as devils in some tribes and killed immediately after birth, or as creatures to be honoured and given prominence in other tribes. The research paper became a mixture of material from these anthropological sources from the West and from the

American textbooks on albinism. This particular researcher happened to have two albino sons himself. He felt, however, that drawing on his own experiences with them was not ‘scientific’, and that he would be accused of being subjective. He did not dare to let his own experiences speak through his own voice, to break the silence surrounding the personal experiences of Africans. After having read the research paper I asked the African scholar, whom I knew well: “If you should tell me what the three most important problems for your albino sons have been, what are they?” He thought for a while and in his mind he was reformulating the research question he had formally posed according to his library search, into a more meaningful question: “What do my experiences tell me about raising albino children in Africa?” After we had discussed this topic for a while, we were able to group the answers to the question into the following main categories:

*1. White Skin in an Environment of Black People*

The fact that his sons were white while all their friends were black made them an object of teasing, often of bullying. Other children said cruel things, such as their mother had been thinking of a white man when having sex with their father. One of the boys had had such a hard time at school that they had to remove him from that school. In Norway, for instance, albino children do not look very different from blond Norwegian children in the winter time. They are not immediately branded as looking different.

*2. The Amount of Sun in the Southern Hemisphere*

Secondly, the fact that the sun shines all day, all year round, can make life torture for albino children. In particular, waiting for the bus to go to school is often very painful. They sometimes had to wait for a long time and there was no shade where they were waiting. The textbooks written in the North do not discuss this phenomenon at all. In northern hemisphere countries it is cold most of the year, the sun is not always shining, and it is easy to hide from it. If you are an albino, it is far more comfortable to grow up as a Norwegian than as a Maasai.

*3. The Poverty of the South*

Thirdly, the poverty of people in Africa (even academic staff like him) makes it almost impossible to buy things that would make life somewhat easier for albino children, such as sun-screen lotion with a strong factor, long-sleeved shirts, caps and sunglasses.

These three problems had, however, not been discussed in the research paper because the scholar did not find them described in any literature, and did not think that a scientific and scholarly paper, which was going to count towards promotion, could build on his own personal experiences. I tried to convince him that putting

himself and his own experiences into the paper was not unscientific. On the contrary—the lived experiences of himself and his wife over many years could be analysed and were the most valid and reliable data he could find. Building on them would be describing African experience from an African viewpoint and would add a sorely needed indigenised perspective to the knowledge available on this topic. In a recent publication (Brock-Utne, 2016) I argue for the use of an ethnobiographical approach by Africans doing research in Africa.

In an article based on case study research of lives of people in South Africa, Coetzee, Elliker and Rau (2013) introduce a programme in the Narrative Study of Lives in Africa, which provides a platform for establishing and strengthening a significant component of the training for social and human scientists. The essence of their programme is epistemologically related to indigenous knowledge, cultural transmission and community engagement, and it contributes towards the democratisation of knowledge.

From 1996 to 1998 I was hired as one of six facilitators teaching qualitative research methods to young researchers at historically black universities in South Africa. I was surprised to find how much these young researchers looked to historically white universities for guidance, even to the extent of simply replicating research that had been carried out there. They did not attempt to build on the knowledge in their immediate surroundings, which they could tap into more easily than white researchers, since they spoke the language of the local people. There is so much to write about from a black South African perspective. Coetzee et al. (2013) encourage South African students to conduct research on questions like: How do we remember the past? How did we experience the past? How is the past still part of our lives in the present? These authors are concerned that traditional historical sources do not adequately incorporate the voices of the majority of South Africa's people. They claim that the racial divide of apartheid led to a situation where:

brought about that the voices of the majority of South Africans were not heard because they found themselves on the economic and cultural margins. Because of their political exclusion they were hidden from historical accounts and their views seldom played a role in the reconstruction and representation of reality. By expanding everyday discourses on issues that reflect everyday life to as wide a spectrum as possible, narrative studies can contribute to greater inclusivity, more opportunities for political and cultural participation, and self expression. (Coetzee et al., 2013, p. 3)

One of the primary aims of the programme in the Narrative Study of Lives is to explore ways to listen to the voices of ordinary people. The programme attempts to sensitise students to describing and understanding aspects of their own social reality, its unique context, and the need to participate in social transformation and reconstruction. This type of research is needed all over Africa, not only in South Africa. There is a need to rewrite the content of textbooks, change curricula and restore the languages Africans speak. In an article taking into account both the

language of schooling in Africa and the content of curricula and textbooks, I present the following four models (Brock-Utne, 2009):

*Table 1. Content models for curricula and textbooks (Brock-Utne, 2009)*

	<i>Foreign language</i>	<i>Local language</i>
<i>Foreign content</i>	A) Textbooks written and published abroad in a foreign language adopted for use without any modification.	B) Direct translations of textbooks and curriculum material written abroad, into a local language.
<i>Local content</i>	C) Some well-known African authors write in the former colonial languages. Most research, even on local experiences, is written in former colonial languages.	D) Texts based on local culture written in the local language.

Model A is the least desirable of the four models, but unfortunately the one most in use in Africa. This is the model we deal with when books from abroad, based on a foreign environment, are simply adopted and used in another culture. Foreign books are often donated to African institutions as a form of development aid. I have personally experienced how loads of outdated American textbooks have been dumped in African university libraries.

Often when learning materials are produced in local languages they are merely translations of learning materials which have been produced abroad (Model B). In Africa, this is often in the country of the former colonial masters. Direct translations into a familiar language make learning easier for children, since they can access the learning material in a language with which they are comfortable. However, the culture is foreign and the examples given are sometimes so unfamiliar that they are difficult to grasp, even in a familiar language.

Model C includes well-known African authors such as Leopold Senghor, Chinua Achebe, and Maryse Condé, who write from an African environment, but in former colonial languages. The Nigerian author Chinua Achebe (1958) is especially known for his widely read novel *Things Fall Apart*. Leopold Senghor (2007) is known for his beautiful poetry taken from African culture, but expressed in French. Maryse Condé (1984) is known for her major novel *Ségu* which tells the story of the Traoré clan in Mali in the years from 1790 to 1850. The novel centres around the Bambara nobleman Dusika Traoré who is closely connected to the royal family. It is also possible to produce textbooks with content from Africa, but written in a foreign language. In Guinea I came across a series of textbooks in French, where an effort had been made to situate the content within African culture. This means not only substituting European names with African names and showing pictures of Africans instead of Europeans, but also describing scenes which are familiar to the African

learner. However, the textbooks had been published in France and imported into Guinea. Alamin Mazrui (1997) reports that a loan from the World Bank to the education sector in the Central African Republic was given on condition that all the textbooks and even language charts should be bought in France.

Model D is the variation we would like to see in Africa. Although it is, unfortunately, the variation we see the least, it does exist. An interesting educational programme, known as the Village School Programme, was put in place for the Ju/'hoansi San children in the Nyae Nyae area in the north-eastern Otjozondjupa region in Namibia, in 1994 (Brock-Utne, 1997, 2000a, 2006). The programme was supported by the Swedish development agency SIDA. The general aim of the Village School Project was to provide basic education in the mother tongue for grades 1 to 3. The teachers were from the community and spoke the language of the children. The language of instruction was the local language Ju/'Hoan and the educational programme was geared to the culture of the learners. According to a personal communication from the Nyae Nyae Foundation, the 220 children in the Village School Programme were far ahead of other learners, because they learnt in their mother tongue, they were exposed to culturally sensitive teaching material, and the teachers were respected by everyone (Brock-Utne, 1997, 2009). The production of teaching material was done within the programme with great emphasis on local curriculum development. During the course of the project, literacy primers in the Ju/'hoan language were developed, based on traditional stories of the Ju/'hoan people. These were collected in the villages of Nyae Nyae by the student teachers themselves. Pfaffe (2002) recounts the process:

Following the production of the Ju/'hoan literacy primers, their subsequent translation into English promoted the cultural richness of the Ju/'hoan people, and made it accessible to a wider audience. Moreover, the English readers are now offering possibilities for contextually appropriate teaching of English as a foreign language. (p. 161)

#### BUILDING UP NEW THEORIES ON THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

In a book edited by Kwesi Kwaa Prah and myself (Prah & Brock-Utne, 2009) we discuss the inadequacy of many Western language learning theories when applied to the African continent, and the necessity of working for a paradigm shift in the thinking on bilingual/multilingual language in education in Africa. Most theories on bilingualism are from the US, Canada, Europe and other industrialised countries, and have been formed on the basis of experiences in those parts of the world. They do not fit the situation in Africa. Concepts such as bilingual teaching, second language learning, additive and subtractive bilingualism, immersion and submersion programmes, early and late exit, maintenance and transition programmes are taken from the West. They apply partly to affluent situations in Canada, and partly to immigrant and minority children from third world countries being integrated into

school life in affluent western countries. Neither of these situations resembles the situation in Africa. Most Africans are at least bilingual in African languages; yet they are not called ‘bilingual’ unless their additional language is a foreign language—one that the learner does not master sufficiently well enough for a learning medium.

Normally when the concept ‘bilingual teaching’ or ‘second language learning’ is used, it means using the African child’s mother tongue or familiar African language as a stepping stone to the use—also as the language of instruction—of a former colonial language. The fact that children learn best when they understand what the teacher is saying is usually overlooked. So is the fact that the former colonial languages remain foreign languages to most Africans.

#### AFRICAN LANGUAGES AS LANGUAGES OF INSTRUCTION AT HIGHER LEVELS OF EDUCATION

If knowledge is to be decolonised in the African university, one cannot avoid the difficult and little-appreciated question (Brock-Utne, 2014a): In which language should the knowledge be conveyed? In the language of the erstwhile colonisers, or in the languages that Africans speak? Africa is not anglophone, francophone or lusophone—Africa is afrophone. Africans speak African languages. In the so-called francophone and anglophone countries, only about five percent of the population speak French or English well, respectively (Brock-Utne & Skattum, 2009). According to the 1998 population census in Malawi,<sup>4</sup> only 0.18% of Malawians declared English as their language of household communication. In sharp contrast, over 70% of the people identified Chichewa as their language of household communication (Republic of Malawi, 1998).

One often hears that there are so many languages in Africa, that it is difficult to choose one (or a few) to use in higher education. The debates in Parliament in Tanzania are conducted in Kiswahili. Most of the newspapers in Tanzania, especially the interesting ones, are written in that language. Yet the language of instruction in secondary schools as well as in higher education is English, the language of the former colonial power of Tanzania. This has at least three grave consequences, which smaller European countries that are using more and more English in higher education, also need to consider:

New intellectual terms in the language people normally speak are not created, so the academic vocabulary is not developed.

The language of instruction becomes a barrier to accessing knowledge.

Mastering the exogenous language stratifies society and becomes a social marker, creating an elite versus the majority who cannot access that language as easily.

#### THE MYTH OF THE MANY LANGUAGES IN AFRICA

Most Africans speak several African languages, among them usually a regional one that could well be used as a language of instruction in higher education.



A Tanzanian school inspector tells how he grew up with three different languages (Kimizi, 2009). He would speak one language with his father's clan, another and very different one with his mother's clan—they all lived in the same compound—and Kiswahili with his friends. He could not say which one was his mother tongue or L1. L1 (or language 1) is a term used by western linguists meaning a person's first language, the mother tongue or the language the child grew up with. They assume that one grows up speaking one language and others are added later and are called L2, L3 and so on. Adama Ouane (2009), from Mali, a former director of the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning, also recounts that he grew up with three different African languages simultaneously and, like Kimizi, cannot tell which one is his mother tongue or first language. Africans are now increasingly moving within and between African countries and, as a result, are becoming more and more multilingual in African languages. Prah (2009a) found that in Nima, Ghana, 69% of those interviewed spoke up to at least four languages, and 41% spoke five or more languages.

The Centre for Advanced Studies (CASAS) is a Cape Town-based NGO that promotes African languages all over the continent, apart from Arab-speaking regions. The scientific focus of CASAS is linguistics. Its aim is to harmonise written forms of African languages which, because of the heavy influence of Western missionaries, are written differently. Their research shows that 90% of the total population of sub-Saharan Africa could be grouped into 23 language clusters; in fact 12–15 such languages would suffice for 75% to 85% of the population (Prah, 2005, 2009b; Brock-Utne & Mercer, 2014).

#### WILL TANZANIA SHOW THE WAY?

Although there are 150 ethnic community languages in Tanzania, according to Muzale and Rugemalira (2008), more than 95% of the population also speak Kiswahili. Kiswahili is one of the two official national languages in Tanzania; English is the other official language, although it is spoken by less than 5% of the population (Brock-Utne & Qorro, 2015). In 1967, the then Second Vice President declared Kiswahili as the medium of instruction through all seven years of primary education (Std I to VII). Tanzania is in a unique position to show the way in using African languages as the medium of instruction, also in secondary and higher education.

The language policy in Tanzania has been swinging back and forth between wishing to extend Kiswahili as the language of instruction in secondary and higher education; and introducing English as the LOI (Language of Instruction) at the primary school level (Brock-Utne, 2012). Tanzania's second Five-Year Plan (1969–1974), appears to indicate a broader plan to implement the use of Kiswahili as the medium of instruction throughout the educational system:

Children, on entering secondary school, will now have to shift to study in a new language, at the same time as taking on more difficult sets of subjects ... as the

government moves over to the complete use of Kiswahili it will hence become more and more inappropriate to have the secondary and higher educational system operate in English. (URT, 1969, p. 152)

The government at the time was aware of the fact that the choice and use of the language of instruction would also have social class implications. The Five-Year Plan refers to a possible “linguistic gulf”:

The division between Kiswahili education at primary level and English education at the secondary level will create and perpetuate a linguistic gulf between different groups and will also tend to lend an alien atmosphere and making it inevitably remote from the problems of the masses of society. (URT, 1969, p. 152)

Since independence there have been plans to change the language of instruction from English to Kiswahili, but these have never come into effect (Brock-Utne, 2012). New hopes have now been born, on account of the new Education and Training policy (Wizara, 2014). The new policy, which when I first got hold it was only published in Kiswahili, states a goal and makes the following declaration (below, in my translation into English)

Goal<sup>5</sup>: To use the language Kiswahili in teaching. (Wizara, 2014, p. 38)

Declaration<sup>6</sup> [3.2.19.] The national language [Kiswahili] will be used for teaching and learning at all levels of education and training, and the government will work to enable the use of this language in order for it to be sustainable and effective in providing education and training for national and international productivity. (Wizara, 2014, p. 38)

Although the policy was written in 2014, it was launched in March 2015 and a debate raged in newspapers and social media all through 2015 (April 2015). Most of the participants in the debate, especially those who are or have been working in secondary schools in Tanzania, seem to be in favour of the change, and argue that it is on high time for it to take place. If Tanzania is able to manage this change, it may have a domino effect whereby countries which are almost monolingual in an African language like Rwanda, Somalia and Swaziland may follow suit; thereafter other countries which have two, three or four broader regional languages like Nigeria, may follow. Even though the policy makes it legal to use Kiswahili as the LOI in secondary and higher education, it also stresses the use of English as an LOI at all levels of education. So far (May 2016) no secondary school in Tanzania has started using Kiswahili as the LOI in secondary and higher education while several primary schools have started using English as the LOI.

Rubagumya, Afitska, Clegg and Kiliku (2011) end their article on linguistic human rights in Tanzania by stating:

What is needed above all in Tanzania, as in Africa in general, is higher quality education through African languages. Communities in Africa will only be able

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to learn and teach through their own languages once they see that their use in schools is effective and their role in society brings rewards. The duration of education through these languages must be extended, its effectiveness increased and the number of languages used as media of instruction expanded. (p. 83)

Rubagumya et al. (2011) claim that this message is being heard by academics, but not yet clearly enough by governments or communities (see e.g. Brock-Utne, 2014a). I would like to add that the message is being heard by *some* academics, but far from all. At the Languages in Education (LEA) conference at the University of Oslo in 2006, where many of the best-known African linguists were present (see Brock-Utne & Skattum, 2009), the inability of African governments to change the language of instruction to one that children use and understand was debated. The pressure from the former colonial powers, now donors or 'development partners', was discussed, as well as the role of the elites. An African participant noted: "We cannot put the blame solely on the donors. The African elite must also take part of the blame. And let us face it, we who are here belong to the elite. We are part of the problem". To this, another African participant replied: "Yes, that is correct. We intellectuals are part of the problem. But we are also part of the solution". I strongly believe this latter comment is the correct approach to take.

The question of which language should be used as the LoI in secondary school is hotly debated by academics at the University of Dar es Salaam. For example, there was an e-mail debate on this issue, following the intranet publication of an application for a job as an 'askari' (a guard), written in pitiful English by a secondary school leaver (Senkoro, 2008). Yet, I believe, as Rubagumya et al. (2011) do, that the fight for the linguistic rights of Tanzanians must be initiated by academics (Brock-Utne, 2014b). I agree with them that academics must make the message louder through advocacy and by means of further research into the topic.

#### TIMSS TESTS AND PISA FOR DEVELOPMENT—A RENEWED CURRICULUM DEPENDENCY?

Educators have generally experienced that the tests students are measured by easily become the curriculum. Sjøberg (2006) mentions that a condition forced upon Ghana in order for the country to obtain a loan to the education sector was to have their students take the TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) tests. In the 2003 TIMSS mathematics test for Grade eight, it was reported that out of the 45 countries that participated, Ghana finished at number 44. South Africa was number 45. Ghanaian students scored an average of 276, compared to the international average of 466.

In two articles in the Ghana News, Fredua-Kwarteng and Ahia (2005a, 2005b) try to explain these low results. In the first article, they discuss the results in mathematics, in the second the results in science. They found that the main reason

why the students do not learn problem-solving and problem-posing skills is the use of a foreign language as the medium of instruction:

Since Ghanaian students took the test in English (the so-called official language of Ghana), those whose first language is non-English are at great disadvantage. We are not surprised that countries that top-performed in the mathematics test—Taiwan, Malaysia, Latvia, Russia—use their own language to teach and learn mathematics.

The two authors, who are both mathematics educators, argue that a Ghanaian student who is proficient in his or her mother tongue would be likely to answer most of the questions correctly if the questions were translated into their native language. The authors further criticise the tests for being rooted in a Western, especially American, environment, using concepts which are unfamiliar in Ghana, such as a ‘parking lot’. From their professional experience, students are more likely to solve mathematical problems if they can relate to the cultural context of the problem.

Mathematics and the sciences are normally difficult subjects for most children to learn. Yet they are important subjects for the development of any country. One would think that policy makers would make a great effort to bring these important subjects to the people in a language they can easily understand. Strangely enough, this is not happening. Ali Mazrui and Alamin Mazuri (1995) argue that any language is capable of handling modern science and technology. This fact seems not to have been properly understood by African political and educational communities.

Now not only TIMSS, but also the OECD tests, called PISA, are making their way into Africa. This is done through a programme named *PISA for Development*. PISA extends OECD’s influence on the global governance of education, but the ambitions behind *PISA for Development* raise important questions. Barrett (2014) asks: How feasible and desirable is it to measure learning across the world along one set of scales? What implications does a single internationally recognised measure have for school curricula? How will spill-over generate capacity to measure and improve education quality at the national level? Barrett (2014) notes that PISA creates pressure for curricular convergence and attempts to define the knowledge and skills that are valued around the world. One example of scholarship that can inform scrutiny of the Western epistemology that underlies tests like TIMSS and PISA is that of Boaventura de Sousa Santos and his colleagues who contributed to the book *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*.<sup>7</sup> They highlight the influence of Western Europe’s former imperialism and the current logic of neoliberalism regarding scientific knowledge. According to the authors in the book edited by Santos (2007) these influences are also inscribed to various extents in school curricula around the world. Barrett (2014) notes that *PISA for Development* may act as a disincentive for local level curricular innovation. Another effect may be that only subjects most likely to figure in the PISA tests will be given prominence and granted enough teaching time. As a result, subjects like history, arts and physical education may be given less time and lower value.

#### REWRITING THE CURRICULUM

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research (GEI) and the International Research Association for History and Social Sciences Education (IRAHSSE), organised an international conference from 8 to 9 December 2015, on History Education in Africa with the theme “Teaching and Learning History in Contemporary Africa: Past, Present and Future”.

History education has long been the subject of debate around the world.

In recent decades, extensive research has been conducted and knowledge consolidated on the teaching and learning of history, especially in the Western world (see.e.g. Lowe, 2000; Zimmerman, 2002; Nakou & Barca, 2010).<sup>8</sup> The organisers of the above-mentioned conference claim that while more global perspectives have been considered in recent years, African perspectives have been conspicuously absent or, at best, marginalised in current international research and debates on history education. But the expression ‘African perspectives’ needs to be investigated more closely. Which perspectives? Voiced by whom? By the majority population of Africa who speak African languages, or by the elite who are comfortable speaking the former colonial languages? Do African perspectives take women into account as well as men? Are the perspectives of children and the elderly represented as much as those of the middle-aged?

#### THE AFRICAN UBUNTU PARADIGM

The basic African consciousness of life is fundamentally different from the European or Arabic, however much Christianity or Islam may have proselytised in Africa. Opening up curriculum content to African culture as expressed through language, sciences, arts, crafts, and religious beliefs involves the reconceptualisation of content from an African perspective. In the African tradition, knowledge is experientially and socially based, rather than derived from propositions. As Avenstrup (1997) points out:

There could hardly be a greater contrast than between Decartes’ contextless mentalist individualism in *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) and the African contextually pregnant, social constructivist relationalism of *umuntu umuntu babantu* (I am because you are). (p. 4)

Catherine Odora (1994) of Uganda stresses the communal character of African life. She is concerned about the way Western schooling destroys the communal character of African indigenous education:

The moment children go to school, they learn to talk about “my chair, my homework, my position”, and less and less about “our”, “we”. The risks of alienation get more profound the higher one climbs up the ladder in search of the elusive certificate. (p. 84)

Murithi (2009) notes that the African cultural worldview known as *ubuntu* highlights the essential unity of humanity and emphasises the importance of constantly referring to the principles of empathy, sharing and cooperation in our efforts to resolve our common problems. It is the European encyclopaedic tradition (from Decartes via Diderot) that has underpinned curriculum development in Africa since colonial times. Before colonialism, education was an indispensable component of societies and was functional for the requirements of each given social unit. As Melber (1997) argues:

This communication of knowledge, in contrast to what is understood by formal education and training in a European—and in the meantime a universal—context, did not primarily serve the distribution of positions of power. The transmission of knowledge was a necessity of life, and for this very reason not selective. (p. 66)

The same author suggests that people should decide on their own system of knowledge transmission and its content, in local units, corresponding to their particular conditions of life and their specific social and cultural structures: “What I wish for is a universal redefinition of education by the people it claims to be for” (p. 69).

Nafukho (2006) seeks to bridge the existing gap in terms of the contribution of the African *ubuntu* paradigm to adult learning in the workplace. He claims that adult learning formed the foundation of many traditional African societies and was viewed as holistic learning for life and work. It was used as a process of breaking down barriers and combating social exclusion. In an article on an African perspective on peace education, Murithi (2009) notes that the *ubuntu* approach to human relationship building offers an example to the world. He shows how Desmond Tutu (1999) utilised the principles of *ubuntu* during his leadership of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Murithi (2009) further outlines the five stages of the peace-making process found among *ubuntu* societies including: acknowledging guilt, showing remorse and repenting, asking for and giving forgiveness, and paying compensation or reparation, as a prelude to reconciliation.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter I have argued for building higher education in Africa on African roots, on the attractive features of African culture and its communal character. There is a need for a reanalysis of the history of indigenous education in Africa, and a reinterpretation of accounts written by Western anthropologists and travellers. Likewise there is a need to harmonise the written forms of African languages which are simply dialects of each other, but were made into separate languages by Western missionaries who were not native speakers of the languages (Brock-Utne, 1997; Prah, 2005, 2009; Makalela, 2005). Many of the theories that originated in the west do not fit the situation in Africa and are not suitable for African children, students,

scholars and researchers. I give as an example the need for a paradigm shift regarding the language of instruction in Africa, since theories built on immigrants and minority populations in the west do not apply in the local context.

There is so much the Western world could learn from Africa, but that will only happen when Africa looks to herself, her own history, traditions and culture and does not allow herself be subjugated to global governance of education.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Siasa* is a social science subject closely connected to the ideology of CCM—Nyerere's party. It was taught in Kiswahili all through secondary school from 1969 to 1992 when the subject—under the influence of the reintroduction of a multiparty system—was renamed 'Civics' for the first four years and 'General studies' for the next two years, and is now taught in English (Mkwizu, 2002, 2003).
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.nairaland.com/901689/top-most-spoken-languages-all> (Accessed April 12, 2014).
- <sup>3</sup> The Haya tribe, or the Wahaya (Mhaya in singular) in Kiswahili (Bahaya in their language), live in the Bukoba region of Tanzania. They speak Kihaya (called in their language Luhaya). The region was colonised early and had a lot of Christian missionary schools. Many highly schooled Tanzanians belong to the Wahaya people.
- <sup>4</sup> This was the last census to include a question on which language was spoken in the family.
- <sup>5</sup> In original: Lengo: Kutumia lugha ya kiswahili katika ufundishaji (Wizara, 2004, p. 38).
- <sup>6</sup> In original: 3.2.19. Tamko. Lugha ya Taifa ya Kiswahili itatumika kufundishia na kujifunzia katika ngazi zote za elimu na mafunzo na Serikali itaweka utaratibu wa kuwezesha matumizi ya lugha hii kuwa endelevu na yenye ufanisi katika kuwapatia walengwa elimu na mafunzo yenye tija kitaifa na kimataifa (Wizara, 2004, p. 38).
- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.boaventuradesousasantos.pt/pages/pt/livros/another-knowledge-is-possible-beyond-northern-epistemologies.php> (Accessed April 15, 2015).
- <sup>8</sup> The book by Nakou and Barca is the 6th book of the International Review of History Education Series. It presents public debates on history education as they appear in 14 different areas of the world.

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## 11. INTERNATIONALISATION AND AFRICANISATION IN A GLOBALISING WORLD

### INTRODUCTION

Concepts such as globalisation, internationalisation, citizenship, good governance, multiparty democracy and civilian rule have become fashionable in academic circles in recent decades. Such concepts have been popularised inter alia by the public media, advertisers, as well as academic and political institutions (Chachage, 2003, pp. 2–3). While it is true that in different parts of Africa—including East Africa—the call for the Africanisation of African institutions was already prominent during the colonial era, this call became even louder in the post-independence period. In particular, within contemporary African scholarship, the concepts ‘internationalisation’ and ‘Africanisation’ have become prominent in mainstream discussion and debates. Not surprisingly, the political leadership has found itself wittingly and unwittingly becoming embroiled in thinking about these two concepts and their implications, particularly for higher education.

The ubiquity of these two terms, in both academic and political settings, makes the debate about them and their relationship to each other even more transcendental and thought-provoking. The extent to which these concepts complement or are inimical to each other, is a fascinating debate in contemporary African scholarship, as much as it is in the broader global context. Given the role of academic institutions in shaping the minds of society, the discussion about the relationship between internationalisation and Africanisation would be incomplete without also bringing such institutions into the equation. It is for this reason, therefore, that this chapter uses higher education as a focal analytical point in order to outline the relationship between the two concepts.

It is worth noting that each of these concepts is understood and used differently, and authors do not claim similarity of meaning among themselves. For Schoole (2014, p. 218) there is a relationship among globalisation, regionalisation, and internationalisation. However, he does not claim that these concepts mean one and the same thing. Academic institutions such as universities embrace the concept Africanisation, and apply it when they discuss curriculum issues which they argue should be Africanised in terms of content and research focus. This was the case, for example, in East Africa during the 1960s (Republic of Kenya. Kenya National Archives, GH/11/24; PUEA/2A/4). Africanisation is both a conscious and deliberate

assertion of the right to be African (Ramose, 1998). Louw (2010) provides a broad definition thus: “for me, Africanisation reflects our common legacy, history and postcolonial experience” (p. 43). Another broad definition is offered by the Sankofa Youth Movement (n.d.) which understands Africanisation to mean the embracing of African heritage, as well as developing a sense of loyalty towards Africa as a continent. Makgoba (1997) avers that “it is not a process of exclusion, but inclusion” (p. 199) and sees Africanisation as a learning process and a way of life for African people. Crossman (2004) writes: “by Africanisation we intend more than the simple nationalisation (replacement of foreign staff and administration, if not funding, by national) of university and research structures which itself has constituted a complex issue for newly independent states” (p. 324). For the purpose of this chapter, I use the term ‘Africanisation’ to refer to the affirmation of the African worldview, without necessarily dismissing anything Western. In other words, I argue for the cross-pollination of internationalisation and Africanisation instead of perceiving them as competitors and inimical to each other.

The idea of an ‘African university’ is a complex one. As mentioned elsewhere (Mngomezulu, 2012), “Any university is a multi-faced institution. It has a local and global identity” (p. 122). So (i) Do we mean any university that is physically located in Africa? or (ii) Do we include a university that is located anywhere in the world, but is linked to Africa in terms of its research orientation and research agenda, even if its staff contingent is non-African? The perception of the university as a regional asset was captured elegantly in a seminar in 1965: “The new East Africa and its needs should be reflected in a reassessment of courses, the syllabi, textbooks, fields of research and teaching methods” (Commentary, *East Africa Journal*, 1965, p. 44). In his address to the World University Service International General Assembly, President Nyerere (1966) commented that the university “must be a committed institution, actively relating our work to the communities it seeks to serve” (p. 4). In the context of this chapter, the envisaged ‘African university’ should be able to forge an identity for itself in the midst of other non-African universities.

The concept of ‘internationalisation’ is both complex (De Wit, 2002) and multifaceted (Knight, 2003, 2004). Those who have defined internationalisation in the context of higher education see it as the process of integrating an international or intercultural dimension to the teaching, research and service functions of the institution (Knight, 1994; Knight & De Wit, 1997). For Hawawini (2011), the internationalisation of higher education institutions is “the process of integrating the institution and its key stakeholders – its students, faculty, and staff-into a globalizing world” (p. 5). It has become “an important issue in the development of higher education” (Sehoole, 2006, p. 2). Cross and Rouhani (2004) claim that the term internationalisation “is not yet recognised by most higher education scholars as a research theme” (p. 236). There is, however, general acknowledgement that the concept ‘internationalisation’ has become a mantra in the education context, particularly in higher education (Tadaki, 2013). It is the subject of a number of reports, policy documents, journal articles, book chapters and book manuscripts

(Hawawini, 2011). In this chapter, internationalisation is understood to mean a reciprocal relationship which exists among countries. It refers to both the spreading and incorporation of materials and ideas across geographical boundaries, with a view to benefitting both sides of the geographical divide. Internationalisation includes the formation of networks which take different forms and cut across different sectors of society such as education, the economic and labour sectors, cultural institutions, and many others. It is distinguished from 'globalisation', a term defined by many scholars in different contexts (Amirkhanyan, 2011; Arnot, 2002; Cooper, 2001; Lowe, 1997; Nahavandian, 2007; Salimi, 2005; Scholte, 2000; Scott, 2005; Zeleza, 2002; Zeleza, 2003; Zeleza, n.d.) but as characterised by integration and expansion on a planetary scale.

#### TURNING POINTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA: THEN AND NOW

The first important point to consider is a reminder that the roots of higher education in Africa run very deep, as discussed further below. Secondly, it would be almost impossible to discuss higher education in Africa without referring to some of the concepts mentioned above. Calls for the establishment of an African university, the Africanisation of African universities, and establishing how they are affected by and fit into both globalisation and internationalisation imperatives, have accompanied African universities throughout various time periods. It is important, therefore, to trace the relevance and efficacy of these concepts through different turning points in the history of African higher education.

The development of higher education in Africa has moved through different phases, as is the case with most development pathways. The first phase predates the arrival of Europeans in Africa. Higher education institutions such as Sankore in Timbuktu (established during the reign of Kankan Musa), the Qarawayin in the science city of Fez, and Al-Azha established in 970 in Cairo, Egypt, existed more than two centuries before Oxford, England's oldest university, was established (Ashby & Anderson, 1966; Mngomezulu, 2013). In other words, ancient institutions of higher learning in Africa existed long before French and British universities came into being. But as Ashby and Anderson (1966, p. 147) and Porter (1965, p. 22) remind us, African universities as they exist in the current form, do not owe their existence to old traditions of scholarship. In a way this is true because the primary aim of the early institutions was to preserve Islamic religion, culture, and science. Africa's needs were not given first priority. Although the identity of a university was part of this early development, the African university identity and Africanisation thereof did not arise at that stage.

While the conclusion drawn above is legitimate, it is also true that during this early phase, concepts such as internationalisation and globalisation were unwittingly adhered to, in the sense that the institutions that were established in Africa had to be in line with what was happening elsewhere in the Middle East. What was missing at



that point in time was the notion of an African university, its identity, as well as its pursuit of Africanisation.

The next time period was the colonial era, when colonial governments in Africa established higher education institutions almost entirely for political reasons (King, 1971; Mngomezulu, 2012). As these sources indicate, the primary aim was to insulate African youths from possible politicisation if they travelled abroad to pursue their studies. Colonial authorities feared that such students would create problems for the government when they returned to the continent after completing studies abroad. In that sense, the Asquith Colleges established in 1945 after the end of the Second World War were geared towards addressing immediate needs for local higher education. Notably, these university colleges were linked to European universities such as the University of London, and appropriated their traditions. In a way, internationalisation applied here, although it was characterised by Western dominance. The idea of an African university and its Africanisation still did not feature in the thinking of the time.

The demise of colonialism in many parts of the African continent in the 1960s and 1970s saw the term 'Africanisation' taking centre stage. The idea of an African university also found a place in ensuing debates of the time. The new political and academic leadership which replaced colonial masters vowed to Africanise political institutions such as national governments and learning institutions, especially institutions of higher education such as national universities. The latter were accorded higher status, not only because they epitomised the apogee of higher education, but also because the new national governments looked to these institutions to produce the human capital needed to establish functional and viable political institutions. The guiding assumption at the time was that getting rid of colonialism while retaining colonial institutions would make a mockery of the entire liberation project. Therefore, the political and academic leadership joined hands to advance the cause for the Africanisation project and expressed views on what they perceived to be an African university. In other words, the aim was to find an identity for an African university.

Within this broad African thinking, the East African political and academic leadership called for the Africanisation of several institutions, namely the federal University of East Africa which was established in 1963 and dissolved in 1970; the East Africa Central Legislative Assembly (EACLA); and the East African Community (Mngomezulu, 2004, 2012). The National Assemblies of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (following the merger of Tanganyika and the Island of Zanzibar in 1964) took a cue from these regional institutions and followed suit. They took a conscious decision to replace expatriate staff in their national institutions. Surely, as expected, this did not go unchallenged. Leaning towards internationalisation and globalisation—albeit unconsciously—some East Africans argued that East African countries could not operate in isolation. They raised concerns that the much revered academic and administrative standards would drop if all the expatriate staff were expelled and replaced by East African nationals, and if the university curriculum, staff and teaching methods were totally Africanised. Implicit in these arguments



was the view that Africanisation (also called localisation or endogenisation) could co-exist with internationalisation and globalisation by drawing on selected elements of each approach. However, some refuted this notion.

These debates took place at regional and national assemblies. Dr Kigundu, a Member of Parliament in Uganda, argued that there was a bad tendency by independent African countries to promote people even if they did not qualify to take up leadership positions, all in the spirit of Africanisation. He was not averse to the idea of Africanisation and finding an identity for an African university. On the contrary, his view was that African universities could not exist outside of the global context and thus could not ignore internationalisation and globalisation. Within this context, Kigundu warned Uganda not to fall into the trap of perceiving Africanisation and internationalisation as adversarial concepts. He opined: “I agree that we should Africanise whenever possible and where we have suitable applicants but I don’t agree with Mr Luande [another Member of Parliament] who says we should Africanise all at Makerere. That is complete nonsense” (Kigundu, Uganda Argus, 19 May 1963).

Dr Kigundu’s statement echoed similar sentiments once expressed by Tanganyika’s Education Minister, Solomon Eliufu, who argued that Africanisation was more complex than some of his colleagues thought. In his view, it did not mean to go into the street and pick up somebody only because he was African. Conversely, it meant that you had to provide such a person with the necessary equipment and the necessary qualifications (Tanganyika Legislative Council, 1960). Where such skills did not exist, his view was that expatriate staff would have to be employed, as this did not in any way undermine Africanisation. Implicit in this submission was that Africanisation and internationalisation can complement each other, instead of being adversaries.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, our primary aim is to consider different ways in which the two concepts (internationalisation and Africanisation) may be discussed within the context of emerging directions in African scholarship, and to establish if they can coexist. A salient assumption is that African scholarship is not static; it changes constantly over time. Consequently, knowledge production by African and Africanist scholars is adaptable—it can resonate with the changing times and contexts, while still remaining relevant to the African context by meeting current societal needs. This puts Africanisation and the identity of the African university at the epicentre of the discussion in contemporary African scholarship. In other words, the question which begs attention is: as situations change and as African scholarship undergoes changes, how should internationalisation and Africanisation be perceived? Should they be seen as friends or enemies? Are they complementary to each other or are they adversarial? These are the questions that this chapter wrestles with and tries to address. As elaborated on below, my view is that the two complement each other perfectly well and can coexist.

Academic institutions have the responsibility of educating society on the one hand, and being the mouthpiece of society in the midst of debates around

internationalisation and Africanisation on the other hand. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss these concepts within the context of emerging directions in African scholarship. Both globalisation and internationalisation force African countries to be constantly changing and to adapt to new situations occasioned by current global trends. They have to embrace change in order to remain current and relevant in the global context. As such, African countries and their various institutions (including higher education institutions) cannot operate in isolation. Nevertheless, it would be foolhardy for them to compromise or lose their identity. Thus, while importing foreign knowledge and skills from other countries in the context of globalisation and internationalisation, African countries also need to shoulder the responsibility to sell or market African systems of knowledge to the global community. This makes it possible for internationalisation and Africanisation to coexist and to both feature in African scholarship, without privileging one concept over the other.

In recent years, concepts such as the African Renaissance have compelled Africans to undertake some introspection, with the view of rediscovering their identity. We do this in part in order to regain some of the power that was usurped by colonial interlopers. Within this context, there are some who perceive internationalisation in a negative light, seeing it as a mechanism used by Western and other countries to appropriate power (political and economic) from Africans. Conversely, those who view internationalisation in a positive light see it as a platform to allow Africans to showcase Africa to the global community. This can be done by sharing what is organically African, while at the same time embracing and learning from the experiences of other countries across the globe. In this sense, internationalisation and Africanisation complement each other. Some of these points are expounded in the following section, in which the relationship between internationalisation and Africanisation is further interrogated.

#### ARE INTERNATIONALISATION AND AFRICANISATION INIMICAL?

The preceding pages have started addressing this question which forms the focal point in this chapter. Put more directly, the question becomes: are the two concepts hostile to each other, or can they coexist in a constantly globalising world? Some pointers can be discerned or gleaned from the discussion above. However, the safest answer to this question would be that it depends on one's vantage point, or the lens through which one views each of these two concepts. For some, internationalisation and Africanisation are not inimical concepts since they complement each other in promoting cooperation in different areas. Those who subscribe to this view juxtapose internationalisation and globalisation and argue that the former brings countries together while the latter pits them against each other. Van Vught, Van der Wende and Westerheijden (2002) argue that in terms of both practice and perception, "internationalisation is closer to the well-established tradition of international cooperation and mobility and to the core values of quality and excellence, whereas globalisation refers more to competition" (p. 17). Although these authors note

differences between internationalisation and globalisation, they are silent on the topic of Africanisation.

For others, internationalisation and Africanisation cannot coexist because their points of departure are irreconcilable. Those who hold this view link the debate to colonialism (Schoole, 2006). They move from the premise that internationalisation is synonymous with colonisation in the sense that it involves some kind of domination. According to this standpoint, Africanisation is associated with liberation and the quest for freedom. This view is plausible. There is evidence which confirms that in certain instances where African universities interact with international universities, the relationship is not mutual (Mngomezulu, 2014). Due to their (usually) good financial position, international universities (and their national governments) dominate their African counterparts and dictate the kind of research to be carried out (Mngomezulu, 2014). Perhaps what is needed is that such relationships should be properly managed, as opposed to being terminated. One proposal proffered by certain scholars (Schoole & de Wit, 2014), is that in order to benefit from the process, Africans need to define their own roles and strategies in the internationalisation process. This suggestion is more constructive than dismissing internationalisation entirely.

Ntuli (2004) appeared to subscribe to the adversarial nature of the relationship between Africanisation and globalisation (the sister concept to internationalisation), when he stated that “Everyone wants to control the thrust of our thinking, so African scholarship becomes a countervailing force against the globalisation that seeks to silence African minds” (p. 1). Implicit in this submission is the assumption that Africanisation is a weapon used by Africans to defend themselves and their identity against outside forces that seek to subjugate their minds and deprive them of their identity and autonomy. In that sense, the two concepts are portrayed as being inimical to each other, thus making it difficult for them to coexist.

An incorrect perception that can be traced back in history is that Africanisation is *backward* while globalisation is *progressive*. During early encounters between Africans and Europeans, the former were deemed to be inferior in almost all aspects of life. As Mangu (2005) points out, Africans were made to believe that they were not capable of producing knowledge themselves, but could only consume knowledge produced by their European counterparts. The same ploy was used by the colonisers to subdue Africans. When Africans eventually obtained political liberation, their erstwhile oppressors expected them to fail in running their governments. In a way, this expectation was vindicated when the majority of post-colonial African governments became dysfunctional within a short space of time due inter alia to political greed, nepotism, civil wars, and ethnic and religious differences. They started begging for funds from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The neo-liberal policies epitomised in part by the so-called Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) created fertile ground for the former colonisers to control Africans once again, although in a different context and under different circumstances (Mills, 2010).

Within this context, when Africans embraced Africanisation as an African philosophy, they were easily dismissed on the inaccurate assumption that they were not capable of inventing an African worldview detached from a European or any other outside worldview. To this day, the juxtaposition and polarisation of Africans and Europeans or any other outsiders continues unabated, albeit sparingly compared to what prevailed some decades ago. According to Higgs (2007), “the West is concerned with perfecting philosophical discourse for its own sake, while Africa wants to use philosophy in a particular sense to address social issues” (p. 671). Inherent in this submission is the view that Africans and Europeans operate at different levels and see things differently from one another. In that sense, it is conceivable to think that internationalisation and Africanisation may be hostile to each other—which is not necessarily correct.

But is there any strong justification for assuming that internationalisation and Africanisation cannot live side-by-side? For me, the answer is firmly in the negative. It would be a fallacy to say that the two cannot coexist at all. Despite the challenges enumerated above, I would submit that these concepts can coexist, provided the relationship is managed properly. While it is true that some international institutions of higher learning exploit their African counterparts, it is equally true that a number of African universities have benefitted significantly from international relations. The advantages come in the form of staff and student exchange programmes, collaborative research, student scholarships and co-hosting conferences. Through internationalisation, African higher education institutions are able to access and use technological expertise obtained from sister institutions abroad, that can be used to advance the cause of Africanisation. For their part, international institutions flock to Africa to generate data sets for their research projects and draw from the skills and knowledge of their African counterparts. In this sense, the two concepts complement each other very well, as opposed to being adversarial to each other. The view expressed by Jallow (2013) is a credible one, namely that “it is just as important to globalise Africa as to Africanise globalisation”. He argues that the call for the Africanisation of globalisation pits a geopolitical formation—Africa—against an amorphous mass of mobility and process—globalisation (Jallow, 2013, p. 83). The same argument, I submit, can be applied to internationalisation.

Part of the Africanisation process means that Africans have to vigorously produce knowledge that is relevant to the African context. To do this, they can use some of the inventions brought about by internationalisation. One example is that through both internationalisation and globalisation, communication is enhanced and national borders or boundaries are surmounted, thereby allowing individuals and their respective countries to interact more freely and learn from one another. Africanisation emphasises that Africans should strive to produce local knowledge or use local content to interact with the global community. One practical way of bringing internationalisation and Africanisation together, would be to teach indigenous languages to local and international students. Having more people who speak an indigenous language across the racial and geographical divide would advance the

cause for Africanisation, while at the same time breaking national boundaries in line with the attributes of internationalisation. We can therefore safely say that while it is true that there is a myriad of factors that polarise internationalisation and Africanisation as well as its sister concept, globalisation, these concepts are not entirely inimical to each other. If properly managed, the relationship could be beneficial to both Africans and the global community, and their respective institutions.

African scholarship is gradually moving away from the confrontational approach in engaging with issues, and is now leaning more towards championing the cause for African existence without necessarily being dismissive of other forces. Therefore, as the manner in which Africa produces knowledge changes, it is critical that perceptions about the relationship between internationalisation and Africanisation should be redefined. In other words, contemporary scholars need to realise that the two concepts can complement each other without necessarily being confrontational or hostile to each other. African studies and African scholarship can assist in this regard. It is relevant, therefore, to end this chapter by citing Olukoshi (2005), who presents a summation of the direction African studies and African scholarship in general seem to be moving.

Olukoshi (2005) points out that for African studies to be truly meaningful to Africa while at the same time being fully critical, there is a need for the subject to be better anchored locally in ways which are organic to the domestic priorities of African countries. For African studies to be truly in the service of Africa, there is a need not only for a change of methodology away from the dominant approach that reduces it to an exercise in a detached—even distracted—study of the ‘other’, but also a shift of the primary audience away from the external world to the internal one, from the foreign to the local. In Olukoshi’s (2005) view, this is the only way in which African studies “might be better positioned to contribute to Africa’s much needed capacity to come to terms with itself, and to engage the world on terms that are favourable to its advancement” (pp. 15–16).

What we can deduce from this articulation is that Olukoshi (2005) makes a clarion call for those involved in African studies to change their perception of the field and project it differently from what has been the norm to date. This is a tacit acknowledgement of the fact that things have changed. Likewise, African scholarship needs to be re-directed and re-focused. It is within this context that we need to revisit our perceptions about the two concepts which are the focus of this chapter—internationalisation and Africanisation. Any narrow focus on these two concepts would deprive us of a glorious opportunity to positively reorient Africa by changing the perception that it is a continent whose people are always confrontational, defensive and protective of their space while engaging in self-destruction. The reality is that Africans have metamorphosed from that stage. They are now adaptive to changing situations. African scholarship today is totally different from what it was a few decades ago. The idea of coexistence has found its place in the minds contemporary African scholars. The continent’s higher education institutions have

also metamorphosed through different phases. The lessons learnt through interactions with the global community should be used as a springboard for the African continent to take its place in the global context through internationalisation and globalisation, without losing its own identity. However, I hasten to add that it is not only Africans who need to change their mind-set. Their international counterparts also need to change their perception of themselves and the manner in which they perceive Africans and their institutions—including higher education institutions. It is through such an exercise that internationalisation and Africanisation could coexist in reality, for the mutual benefit of all concerned.

### CONCLUSION

This chapter has achieved its set goal, which was to tackle two of the most commonly used but sometimes misconstrued concepts in topical literature—internationalisation and Africanisation—whose meanings are varied and contested. Both concepts should be perceived as social constructs that are subject to both contingency and contestation, as opposed to being fixed. We have argued that the nature of the relationship between these concepts is informed by the lens through which they are viewed. As such, some see the relationship as being adversarial, while others argue that it is complementary.

The chapter has discussed these concepts both in the general context, and with specific reference to some case studies. While the former provided the broader theoretical context, the latter used specific examples to demonstrate how these concepts are applicable in real-life situations. What emerged from the discussion is that African institutions of higher education have not been affected by these two concepts in the same manner in the past, as they are today—nor will they be affected in the same manner in the near future. The reality is that forging networks of collaboration is an integral part of human life and knowledge seeking. In that sense, Africans can neither afford to, nor are they able to live in isolation. Networking will always be part of human life, including among those who work in the higher education sector.

Another point made is that the relationship between the two concepts is not constant. As situations change, so does the relationship between them. Some see the two terms as being inimical to each other, with no chance for their possible co-existence. Conversely, others argue that these concepts can actually co-exist—a view I share. In the context of contemporary African scholarship, the conclusion arrived at here, is that internationalisation and Africanisation can live side-by-side since they complement each other. Thus, when African studies scholars make a case for Africanisation, they should treat internationalisation as just another opportunity, and not as a common enemy that needs to be attacked and destroyed before Africanisation could triumph. Africanisation does not owe its existence to the elimination of internationalisation. There is space for the coexistence of both concepts, without expecting either one to give way to, or dominate, the other.



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## 12. AFRICANISATION OF HUMANITIES KNOWLEDGE IN THE UNIVERSITIES IN AFRICA

*A Critique of the Cameroon and South African Experiences*

### INTRODUCTION

A point of departure for us in this chapter are the calls for us Africans to be conscious about ourselves; to liberate ourselves (Biko, 1978); to decolonise our minds (Ngugi, 1986); and to “emancipate ourselves from mental slavery” (Bob Marley’s *Redemption Song*). Within the broad thematic context of this book, such calls translate into the Africanisation of knowledge in African universities. Our fundamental argument is that the task has been, or was expected to be, a social justice project of liberation from coloniality and re-centring knowledge on and about Africa. This project encompasses all efforts embedded in Afrocentricity, indigenisation of knowledge, setting up local contents curricula, and proliferating the use of African mother tongues in the development and dissemination of knowledge in African institutions of higher learning.

We believe that it is the centring of African higher education institutions within these initial missions and visions that is expected to make them true African universities, and not merely universities in Africa. We clarify in the first section below, the conceptual basis on which we pin our argument. Focusing on humanities and social sciences curricula as our area of study, we then use empirical data from our field research in Cameroon and South Africa to present the extent of the transformation in becoming African universities and fulfilling the social justice project. In doing so, we weave into our discourse the dynamics of knowledge and change by identifying the stumbling blocks to transformation and chart a way forward for the project.

### THE AFRICANISATION OF KNOWLEDGE AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT

According to Rodney (1981), for education to achieve its purpose “of preserving the lives of the members of its society, maintaining its social structure and promoting social change, it must grow out of the environment of that society” (p. 239). The content presented to students and the learning process must be drawn from the knowledge base of the society. What we mean here, which was a typical characteristic

of pre-colonial African education systems, is educational relevance; its close link with social life, both in a material and spiritual sense; its many sided-nesses; and its progressive development in conforming to the successive stages of physical, emotional and mental development of children. In other words, education in African societies had been socially, economically and politically relevant to the society. Knowledge was about the society, by the society and for the society. It matched the reality of pre-colonial African society and produced well-rounded personalities to fit into that society.

Unfortunately, colonialism did not allow the indigenous African system of education to thrive; instead it called for a re-orientation of knowledge production and acquisition to attain its diverse exploitative agendas. The knowledge structures that Africans had built up for themselves were completely destroyed with the introduction of Eurocentric content and ideologies of white supremacy; *herrenvolk*, assimilation, paternalism, apartheid, etc. These ideologies and their content emptied the African's brain of all indigenous knowledge forms and distorted, disfigured and destroyed the African self-image. In this chapter, we view colonialism as a conscious scheming by Europeans to control the destiny of millions of Africans over a considerable period of time, extending into the future. This is what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, p. 8) has termed "the final contour of coloniality" which, amongst other things, stands for "the control of African subjectivity and knowledge, including the imposition of western epistemology and its use in shaping the formative processes of development and entrenching the permanency of black subjectivity".

This has been the single contributing factor in engendering the impossibility of a simultaneous African epistemology, as the African learnt to hate his heritage and found solace in identifying closely with white society. Such alienated individualism greatly delayed the social, political and economic processes through which African societies should have long ago regained their uniqueness and independence. Dr Kofi Busia, a renowned Ghanaian statesman, once confessed that as he "went through college and university he understood his community far less than the boys of his own age who had never been to school" (cited in Rodney, 1982, p. 246). Awareness of such problems has been a significant factor in calls for the Africanisation of knowledge. As a famous Bakossi-Cameroon proverb goes: "you can cure only what you know".

That is why we see past and present calls and initiatives for the Africanisation of knowledge as a social justice project for the African. To quote Biko, "in our minds, souls and hearts, these are the things we desire deeply to change. We want the African child to be born with a love and admiration for his/her heritage and to identify first with what (s)he is, namely: African" (Biko, 1987, p. 29). To view Africanisation as a social justice project, we go beyond the erstwhile neo-colonial meaning of replacing the European or white staff of (an organisation in Africa) with black Africans, to the notion of bringing under an African, especially black African influence, or adapting to African needs. It also has to do with situating knowledge and skills in their cultural contexts (Maree, 2009, p. 55) in ways that the project

should reflect the identity of the people concerned (Sifuna & Otiende, 1994, p. 220). In the words of Edward Wilmot Blyden, “the African must advance by methods of his own” (cited in Legum, 1962, p. 20).

As a social justice project therefore, and for this chapter, the Africanisation of knowledge refers to all efforts related to re-assertion of the African knowledge base. It calls for a re-appropriation of the production and dissemination of knowledge in universities in Africa, detached from the present coloniality geo-political configuration of the world; questioning the logic of euro-western-centric universalism, or what Walters Mignolo has termed the logic of *punto-cero* (Mignolo, 2009, p. 159). We need to make visible the idea that there are multiple global hierarchies of power and knowledge, amongst which, Africa is one. We believe that it is a manifestation of social injustice when the Africans’ world and African experiences are explained, written, voiced, sung, and carried on in a medium that is not of their culture.

The reader may find many perspectives of Africanisation being raised in the various chapters in this book. In this chapter, our argument focuses on the transformation of syllabuses and content of African university programmes; i.e. required changes in what is taught, with a pertinent consideration to local relevance, bearing in mind the sustained oppressive status-quo of the coloniality of knowledge. This understanding of transformation relates to reclaiming what and who have been historically disenfranchised. We draw the attention of the reader to the fact that our approach is not fundamentally how Achille Mbembe sees it as “always haunted by the dark desire *to get rid of the foreigner*” (emphasis added). (Mbembe, 2015, p. 11). No! We believe that even though coloniality, westernisation or eurocentrism have often been characterised by the tacit white desire to eliminate the black identity in knowledge production and craft, we think that Africanisation does not mean *to get rid of the foreigner*. Rather, Africanisation means to get rid of the negative and demeaning things that *foreigners* have wrought on the African knowledge base and knowledge about Africa in particular. Hence from the trajectory of these two formulations, one can argue that the ongoing call for Africanisation is a form of protest or rebellion “against the tyranny of westernisation and the values that it has promoted” (Ndille, 2012, p. 140), with the aim of the ultimate reclamation and re-assertion of the African episteme.

The central idea of the Africanisation of knowledge in universities in Africa relates to all efforts aimed at ensuring that the orientation of the higher education curriculum should be African specific in terms of culture and knowledge sources. Thus curriculum development should aim to do the following: increase African knowledge in the general body of global human knowledge; create linkages between sources of African knowledge and centres of learning on the continent; and reduce the gap between African elites and the communities from which this African-centred knowledge should be drawn. We need to ensure that education is available to all Africans and that such “education is drawn from the communities” (Nabudere, 2011, p. 16). Briefly, “the African university should be the custodian of African knowledge” (Makgoba & Seepe, 2004, pp. 19–20). Archbishop Desmond Tutu highlighted this

idea in a keynote address at the World Future Studies Federation Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1995. He said:

...we [Africans] need to re-awaken our memories to appropriate our history and our rich heritage that we have jettisoned at such a high cost as we rushed after alien and alienating paradigms and solutions. We must determine our own agenda and priorities. To recover our history and to value our collective memory is not just to be engaged in romantic nostalgia. Far from it, it is to generate in our people and in our children a proper pride and self-assurance. (cited in Ndille, 2012, p. 141)

With every society possessing a particular culture and knowledge base, and in a world of racial equality and state egalitarianism, it is becoming an increasingly popular opinion that solutions to local problems must originate from within the locale; for Africa this means drawing from within African systems of knowing instead of grafting African knowledge onto western implanted epistemes. Once Africans learn about, and begin to tenaciously embrace home-grown products, knowledge and ideas as the Chinese, Japanese and Malaysians have done, then and only then can Africa's monumental problems be solved (Ndille, 2012, p. 141). For the specific case of historical knowledge, some scholars have argued that if alternative African histories must be written by way of deconstructing Eurocentrism, they must be written "by insiders about insiders and not intimate outsiders." Africans, "must begin to narrate themselves in their own context and in their own voices" (Adedeji, 1993, p. 26). This is what Timberlake has called "the going back to African roots" (cited in Ajayi, 1985, p. 11).

It is also important for us to state that we do not see a contradiction in our definition of Africanisation and Afrocentricity, whose pioneer, Molefi Kete Asante, defines as "an intellectual idea and paradigm that suggests all discourse about African people should be grounded in the centrality of Africans in their own narratives" (2015, p. 1). Africanisation "seeks to rethink the canon of Western intellectual and philosophical space. In this regard, it is concluded that there was and there remains, in the ethos of African communities, a foundation of inspiration, a source of civility, a power of self-correction; and these qualities are capable, even today, of great acts of restitution" (Adedeji, 1993, p. 26). These remarks justify the need to Africanise the curriculum in institutions of higher learning (universities) in Africa.

The Africanisation project is not a recent affair. The need to Africanise knowledge in the African university was heard even before the 1960s. Since then, a consensus has emerged, suggesting the need for a total overhaul, a revolution in reconstructing educational goals and policies to meet the needs and realities of local African communities. Independence brought with it the need to decolonise education and reconnect the higher education curriculum with the reservoir of long-neglected indigenous knowledge.

Most African statesmen at independence elaborated on the need for Africans to "Africanize *their* education and get rid of the negative features and misconceptions

inherited from an educational system designed to serve colonial purposes” (Ndille, 2012, pp. 139–140 emphasis added). It was expected that educational experts in independent African countries would immediately plunge themselves into developing indigenous knowledge in all fields of life to fill the gap created by colonial education. It was even expected that such initiatives would lead to the development of indigenous African educational paradigms, such as those subsumed under the rubric of *ubuntu* (Bangura, 2005, pp. 13–18). In this regard, African schools would be teaching predominantly the history, geography, literature and languages of indigenous African communities, national histories, and to an extent the history of the African continent. Our task was to show investigate how far this has been achieved in two case studies—Cameroon and South Africa—and to examine the challenges and prospects related to its attainment.

#### THE AFRICANISATION OF THE HUMANITIES CURRICULUM IN CAMEROON UNIVERSITIES

The discourse on the Africanisation of knowledge in universities in the central African country of Cameroon begins with the former Federal University of Cameroon which was created in 1962 (renamed the University of Yaoundé in 1972 and the University of Yaoundé I in 1993). Unlike other countries, Cameroon did not have the luxury of a university during the colonial period; nevertheless, the independent government was aware of the heavy dominance of Eurocentric knowledge in primary and secondary schools throughout the colonial period (Ndille, 2012). The new government was therefore determined to guarantee that such an ‘illness’ should not plague the new university. Amadou Ahidjo, the first President of the Republic of Cameroon told the nation in 1960 that:

We must shun all servile importing and transplanting of foreign systems. The structure and substance of our educational system must consult the environment, needs, and personality of the Cameroonian people. (quoted in Gwei, 1975, p. 31)

Therefore, the Africanisation of knowledge in the Cameroonian university meant, from the onset, the introduction of content with indigenous relevance. It aimed not only at the “demythologizing of whiteness” (Mbembe, 2015, p. 2), but also at demonstrating that Cameroon had had a civilisation worthy of national and international recognition. That is, the Cameroonian university was to show that knowledge is beyond ‘whiteness’. This study of the curriculum of Cameroonian universities, especially in the Humanities and social Sciences, reveals the extent to which Ahidjo’s verbal commitment was transformed into reality.

The independence of Cameroon was finalised on October 1, 1961 and a federal bilingual nation was formed, merging the former British administered Southern Cameroons, and the former French Cameroons (which had been independent since January 1, 1960 as *La République du Cameroun*). Within the new state of Cameroon,



education was recognised as the greatest instrument in the development process, and higher education was imperative in this effort. The target was therefore to find national education paradigms to fuel the national development agenda.

On April 25, 1961, the National Institute of University Studies was created to offer propaedeutic classes in arts, science and law (Republic of Cameroon, 1961). This was the first step towards the establishment of a university in Cameroon. However, this structure had a heavy French influence and was set up with French financial aid. France, the former coloniser of Cameroon, undertook to set up the institute and provide the academic staff. The institute was to prepare Cameroonians for various examinations to be organised according to the pattern and norms set by French universities. This was made clear in the agreement establishing the institute. The task of setting up the institute was given to Professor Ledoux of Toulouse University in France, which he completed in December 1961. As there had been no university in the entire territory during the colonial period, there few Cameroonians at this time who were prepared to teach at the university level. The institute was immediately affiliated to the University of Toulouse and lecturers from Toulouse University took turns every three weeks to teach in the initial two programmes of arts and law.

In December 1961, upon the request of the Cameroon Government, a UNESCO Advisory Commission for the Development of Higher Education was set up, including five international experts and three nationals. Amongst other things, they were:

To help the government analyze the country's needs in the field of higher education ... bearing in mind the objectives and basic opinions of the plan for economic and social development ... to assist the government, on the basis of such analysis, in preparing draft plans for the development of higher education in the country, with recommendations on, for instance, the number and nature of the establishments to be set up, the subjects to be taught in them ... including guidance regarding teaching programmes and methods. (UNESCO, 1961, p. 1)

To the national middle class which "had totally assimilated colonialist thought in its most corrupt form" and with "its lack of spiritual depth" (Fanon, 1963, p. 167), things seemed to be moving very well. At the 1962 Fourth Congress of the ruling party, the Union Camerounaise (UC), President Ahidjo disclosed the government's decision to establish on Cameroonian soil, a university of international quality in accordance with the fundamental objectives of the country's plan for economic and social development. This decision, he said, was taken upon the realisation that "institutes of higher education in foreign countries satisfy very insufficiently, very partially and with desperate slowness, the training of the highly qualified personnel needed by the Cameroon nation" (Republic of Cameroon, 1962, p. 37).

In terms of the number of African scholars trained in foreign countries, especially France, Ahidjo was right. It took over ten years after completing a bachelor's degree for a smart African to obtain a doctorate in a French university. In the former British occupied section of the country, as of 1961, there were only twenty-one known



university graduates with either undergraduate diplomas or first degrees (Ndille, 2014). Ahidjo was also certain that the curriculum in Western schools was highly estranged from the local Cameroonian context; by creating the Federal University of Cameroon, he was determined from the outset to avoid such a situation.

The Federal University of Cameroon, which was the only one until 1993, started on August 8, 1962 with three faculties: the Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences which became the University of Yaoundé II in 1993; the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences; and the Faculty of Science. In the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, there were three departments: Modern Literature in English; Modern Literature in French; and History and Geography. There was also a Bilingual (English and French) Literary programme. The extent to which the Africanisation of knowledge was (or was not) achieved can only be appreciated by investigating the curricula of the literature and history and geography programmes. This summary is taken from the University's 1975 syllabus booklet (University of Yaoundé, 1975).

In the Modern Literature in English programme, emphasis in the first year of the language component was on the English language, while the literature component dwelt on the history of English literature, and commentaries on selected English novels, plays, poems and biographical studies. The electives were to be selected from linguistics, history of arts, philosophy, classics (Greek and Latin), or modern languages (German or Spanish). In the second year, the focus in the language component was on the history of the English language in Great Britain and the world, and the literature component required a study of two works in English literature. The electives remained the same as in the first year. In the first year of first cycle (Bachelor's degree) the English literature entailed a detailed study of poems, drama, and novels selected from different periods of English literature, American literature, French literature and civilisation. At this level, there was a course in African literature (drama and oral tradition). In the second year of the second level (*Maitrise* or Postgraduate Diploma), Modern Literature in English involved a detailed study of philosophy, history of philosophy, great expansion in contemporary thought, Western political philosophy, German or Spanish, and classics—Greek and Latin. Cameroon was mentioned in the curriculum only in the linguistics course, in which there was an introductory encounter with the local Basa, Duala, Ewondo and Fulfulde languages.

In the Modern Literature in French programme, the situation was the same. For the first year emphasis was on the French language, and French literature from 1715 to 1975. There was also the normative and stylistic study of modern French. In the second year of the first level, the curriculum included a study of four works of French literature beginning in 1715, and the history of French literature covering the same period. A study of the essential characteristics of modern and contemporary French, and a linguistic and descriptive study of modern French was also compulsory at this level. As electives, the students were to take interdisciplinary courses in classics (Latin and Greek), or one modern language (German or Spanish). The single course related to Africa involved a study of two works of African literature; a comparative commentary on African texts; and an introduction to literary research on one French

and one African work. The second level involved a grammatical study of modern French; a normative study of modern French; three works in French literature; 17th century French comedy; classical French literature; French literature and civilisation; in addition to Greek and Latin, and German or Spanish. There was only one course on Africa at this level, namely Comparative African literature.

Regarding the History and Geography programme, for the first year, the study of history required the study of the modern and contemporary world; the reformation of the 16th century; international relations from the Congress of Vienna to the Great War (probably the First World War); and the Maghreb region in the 19th century, with emphasis on the role of France. There were interdisciplinary electives; one chosen from the classics (Greek and Latin); one modern language (German or Spanish); sociology, philosophy, or the science of education. For the second year of the first level, emphasis was on the history of the ancient world, the medieval world, and France and England from the 10th to the 13th centuries. There was only one course on east and central Africa in the Middle Ages.

At the second level, History again focused on a more in-depth study of the ancient and medieval history of Europe; the Mendicant orders of the 13th and 14th centuries; Athens in the 5th century; the Far East, China and Japan; and the Pacific from 1886 to 1922. There was a course on Modern and Contemporary African history which involved Cameroon under German colonisation, and Central Africa in the 19th century. Students were also expected to choose one course among the History of Religions (especially Catholicism and Islam); the History of Civilisations (Greek and Roman); or the Spanish American world.

For Geography there was General Geography (physical and human), with human aspects focusing on the developed world, for example, fishing in Newfoundland, lumbering in Sweden, extensive farming in the Prairie, intensive farming in Holland, dairy farming in New Zealand etc. There was an introductory course on the regional geography of Cameroon. In the second year, the focus was on the physical and economic geography of Europe and North America. Electives for History major students included auxiliary sciences of history and geography, economic history, pre-history, and archaeology; while those for Geography major students included an introduction to industrial society, industrial geography of the world, and types of industrial families. At the second level, Geography involved physical and human geography of France and the British Isles. Apart from the introductory course on the regional geography of Cameroon, Geography was about the study of the developed world.

From the empirical data presented above, it is clear that the Africanisation of knowledge at the Federal University of Cameroon, although an acknowledged and urgent necessity at its inception, turned out to be a great disappointment. The reason for this situation was clear: the heavy French influence in the establishment of the university in Cameroon, which was possible only through a 1961 Franco-Cameroon Cooperation Agreement. With respect to higher education, France undertook, amongst other commitments, to “provide the credits necessary for the creation of the

federal university; to recruit and pay the academic staff demanded by the Cameroon government; and to be responsible for the expenses involved in the equipment, operation, and staffing of the professional chairs created at the university” (Europe-France Outre Mer, 1964, p. 35). Furthermore, the university was to replace the National Institute of University Studies created in 1961, which had been affiliated to the University of Toulouse and tailored to reflect the Eurocentric university and examination systems in France.

This perpetuation of French colonialism in the university system in Cameroon was sustained through ongoing foreign aid. Almost every form of foreign aid affects the life of an institution. Cameroon’s only university at that time came into being through international assistance and cooperation. Apart from other foreign nationals in the UNESCO team which visited the country in 1961, France and Frenchmen contributed the biggest quota of aid to the university. That accounts, at least in the main part, for the extent of France’s presence at the university. In the inauguration speech of the university, President Ahidjo told his countrymen that:

The French Government ... undertakes at its own expense to put at the disposal of our university the teaching staff which have been requested. It is equally ready, by means of scholarships, to facilitate the training in French higher education and research establishments, of Cameroonians who are capable of acquiring the qualifications necessary for entry into the posts in higher education laid down in the texts of our university statutes ... Last year (1961) our faculties of arts and law were in operation thanks to French financial help. This year again, these same faculties, with the addition of that of science, will operate on French funds, but with exclusively Cameroonian syllabuses. (Republic of Cameroon, 1963, pp. 16, 18)

The last part of Ahidjo’s message was a wish shared by every African statesman, but judging by the heavy French influence, it was to remain an illusion. There were 16 French lecturers with no Cameroonians in the years 1962 and 1963. Four years later, in 1966–1967 there were 82 French lecturers and 24 Cameroonians; and in 1973–1974 there were 357 French lecturers and only 169 Cameroonians. The French influence, especially at the top decision-making level of the university, was unquestionable (Gwei, 1975, p. 326). This, of course, was bound to influence the type of knowledge dispensed or acquired in the institution. Through its patronising role, France tacitly continued with its assimilationist *mission civilatrice* policy in Cameroon, using the schools and school system to inculcate in young Cameroonians a love for France, the French culture and civilisation, and a sense of inferiority and lack of appreciation of Cameroonian cultures. Even though the French personnel began to withdraw in the late 1970s and 1980s, the curriculum of the university underwent hardly any revision.

In 1993, the university system in Cameroon underwent significant reform, with six state universities emerging from the lone University of Yaoundé; however, judging from current curricula, the Africanisation of knowledge is still far from

being achieved. At the University of Ngaoundere, the focus is still on Europe and world affairs. From a quick count of the history courses on offer, there are over thirty in the undergraduate programme, with only two courses on Cameroon history and three on African history (F. Fogue<sup>1</sup>, personal interview, June 3, 2015). At the university of Yaoundé I (still seen as the mother university), there are currently over fifteen undergraduate history modules, with only two on Cameroon, and one on Africa (A. Samah<sup>2</sup>, personal interview, June 3, 2015). At the University of Buea which has an Anglo-Saxon orientation, the situation is not very different. There are thirty courses on the history programme, with only four on the general history of Cameroon (pre-colonial, German colonial, British and French colonial, and independent) (University of Buea, 2009). The situation is not different in the other departments such as Modern Letters.

The founding heads of departments of the new universities, many of whom had been faculty members of the mother University of Yaoundé, simply brought with them the old curricula, with very little revision towards Africanisation. Considering this state of affairs, it is clear that Cameroon universities to date, present a sad story of lack of Africanisation of knowledge. This remark does not, however, dampen the efforts of those tireless men and women who have continued to conduct research in local contents in order to justify the need for a complete reform of the system; yet their voices have hardly been heard.

#### THE AFRICANISATION OF THE HUMANITIES CURRICULUM IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Like in Cameroon, the desire to Africanise education in South Africa cannot be severed from the country's colonial heritage and identity formation (Msila, 2007, p. 146). This is because, historically, colonial and apartheid education in South Africa were used as a tool to obliterate the cultural identity or 'Africanness' of the majority of black South Africans. This began as early as the establishment of British colonialism in the Cape Colony and continued with the subsequent establishment of the Union of South Africa. At that time, the spread of the British cultural heritage in education was blended with the Afrikaner philosophy of education in the trekker states (the Orange Free State and the Transvaal) of "no equality and segregation, grounded in the life and worldview of the Whites who are senior trustee of the natives" (Msila, 2007, p. 148).

The philosophy of segregation required, as in other aspects of life, a separate school system for black South Africans called 'Bantu Education', in which values of white superiority and black inferiority were entrenched. Learning content was predominantly European, with practically nothing about the black South African, as if to push through the idea that the black person had no indigenous knowledge base and constituted no historical part of the world. According to Kallaway (1988, cited in Msila, 2007, p. 14), apartheid education grew as a practice of maintaining the British and Afrikaner status quo of "not only domesticating black people but

indoctrinating them as well". The impact was tremendous, as school knowledge was distorted to ensure control over the intellect of black Africans. It maintained black South Africans in a permanent state of political and economic subordination (Gutek, 1974), and completely destroyed their identity and knowledge base (Hartshorne, 1988).

South African independence came in 1994, and a new constitution was established in 1996. Amongst other things, the constitution aimed at "healing the divisions of the past and establishing a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights" (DoE, 2002b, p. 1). Act No. 108 justified the role that education had to play in this mission: to correct the social and educational problems of the colonial and apartheid regimes (DoE, 2002b, p. 1). This aim provided the basis for curriculum transformation in South Africa. A year later, in 1997, the government launched Curriculum 2005, also referred to as 'outcomes based education' (OBE). OBE stressed the need for education "to create a new South African identity that encompasses critical consciousness, promotes democracy and transforms the South African society towards egalitarianism" (DoE, 2002a, p. 3).

In 1997 the Parliament of South Africa complemented the OBE transformation agenda by passing the South African Language in Education Policy, which required that "the home language of students must be maintained as language of instruction from Grade 3 to Grade 12. The law also required students to take two languages as subjects: the language that they learn in, and one additional language" (Ramoupi, 2012b, p. 4). The law, however, did not make it clear that the two languages were to be African languages. Considering the fact that the languages which had hitherto been in official use were not African this clause was imperative in the law.

In 2001, the Working Group on Values in Education returned to the issue of how the values of the constitution could be made manifest in the educational system. Referring to the value of social justice, it observed that the new system strives to create an identity of 'South Africanness' (Republic of South Africa, 2001, p. 111). This included promoting multilingualism, which in the past had been limited to English and Afrikaans, but which henceforth was to include African languages.

In 2002 the OBE curriculum was revised within the general framework of transformation and Africanisation. The ensuing Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) comprised eight learning areas at the secondary school level, amongst which were Social Sciences, and Arts and Culture. The objectives of each of the learning areas were visibly to forge a new African identity and affirm a new African citizenship through the curriculum. In both Social Sciences and Arts and Culture curricula, one clear objective was the "provision of access to curriculum contents for all learners as part of redressing historical imbalances" (Msila, 2007, p. 151). This clearly extended to higher education and included the Africanisation of knowledge as an imperative to address past imbalances due to the lack of African-centred content in the colonial and apartheid school systems.

The RNCS based its suggestion on the understanding that learning is more effective when learners identify with the content (Emeagwali, 2005) and the medium

of transmission (Ouane & Glanz, 2011). This new initiative was viewed as a social justice project. The RNCS held that African indigenous knowledge systems (AIKS) have the potential to redress many social ills and address many social needs. To quote Emeagwali (2005),

The potential of an Africanised system lies largely in what and how the learners are taught: with indigenous based contents, learners are encouraged and trained to challenge existing relations of power and domination in terms of a transformative epistemology. Awareness of societal ills at local and global levels preoccupies discourse and the curriculum is viewed as an instrument of empowerment. Consciousness raising and the development of social awareness become part of the mission of the curriculum and curriculum planning. (p. 3)

Curriculum development efforts in South Africa were not only expected to guarantee an Africanised curriculum at the basic education level, but also highlighted the urgency of Africanisation of the curriculum in universities as knowledge production centres. This precipitated the creation of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions. The committee presented its first report in November 2008, in which “government concern for the reformulation of curricula for African-centred education in the universities was stressed” (Soudien Report, 2009, p. 6).

The recommendations of the Soudien Report were further highlighted in March 2014 when the Council on Higher Education South Africa (HESA) presented an evaluation report on the extent of transformation of the higher education sector. The HESA Report reiterated the importance of Africanisation and the failure of the post-apartheid curriculum to address the question of social exclusion and inclusion in South African higher education (HESA Report, 2014, pp. 7–8). Although the buzz-word from at least the 1990s had been ‘transformation’, the education system remained largely the same as far as curriculum and content were concerned. In fact, according to Ramoupi (2014), “the past twenty years of our liberation have disappointed and failed African research and scholarship in South African higher education institutions” (p. 269).

It is true that in the twenty years since 1994 most of the country’s institutions of higher education have changed leadership from white to black (African, Coloured, and Indian) vice-chancellors. But at the centre of what these universities do—teaching, learning and researching—there have seen no substantial paradigm shifts to bring about meaningful Africanisation of the curriculum and content. In 2008, the South African Government acknowledged the fact that the growing awareness of the need for higher education institutions to “provide intellectual leadership to society”, including “the recognition of a need for epistemological transformation, has not translated into any significant shifts in the structure and content of the curriculum to date” (Soudien Report, 2009, p. 7).

In the same light, and drawing from his own experiences of university education in South Africa, Ramoupi (2010) reported that:



The massive challenges in our curriculum were made acutely clear to me during my own experience of education at various institutions of higher learning and training. Throughout this period I recognised that the education system that had been legally endorsed by the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, with its colonial and apartheid mindset is for the most part still in place in South Africa today – 17 years after the inauguration of Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela in 1994. My degrees: BA Political Science and History Majors (1991); BA Honours History, 1993; and MA History, 1999 all had nothing to teach me about Africa; about Cheik Anta Diop. I had to cross the Atlantic (to Howard University in Washington DC) to know about Nnamdi Azikiwe and this was sadly only at the PhD level. (Ramoupi, 2010, p. 5, emphasis added)

Many South African students would attest to a similar experience. For example, at the University of Cape Town, one student told us: “I didn’t hear of Cape slavery until I was in fourth year at UCT.” This shows how un-African the curriculum is at all levels of education in South Africa. The Soudien Report (2009) indicates this failure by South Africa to transform its higher education curriculum. It points out that the SA education system has not taken on board the effects of knowledge production by the majority of its citizens, who are Africans. Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs), which are expected to be the foundation of African-centred education, continue to be mentioned in passing in policy documents, without any indication of an implementation agenda (Soudien Report, 2009, pp. 6–7).

At the University of Cape Town (UCT) for example, until recently, the Philosophy Department had no course on African Philosophy because, according to Mangcu, the Head of Department, Professor David Benatar, says Africa does not have a philosophy (Mangcu<sup>3</sup>, 2015). Such an omission is a clear case of social injustice to Africa’s people, because the Philosophy Department at UCT teaches and produces graduates from across the African continent and beyond, who will go into practice and serve African communities, without any comprehension or idea of a philosophy that is theirs—African. They will be African professionals whose education and knowledge base alienates them from their own roots and people. Another example is at the University of the Free State, where there is a *Centre for Africa Studies* and not a *Centre for African Studies*, as if to drive home the message that their mission is not necessarily for Africans, but merely includes something about Africa.

Recently at the University of Cape Town (UCT), there were overt attempts to completely wipe out African scholarship with a secret movement there—called the ‘Disestablishment of the Centre for African Studies (CAS)’. This began in 2011 and was halted only because students in the centre decided to be proactive and took it upon themselves to challenge the authorities. These African Studies students organised themselves and established a forum called Concerned African Studies Students. For that entire year, the activism of these students against the UCT administration’s efforts to disestablish CAS became an inspirational and informative platform for the rest of South Africa.



What therefore accounts for the overall failure of the Africanisation of the curriculum project in South African universities? According to Ramoupi (2014), there was a false start at independence in 1994. In his opinion, the black South African leadership at liberation did not make a firm commitment to transform South African education as leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere had done when their countries achieved independence. Figaji on the other hand cites the nature of the negotiated settlements during liberation, in which compromises were made to avoid civil war between white and black people in South Africa. While the major victory of this negotiated settlement was, perhaps, the reconciliation and nation-building policies of the Mandela presidency, national education, and particularly curriculum content at all levels, was probably the area most untouched by the new policies (Figaji, 2014).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which was set up following the end of Apartheid presented opportunities to interrogate South African universities about the roles they played in supporting and keeping apartheid alive, and consequently call for their transformation. However, this opportunity was missed when those in charge of education during apartheid were not called to testify, which was a miscarriage of justice. Education was probably the most brutal aspect of apartheid ideology; the education system at the time prohibited the African and black majority from studying at higher education institutions; where they were permitted to enrol, they could only learn prescribed content in certain fields intended to prepare them for servitude (Ramoupi, 2012b, p. 1).

The failure of the TRC allowed educational institutions to think there was nothing wrong with the manner in which they ran their business; so they continued to operate their mission of teaching, learning, and researching in the same institutional environment as during the apartheid regime. Today, South African institutions retain an institutional culture that repulses ideas of Africanisation. In most of the submissions that universities made to the Soudien Commission regarding transformation of higher education, it was observed that the curriculum was not discussed (Soudien Report, 2009). This is not surprising, as the curriculum is inextricably intertwined with the institutional culture and, given that the latter remained white and Eurocentric in historically white institutions, the institutional environment was not conducive to curriculum reform and Africanisation.

A key feature for the transformation of any higher education institution has to do with staffing. In post-apartheid South Africa, universities were expected to recruit black South Africans to promote the transformation agenda. Many renowned universities, for example the University of Cape Town, declared that they were anxious to recruit academics who had been in exile from the country, as they could make a vital contribution in the years ahead (Ramoupi, 2014). This was an important social justice statement, but three important cases in the past twenty years brought about negative publicity in this regard. We conclude that South African universities have never been honest in practically implementing the transformation

agenda. Consequently the Eurocentric institutional culture has persisted and the Africanisation project has been foiled.

We refer to what we call the ‘triple M cases’ and other related experiences to justify this point of view. The first two cases involve the University of Cape Town (UCT). In 1968 the university had refused to recruit a black South African, Archie Mafeje as a senior lecturer; the surrounding publicity and the generally hostile atmosphere under the apartheid regime forced him into exile. By the 1990s, he had become a distinguished professor of anthropology with experiences in Europe and North America. Upon his return from exile Mafeje, whose alma mater was UCT, made his intentions clear that he would like to teach at UCT; however, he was never welcomed there (Ntsebeza, 2014).

The second case is connected to the first, and concerns Mahmood Mamdani a Ugandan-Indian professor working in the United States. There is a well-established tradition, especially in the formerly white universities in South Africa, to appoint foreign Africans or blacks, merely to comply with equity goals. Also, these institutions know that foreign staff, unlike black South Africans, will accept and the status quo without question. Unfortunately for UCT and beyond all expectations, Mamdani who was preferred over Mafeje, became a thorn in their flesh, with his stance that the Centre for African Studies, which he was called upon to chair, “must not be turned into another home for Bantu Education” (Ramoupi, 2014, p. 284). Upon arrival at UCT, Mamdani noticed that the writings of African intellectuals were missing from UCT African history courses. To him, this was a reflection of the continuing legacy of the colonial mindset. He therefore attempted to present an *Introductory Course on Africa*, with a focus on the black African experience. Unfortunately, this eminent scholar was prevented by the university from teaching his Africanised curriculum (Mamdani, 2014).

The third case occurred at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), and involved Malegapuru Makgoba—dubbed the ‘Makgoba affair’. Makgoba had made his intentions clear from the start of his appointment as deputy vice chancellor in the 1990s, namely to lead an Africanisation of the curriculum ‘revolution’. He warned that:

Wits must realize that the cultural ethos which apparently served the institution so well in the past must change to accommodate other cultural values. The *curricula* have to change fundamentally as the university comes to terms with the reality that it is educating all South Africans in Africa. Africans in particular do not come to university to escape or erase their Africanness, but to confirm and articulate their roots. (Makgoba, 1997, pp. 76–77, emphasis added)

The fact that Makgoba was not allowed to implement his Africanisation agenda further demonstrates the wasted opportunities of South African academic institutions to cultivate and value African scholarship and its research in the post-1994 period. There were also some alleged grievances against Professor Makgoba while Vice-

Chancellor of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), but I do not see the relevance of debating them here when my communicating about him is about his Africanisation agenda at Wits University in the 1990s.

Another experience at KwaZulu-Natal is recounted by Ramoupi who writes that:

In 1992, I was studying for my BA History Honours at the University of Natal in Durban, where Professor Mazizi Kunene had an office underground in the MTB building; and above his office were departments of foreign languages i.e. Dutch, French and Spanish. It appeared that the institution, while it could not ignore Kunene's reputable international academic career, was attempting to keep him out of sight from the university community that could have benefited from his knowledge. (Ramoupi, 2011, pp. 1–2)

In October 2014 the Southern African Historical Society Newsletter (2014, p. 13) listed twenty PhD and Masters students at the University of the Free State (UFS) who were supported by Mellon and Oppenheimer funding. While all these students were from Africa, none was a black South African. As of now (2015), UCT has no black South African or African woman full professor; and only one African woman professor (a foreign national, from Kenya), in the Law School (Mangu, 2014). The only Black South African full professor that was at UCT was Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, who has since left. The Philosophy Department at UCT does not have a single black, coloured, African or Indian professor or lecturer—and coloured people are in the majority in the Western Cape province; all faculty members are white, either from South Africa or other countries (Mangu, 2014). At the Centre for Africa Studies at the University of the Free State, there are only two permanent academic staff members and both are white Afrikaner women.

We are of the opinion that such trends are purposive, with the aim of maintaining the Eurocentric institutional culture. The university authorities are fully aware that the appointment of black South African professors like Mafeje and Makgoba would have been a threat to the long-established university curricula, value systems, and institutional culture based on Europe and Europeans as focal points of knowledge and knowledge production. The consequence is that research about black South Africa is not encouraged and the status quo of the colonial and apartheid education systems continues.

The failure of the government to deal with the very strong Eurocentric/ apartheid institutional culture has led to a new phenomenon in South Africa: students have taken up the challenge in what has been termed the 'Rhodes Must Fall Project'. This movement began at the University of Cape Town around a statue of Cecil John Rhodes which the students brought down on 9 April 2015. However, a statue is merely a symbol, and bringing it down is merely symbolic. At the heart of the movement, we argue, is the need for Africanisation of South Africa universities. On 25 March 2015, Ramabina Mahapa, the president of the Student Representative Council (SRC), addressing the University Assembly at UCT declared:

In my own case, last year I wrote quite extensively on the issues of symbolism; on why it is problematic to have the statue (of Cecil Rhodes) there! The issues have always been raised. But the feeling is that the university continues to respond in the same way, by saying that Rhodes has donated money or land to the institution; therefore, we must pay homage to him and we must glorify him with that statue. We find it utterly unacceptable ... It is not only the statue that is problematic. Look around you! On the walls, do you see a black (African) person? When we come here for the graduation ceremonies, we hear a Latin song that is sung here! We can't identify with that song! Our living and learning spaces should be diverse and inclusive for us all. Do not bring the issue of "Let us preserve our heritage!" When you created that heritage, we were not here; we were excluded from being here! (Mahapa, 2015)

This speech and those of the others who took turns on that day, tell of the institutional culture at UCT; a culture which obviously is very hostile to Africanisation as a whole. The 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement has since spiralled into other universities in South Africa, notably Wits University in the Gauteng province, Rhodes University (RU) in the Eastern Cape, Stellenbosch University (SU) in the Western Cape, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in KwaZulu-Natal. It is hoped that this movement may one day diffuse into an open denial by university students of the alien curricula which continue to characterise higher education in South Africa.

#### CONCLUSION

From our study of the extent of Africanisation of humanities curricula in universities in Cameroon and Africa, we have commented on several key challenges at the heart of higher education transformation in both countries. A major challenge is the need to engage effectively and sincerely with the historical legacies of "intellectual colonisation and racialisation and patriarchy", in order for real Africanisation of the curriculum to occur (Du Toit, 2000, in Ramoupi, 2014, 296). In Cameroonian universities, continued reliance on European tutelage needs to be dealt with. The relatively younger universities in the English-speaking sector of Cameroon long to retain their pride in being Anglo-Saxon universities, and those in the French-speaking sector have remained faithful to their original French culture. In South African universities, the urge to nostalgically maintain colonial and apartheid heritages remains very strong. As we have observed above, such phenomena account for the endangered state of indigenous intellectual discourse and Africanisation in both countries.

There is therefore a need for the governments of both Cameroon and South Africa to ensure that each higher education institution clearly and sincerely answers questions such as: How have the dominant discourses that characterise the intellectual space of higher education developed and been reproduced historically? What are the

implications of the dominant discourses for social inclusion and social justice in higher education in Africa? What are the prevailing conceptions of epistemology and ontology, and to what extent have African knowledge bases been taken into consideration? It is only when a determined effort is made to practically answer these questions that Africanisation of the curriculum will become a reality.

In the fieldwork that we conducted for this study, frequent reference was made to providing students with 'epistemological access' to knowledge, rather than only physical access; but the question which was not answered was: which epistemologies? Only when these epistemologies are Africa inspired and generated can we talk of the African university. Until then such institutions will remain merely universities in Africa.

#### NOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> Albert Samah is an Assistant Lecturer, Department of History University of Buea.
- <sup>3</sup> Xolela Mangcu is Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town.

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