

DECOLONIZING UNIVERSITIES PEDAGOGY IN CREATING SPACE FOR AN ENGAGED TEACHING AND LEARNING.

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ABSTRACT

This article is grounded on how to decolonize pedagogy within the South African Universities, and the effective ways to create space for an active approach to education. The engagement, transfer, transformation, and extension of knowledge—including learning with diverse audiences through formal or informal arrangements—are all considered aspects of engaged teaching and learning in this article, and these learning includes community services learning, community based learning, or interprofessional learning. Capturing it from the literature on decolonizing pedagogy in institution of higher learning, the article probe into the issue of creating space for engaged teaching and learning around South African Universities. The article was qualitative in nature, participatory action learning research was used as methods and interviews were conducted from students and lecturers. Based on the main project about participatory evaluation of University program, an article about qualitative tracer studies and reviewed literatures, the article came up with the concepts and context of decolonization of pedagogy and the impact of decolonizing in creating space for teaching and learning. On this article the researcher argued that it is important to invent space for decolonial pedagogy into the overall teaching and learning practice. The article recommend that Universities should decolonize their curriculum , and they should be possibilities to have discipline of decolonial studies within each institution. Furthermore, the article advocates for the transformation of pedagogical approaches.

Keywords: decolonization, pedagogy, teaching and learning, participatory evaluation

Held (2019) wrote:

“Almost all of academia's attention has been on Western pedagogy and methods of instruction. Along with imperialist and colonial sentiments, Western science was spread from Europe to other countries, resulting in this form of ontological oppression” (Chalmers, 2017; Kuokkonen, 2000)

INTRODUCTION

The idea of decolonization and curricular reform in higher education has gained popularity in South Africa. According to Nevhudoli (2023), the decolonization of the curriculum was the

primary factor influencing the demands made by the unrest among university students in 2015; this is because, Although in South Africa Universities have seen many improvements, programs and curricula continue to encounter numerous obstacles, particularly with regard to their applicability and responsiveness to the needs of the communities today. Calls for curriculum transformation have been made to address those issues in a number of ways, including decolonizing the curriculum, fostering epistemological diversity, advancing a post-apartheid knowledge agenda, developing relevant and responsive curricula, contextualizing the curriculum, and designing courses for student success. (DHET, 2017). Given that the majority of South African institutions are founded on a Western model of academic development, a thorough examination of material that would result in changed and innovative curriculum would always be necessary (Nevhudoli, 2023). Le (2016) asserts that since this method has mainly gone unopposed, a university pedagogy is now required in South African higher education.

Concepts of decolonization

Decolonization is the process through which a colonized nation transforms to become independent of its former colonizers; nevertheless, this process involves more than just political independence; it also entails economic, social, and educational independence. (Heleta, 2016). Furthermore Heleta (2016) mention that more than a political process, decolonization is a social one. Decolonizing the nation's intellectual environment and, eventually, the minds of the formerly colonized citizens are essential steps in overcoming the legacy of colonialism. Most people, especially academics, will always be afraid of decolonization concerns; the primary question that comes up is whether they should just teach South African and African subjects. (Heleta, 2016).

The majority of scholars believe that decolonization means cutting themselves off from the outside world. According to Heleta (2016), the sarcastic remarks made by primarily white academics who insist that stakeholders explain what "decolonization" means to them betray their own ignorance of the history and scholarly discussions surrounding their fields. Since other African nations have been battling the same problems for decades, these kinds of inquiries also reveal a clear lack of interest in the continent. Scholars and thinkers have long worked to free their disciplines and universities from colonial restraints in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ghana. Heleta (2016).

Demand of decolonization and curricular reform in South Africa

According to the Council of Higher Education's (CHE) proposal for undergraduate curriculum

reform, attaining the objectives of equity of access and equity of outcomes requires a fundamental structural change, such as a systemic change to the parameters of the South African curriculum and the introduction of an extended curriculum across the board. This is necessary for a decolonized curriculum that addresses the alienation that arises from access to higher education, which does not necessarily convert into success, and the alienation that is caused by it. Nevhudoli (2023).

Regarding the CHE proposal, Badat (2015:) contends that until much-needed academic reforms are implemented, we will deprive members of socially marginalized groups of chances, sadly waste their abilities, and continue to perpetuate injustice. Democracy is jeopardized by this (Badat, 2015).

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC, 2001) of the CHE, in light of the severity of these standards and the significance of curriculum in higher education, its permanent committee, has acknowledged that a thorough discussion of curriculum decolonization is vital for establishing opinions on the quality of higher education and for focusing efforts in this field. There has been adequate response to the demand for curriculum reform (HEQC, 2001).

In his article, Nevhudoli (2023) stated that the need for curriculum decolonization originates from a variety of sources and is not necessarily founded on the same ideas and viewpoints when applied by other people or organizations. According to some interpretations, the broad definition of curriculum that underpins the decolonization of the curriculum invariably links it to the proposed decolonization of the university, which entails a fundamental change in the identity and character of these institutions as well as the dismantling of the structures believed to maintain and perpetuate a colonial legacy (HEQC, 2001). The syllabus needs to be Africanized or indigenized to better reflect a changing educational landscape since in certain contexts, the term "curriculum" appears to refer solely to what is taught.

Since apartheid has ended, we no longer use the term "transformation" to mean equitable access to higher education, According to Nevhudoli (2023) As a nation, we have passed and accomplished that. The primary problem now is that the curriculum offered to students at higher education institutions may not be current, which could not meet their needs or enable them to contribute to the national economy once their studies are over. Nevhudoli (2023). The primary duty for reversing this scenario rests with HEQC, which considers these factors when a program is submitted for accreditation. Among other things, they consider whether the program is pertinent and seeks to address societal problems (Nevhudoli, 2023).

According to the Higher Education Act of 1997, quality assurance in South African higher education is the responsibility of the Council on Higher Education (CHE). This responsibility falls on the Permanent Subcommittee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC, 2003).

Quality promotion, institutional auditing, and program accreditation are all part of the HEQC's mandate. A key component of the HEQC's operations is the enforcement of the quality-related criteria, which serve as both evaluative instruments for auditing and accrediting processes and general standards for quality management arrangements in higher education. HEQC (2003). The criteria are meant to direct the creation of self-evaluation reports and to give institutions the ability to examine and consider their quality management systems. HEQC (2003).

When the HEQC wishes to assess a program, they take into account a number of factors since they may also request an audit of the program. HEQC (2003). The Committee's areas of interest are community participation, research, and teaching and learning. The HEQC evaluates the standard of instruction and learning in relation to terms of how it is organized based on program development and revision, as well as how well it is organized for student evaluations and success. HEQC (2003). To guarantee the program's legitimacy and consistency, the HEQC also employs the peer and expert review system. Experiences and opinions of the tertiary education environment are additional essential criteria, according to Roman et al. (2018). It should be possible for students to relate.

Adding to the corpus of knowledge

Decolonization has been extensively studied. The decolonization of teaching in South African universities is the main topic of this article . Nevhudoli (2023). Numerous requests for curriculum evaluation and reform have been supported by the Department of Higher Education (DHET, 2017). Higher education institutions must rethink the disciplines, reformulate the curricula, and change pedagogies in order to solve the issues of relevance and responsive curricula (Human-Hendricks and Meier, 2020).

By offering information regarding the suitability, efficacy, and efficiency of the curriculum in relation to the necessary goals, this article aims to add to the body of knowledge and best practices in the institutions of higher learning. The article would include information on areas of curriculum or pedagogy relevant for that process in order to facilitate the necessary transformation and improvement. The results helped policymakers and curriculum developers to make decisions about curriculum developments by offering insightful information on pedagogy and future program development at various higher education institutions. Furthermore, the findings encourages higher education institutions to continuously assess their courses in order to improve their responsiveness and relevance.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to challenge and modify the relations of colonial rule, decoloniality is an ongoing process and practice (Legg, 2017). To open up decolonial options, this entails tenaciously working to disassociate from the cloak of colonialism that is concealed under the rhetoric of modernity (progress, growth), which has and still is seen as the natural order of things because Europe claims a dominant position both geopolitically and epistemically (Mignolo 2011). Participatory inquiry, in decolonizing pedagogy grounded the researcher in conducting this study. Reflecting on the current teaching and learning was very important in discussing decolonial gestures at the University level, it was also another way to transform University curriculum in order to be responsive and relevant in solving the society problem. In addition to reflecting on our own teaching, we also have conversations that help us decolonize our own thought processes and create opportunities for (re)learning via our practice in novel ways. Nevhudoli (2023).

Other ways of being, knowing, and living are ignored and invisible by the epistemic hegemony of Western knowledge, which also promotes the material dominance of those who do not fit the Eurocentric norm (Stein, 2019). According to Nevhudoli (2023). In higher education, decoloniality is not intended to replace the Western episteme's dogma with a new, exclusive, and totalizing decolonial episteme. Instead, it affirms the re-emergence, re-existence, and emancipation of people who have been subjugated by the global westernizing agenda while de-centering the West. In this sense, it preserves and reconnects with memories, ways of living, and traditions that people have good cause to cherish but that modernity has deprived them of (Mignolo 2016).

Decolonizing development education and its pedagogies is equally necessary to decolonize development ideology (Rutazibwa 2018). Decolonial pedagogy is an approach to teaching that takes an external perspective. We strive to learn from non-Western and indigenous cultures and cosmologies as we sit at the border and educate. A dedication to working outside of established hierarchies and the student/teacher dichotomy is another aspect of decolonial pedagogy. Decolonial pedagogy is practical in this sense, incorporating dominating voices and practices (Atehortúa 2020). Decolonial pedagogy is also dialogic. As the pupils learn to identify their own roles in the colonial power structure, it is a process of conscientization (Walsh 2015). Thus, decolonial teaching is also a process of reflection in which students consider not just colonial histories but also their own histories. (Nevhudoli 2023)

RESEARCH METHODS

The article adopted a decolonial paradigm to determine whether it is fact possible to decolonize

University pedagogy when in fact we are still using the existing colonia Eurocentric pedagogy that was also created and imposed to us by the western colonial scholars. A qualitative participatory approach was employed and deemed fit for the article as it involving different stakeholders. Data were generated from Semi-structured interviews, and desktop research was also used to generate data from the existing resources about the decolonization of the University for transformation. Desktop research was considered not to be time consuming techniques as compared to field interviews, as the main sources were material published in reports and similar documents on the decolonization of institution of higher education that are available in University libraries, websites, And the reviewed literature were also used in data generation as it was an great method of combining research results to provide meta-level evidence and identify places where the article was grounded on.

FINDINGS

In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world". Giving pupils the tools they need to succeed in the Fourth Industrial Revolution is the aim of education. Nevhudoli (2023). Rapid technological advancement since the turn of the century has sparked calls for everyone, regardless of race, to have affordable access to high-quality education and for the abolition of a socioeconomic class hierarchy, which is linked to the decolonization of educational institutions' cultures and curricula. Du Plessis, (2021). The following findings were discussed according to the following Question and phenomena: What does it entails to decolonize pedagogy to create space for engaged teaching and learning?

Promoting the understanding of decoloniality

Even after Thirty -six years of democracy, South Africa's institutions and colleges still frequently present a colonial and apartheid-era perspective of the nation. The majority of university curricula are still Westernized, reflecting a white European perspective on what should be taught (Le Grange 2016).

Participant 3 "The issue is that we are being taught things that are not relevant to us, our lecturers do not make efforts in understanding the importance of decolonization the program, even though it is irreverent "

Curriculum, according to education sociologists, is a discourse that is strongly impacted by ideology. This suggests that it includes implicit ways of knowing, doing, and being in addition to content. The prevailing consensus among lecturers is that adding authors from Africa to a reading list will suffice as a means of decolonizing the curriculum and altering the subject matter of their classes. The issue is that they don't change the assignments needed to interact

with the text, so students continue to feel excluded and alienated. Du Plessis, (2021).

It seems as Lecturers are unaware of the potential benefits of decolonial practices in the classroom and do not experiment with diverse teaching philosophies. Nevhudoli (2023).

Change in the post-apartheid educational system requires rebuilding the nation's basis while fully embracing the past. To give every students a top-notch education, new abilities focused on reading, critical thinking, and conceptual imagination must be developed. This calls for a radical comprehension of the essential elements of education. (Block and Corona 2014).

Transforming of the curriculum

Report from Open University (2019) gave a brief and concise explanation of the importance of decolonizing the curriculum. The findings of this article showed that curriculum provides a way of identifying the knowledge valued by the society and structures the ways in which we are taught to think and talk about the world and offers a means of recognizing the information that society values. One Participant said the following:

Participant 1 “There is need for curriculum transformations. The current curriculum is not relevant as it does not address the issues that we as graduates encounter”.

According to Nevhudoli (2023) Decolonizing education forces us to view everything we learn from a different angle. Decolonizing education enables us to identify, comprehend, and question the ways in which colonialism has formed our reality, which in turn prompts universities to assess their own professional practices. In addition to being more inclusive, this article emphasized that a decolonized curriculum challenges preexisting paradigms, addresses issues of power, hierarchy, and equality, traces the origins of ideas, and illustrates the positive and negative applications of key concepts. Nevhudoli (2023).

Transformations of the pedagogies

In Paul Freire's groundbreaking 1970 call for critical pedagogy, *Pedagogies of the Oppressed*, the author contrasts two different approaches to teaching: imparting knowledge to students and fostering an environment where students and their lecturers can learn from one another, drawing on their cultural background and lived experiences.

The findings find out that a decolonized pedagogy always challenge the idea that lecturers are the only one with the knowledge, the teaching and consequently, the learning process should be participatory and collaborative. The methodology used, the content applied and activities in that pedagogy should emphasizes and promote the relevance and responsiveness which will obviously be applicable to students and societal needs. Rethinking of pedagogy should produce

graduates who are independent and critical thinkers. Nevhudoli (2023).

DISCUSSIONS

The following expressions are frequently used, and they were most common in the context of implementing more for decolonization: liberate the university, the classroom, the curriculum, and the pedagogy. The decolonization concept has been used more and more, which has led to two prominent scholars (Shahjahan et al., 2022) contending that decolonization shouldn't be seen as a metaphor for many approaches to education, such embracing critical methodologies, increasing student-centered pedagogies, or promoting social justice. However, considering the term's popularity, the article made the case that we had to pose challenging questions such what the calls to decolonize university pedagogy really imply. Additionally, it seems clear what it means, hence it was a matter of making teaching and learning more responsive and relevant.

The study conducted by Phillips and Whatman (2007) on indigenous education contended that before any particular curriculum changes are implemented, the process of decolonizing any curriculum must first focus on reforming the colonizing spaces where such instruction occurs. However, Waghid and Hibbert (2018) point out that in order for South African universities to tackle the problem of decolonizing their pedagogy, they must be dedicated to and prepared to interact with their curricula and pedagogies in a critical, self-reflexive, and creative manner. The article presented a compelling argument that institution of higher learning ought to create curricula that emphasize on decolonization, and revamp and transform current curriculum to engaged with in the new era.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The article recommend that Institutions of Higher learning should transform their curriculum through decolonization of the pedagogy in order to have an engaged teaching and learning that will benefit both the students, the society and Universities at large. There is a great need to know and understand culture, value, and norms but there is also a very great need for South African universities to start engaging in recent debates such as of the decolonization, and how it might positively affect teaching and learning in particular. Nevhudoli (2023). However, McMahon and Portelli (2012) also point out that colonialism, neoliberalism, and globalization have left education with a system that still fosters social justice, inequality, and student disengagement. If reform is to happen, academics must take the initiatives.

The most disadvantaged Universities are still suffering from the Western epistemology that has been transferred into teaching and learning. Furthermore, (Biesta 2016) indicated that Departmental leaders within Universities need to engage Lecturers , HOD and senior Lecturers

personnel for equality at the national, regional, and institutional levels. Additionally, they need to talk with staff members about decolonizing classrooms and implementing changes, diversifying content and materials, teaching learning outcomes that discuss social justice and power, creating assessments that let diverse learners show mastery in a variety of ways, and embracing diverse language usage in interactions. Social issues should be linked to academic subject. Nevhudoli (2023).

CONCLUSION

The term "decolonization" is frequently used to describe the disruption of a particular "colonial" and thus unwanted process or trait. This conception, however, is based on a highly selective examination of colonialism and colonization. Given the power, ubiquity, and complexity of colonial attitudes and relationships, an alternative mobilization of decolonization in education would present colonialism as a continuous, lifelong process that is rife with challenges, conflicting demands, and unpredictable results. It was important for the researcher to have this type of the article particularly because he is also a product of such pedagogy of colonial legacy, to participatory draws on the implications of decolonizing the curriculum with the institution of higher education especially in South Africa. Nevhudoli (2022) mentioned that Universities should direct their teaching and learning to transformation praxis. In closing, the author restates the need of academics committing to decolonizing their pedagogy in their own daily teaching practices. The examination of the colonial epistemic heritage, subtle kinds of epistemic oppression, and opportunities to adopt more powerful liberatory teaching and learning strategies should all be downgraded in the curriculum. As part of the process of decolonization, Universities may be among the many spaces well – suited to support the decolonization of pedagogy fostering more engaged teaching and teaching.

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