

Rethinking South African Higher Education Institutions Role Towards Curriculum Restructuring



Nozuko Nqabeni¹ 

¹ Faculty of Educational Sciences, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

The article shed light on the crucial process of restructuring the curriculum and emphasized the need for proactive engagement, despite the challenges that impede effective learning and teaching. The transformation of education in South Africa is a topic that deserves more attention, particularly considering the positive impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which accelerated the integration of technology into learning and teaching worldwide since 2020. This acceleration has prompted urgent changes in various operational aspects of higher education institutions (HEIs). The main focus of this article was to highlight how higher education institutions should approach the restructuring of the curriculum to ensure sustainable transformation. Although the need for this transformation has long been recognized, there has been limited resistance against the prevailing Eurocentric model upon which South African university's foundational academic organization is built. The author argued that despite efforts to counter Eurocentrism, the South African educational system remains dominated by it in all aspects. To assess the role of higher education institutions in promoting effective learning and teaching through curriculum restructuring, this theoretical paper thoroughly examined the topic of restructuring the curriculum at South African universities. The theoretical framework for this study drew upon the principles of socio-cultural theory, curriculum development and the role of HEIs in curriculum reform. These approaches aim to comprehend how higher education institutions sustain and perpetuate exclusion through Eurocentric epistemology and pedagogical practices. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the struggle to normalize higher education must continue. The article emphasized the ongoing need for change and transformation in higher education institutions to address the deficiencies caused by Eurocentric influences and ensure an inclusive and effective learning environment.

Correspondence

Nozuko Nqabeni

Email: uzukonq@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education in South Africa has seen substantial changes recently as a result of a collision of societal pressures, global difficulties, and the need for equitable development. Nqabeni and Buka, in agreement with Badat, state that higher education institutions in South Africa should examine and modify their curricula in the wake of this paradigm shift.¹ The importance of these institutions in curriculum restructuring has increased as the

¹ Nozuko Nqabeni and Andrea Mqondiso Buka, "Post Covid-19: Exploring the Decolonisation Factor in a Mathematics Classroom in South African Schools," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 4, no. 3 (March 17, 2023): 287–99, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2023439>; Saleem Badat, *Trepidation, Longing and Belonging: Liberating the Curriculum at Universities in South Africa* (University of Pretoria Public Lecture, 2010).

country works to create a more just and progressive society.² This has made these HEIs the important change agents and socioeconomic transformational forces. Due to the long-lasting effects of apartheid, which left a wide gap in educational access, standards, and content, South Africa's higher education system has historically encountered challenges.³ According to Makoni, it has taken a long time to overcome the effects of this historical injustice, but significant strides have been made in promoting access for underprivileged populations.⁴ A thorough reassessment of the curricula in HEIs is however required because of the contemporary environment's increasing complexities and problems.⁵ Santos asserts that the world is currently seeing tremendous technological developments, the globalization of economies, and significant changes in societal expectations.⁶ According to Badat, South African HEIs must critically assess their curricula to make sure that they provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for navigating the complexities of the modern world if they want to be relevant, competitive, and responsive.⁷ Additionally, according to the aforementioned author, curricula must be created to address the nation's current problems, such as unemployment, inequality, environmental sustainability, and social justice. This paper intends to examine the critical role played by South African HEIs in curriculum restructuring while also highlighting its opportunities and difficulties.

Thus, the paper seeks to provide insight into new approaches to curricular design that promote inclusion, relevance, and responsiveness to the diverse needs of HEI students. According to this paper, curriculum redesign efforts can be enhanced in order to contribute to the realization of a more just, inclusive, and sustainable future for South Africa by utilizing socio-cultural theory, curriculum development, and HEIs' roles in curriculum reform. The subsequent sections examined the historical background of higher education in South Africa, the difficulties that HEIs are currently facing, and the necessity of curriculum revision to meet societal demands. This article drew lessons applicable to the South African context from the body of literature already in existence and from the nation's successful curricular revisions. The ultimate goal of this paper is to inspire a collective commitment to envisioning and redefining higher education curricula, enabling future generations of students to meaningfully contribute to the advancement and development of the country.

METHODOLOGY

The goals of this work were achieved by using a qualitative research design. To enable the study to draw a meaningful conclusion when considering the role of South African Higher Education Institutions in Curriculum Restructuring (CR), relevant literature was evaluated and synthesized. This strategy was deemed adequate because it enabled the author to review and summarize the literature on this hotly contested topic.⁸ The author was able to comprehend the scope of the issue and how South African higher education institutions react to curriculum restructuring, which is more significant. Engaging the literature enabled the study to have sufficient data to ensure a meaningful conclusion because curriculum restructuring in HEIs in South Africa is not a recent phenomenon but has instead received significant attention from policymakers and academics alike over the last decade.⁹ This research focused on socio-cultural theory, curriculum development, and HEI roles in CR while incorporating historical debates and narratives about rethinking South African HEI's stance toward CR. The acquired material was analyzed using thematic content analysis.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Despite being delayed, curriculum restructuring in higher education institutions (HEIs) remains a pressing challenge that requires immediate attention.¹⁰ This is primarily due to the fact that the process of curriculum

² Chrissie Boughey and Sioux McKenna, *Understanding Higher Education: Alternative Perspectives* (African Minds, 2021); Lesley Le Grange, "Decolonising the University Curriculum: Leading Article," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, no. 2 (2016): 1–12.

³ Badat, *Trepidation, Longing and Belonging: Liberating the Curriculum at Universities in South Africa*; Catherine Odora, "Transformation and Change in Knowledge Generation Paradigms in the African and Global Contexts: Implications for Education Research in the 21st Century," *Educational Research for Social Change* 6, no. 1 (2017): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2221-4070/2017/v6i1a1>.

⁴ Munyaradzi Makoni, "Urgent Need to Decolonise Intellectual Property Curricula," *University World News* 443 (2017).

⁵ Katlego Disemelo, "Student Protests Are about Much More than Just #FeesMustFall," *Mail&Guardian*, October 29, 2015, <https://mg.co.za/article/2015-10-29-student-protests-are-about-much-more-than-just-feesmustfall/>.

⁶ Joseline M. Santos, "Google Classroom: Beyond The Traditional Setting," *Problems of Education in the 21st Century* 79, no. 4 (August 15, 2021): 626–39, <https://doi.org/10.33225/pec/21.79.626>.

⁷ Badat, *Trepidation, Longing and Belonging: Liberating the Curriculum at Universities in South Africa*.

⁸ Brian Kamanzi, "Decolonising the Curriculum – A Student Call in Context," *University World News*, May 27, 2016, <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20160527145138375>.

⁹ Boughey and McKenna, *Understanding Higher Education: Alternative Perspectives*; Odora, "Transformation and Change in Knowledge Generation Paradigms in the African and Global Contexts: Implications for Education Research in the 21st Century."

¹⁰ Le Grange, "Decolonising the University Curriculum: Leading Article."

change has historically been approached from a Eurocentric perspective, which has sparked discussions and debates.¹¹ As stated in the Education White Paper 3, transitioning necessitates a critical examination and reevaluation of existing values, practices, and institutions in relation to their suitability for the new era.¹² Curriculum restructuring (CR) entails embracing indigenous knowledge systems, Afrocentric epistemology, and other contemporary alternatives for teaching and learning.¹³ It involves revitalizing marginalized knowledge and shifting the focus of knowledge production within HEIs from a different vantage point.¹⁴ Despite potential challenges that hinder students' successful mastery of their education, Wessels argues that curriculum restructuring in South African universities is a problem that must be addressed, yet it remains undertheorized.¹⁵

Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is an important theoretical framework that provided helpful context for this paper.¹⁶ According to this view, education is a social and cultural process that is intricately entwined by the student's relationships with others and the larger socio-cultural environment. The development of a comprehensive understanding of how curriculum reform can promote fair education in South Africa by comprehending and using sociocultural theory is explored in this paper. The social divisions made between cognitive and social components have an impact on people's learning styles both on an individual and social level.¹⁷ Alvard learns that culture is a socially transmitted form of deeply embedded knowledge. In the context of pedagogy, this is evident, as context plays a crucial role in the learning process.¹⁸

According to Mbembe, the current era in higher education is characterized as a negative period that mirrors significant societal upheavals.¹⁹ It is a time when new hostilities emerge while unresolved conflicts from the past persist. Moreover, it is a time of conflicting and fragmented forces whose interactions yield uncertain outcomes.²⁰ The author further argues that this is a problematic period that demands a comprehensive reassessment of existing power structures, a reconsideration of how interactions shape results, and a recognition of the importance of unraveling curriculum debates. Additionally, the author explores the philosophical traditions that underpin the call for decolonizing these traditions, examines the conflicts they represent, and seeks glimpses of a better and more coherent future within them. As explained by Backus, although learning is an individual experience, it is initiated and experienced through social interaction.²¹ Consequently, when unequal social conditions exist, as they often do in postcolonial societies, they are likely to have a negative impact on the pedagogical process and learning outcomes. In contrast, the author argues that the implicit learning that occurs through culture can be disrupted under certain circumstances, resulting in the loss or unlearning of behaviors and desired learning outcomes in dysfunctional educational settings. Integrating socio-cultural theory into the paper provided valuable perspectives on how to create inclusive, relevant, and effective curricula. By emphasizing social interactions, cultural relevance, and contextual learning, this theoretical framework can help shape a transformative educational environment that fosters active learning, and critical thinking, and prepares students to be active participants in shaping the future of their communities and the nation at large.

¹¹ Disemelo, "Student Protests Are about Much More than Just #FeesMustFall."

¹² Department of Education, *Education White Paper 3* (Pretoria: A programme for the transformation of higher education by S. M. E. Bengu, MP Minister of Education., 1997).

¹³ Achille Joseph Mbembe, "Decolonizing the University: New Directions," *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 29–45; Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Why Are South African Universities Sites of Struggle Today?," *The Thinker* 70 (2016): 52–61.

¹⁴ Joseph Mbembe, "Decolonizing the University: New Directions."

¹⁵ Nastassja. Wessels, "Decolonisation of Education in South Africa A Basic Education Problem," 2017, <https://www.diggitmagazine.com/papers/decolonisation-education-south-africa>.

¹⁶ Lev Semenovich Vygotsky and Michael Cole, *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Harvard university press, 1978).

¹⁷ Urie Bronfenbrenner and Pamela Morris, "The Ecology of Development Process," in *Handbook of Child Psychology*, ed. R.M. Lerner, vol. 1 (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2006); Michael S Alvard, "The Adaptive Nature of Culture," *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews: Issues, News, and Reviews* 12, no. 3 (2003): 136–49.

¹⁸ Bronfenbrenner and Morris, "The Ecology of Development Process."

¹⁹ Achilles Mbembe, *Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive*, 2015, [https://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/Achille Mbembe - Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive.pdf](https://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/Achille_Mbembe_-_Decolonizing_Knowledge_and_the_Question_of_the_Archive.pdf).

²⁰ Mbembe, *Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive*.

²¹ A.M Backus, "Learning, Class 2: Learning Theories ," (*PowerPoint*), 2018.

Curriculum Development

The terms "decolonization" and "transformation" mentioned earlier signify a profound change in the essence and identity of university curricula, with the aim of eliminating the remnants of colonialism.²² This entails modifying the subject matter taught, and the methods of delivering it to students.

Modifying the Student's Curriculum

The primary concerns with this version relate to the disconnect between South African curricula and real-life experiences, as well as the value of knowledge acquired through academic study. In order to resolve these issues, scholars must address poverty reduction, disparity, and economic growth. Mbembe raised a crucial question regarding the essence of a university in South Africa, suggesting that the significance of the material taught could be emphasized.²³ This could involve incorporating African Studies into university curricula, replacing Eurocentric texts in humanities subjects like literature with locally generated resources, or reorienting certain disciplines to address regional conditions and challenges.²⁴ Furthermore, it involves utilizing locally relevant examples and applications of scientific knowledge. Essentially, it requires restructuring the overall focus of university curricula to prioritize academic fields that meet the development needs of the region.

Ndofirepi argues that a university located along the coast could focus on maritime studies, trade law, development economics, transportation, and so on, while a university situated in an area suitable for archaeological exploration could consider subjects like history, sociology, psychology, economics, and health.²⁵ Medical studies should place greater emphasis on primary healthcare in areas with the greatest need, and agricultural studies should shift their focus from large-scale commercial farming to sustainability in small businesses. This may involve a broader reorientation of the subjects taught at universities, selecting and concentrating on disciplines that address the development issues specific to the region where the university is located. The objective of this iteration is to offer comprehensive and pertinent local information that caters to the needs of students and addresses South Africa's developmental challenges.²⁶ Additionally, it seeks to add to the global creation of knowledge from an African perspective.²⁷ Concerns have been raised, meanwhile, about how disconnected South African students may get from the material if it has little to do with their everyday lives.²⁸ Furthermore, questions are raised regarding the usefulness of university-level expertise in tackling important societal concerns in South African society. These concerns include addressing inequality, reducing poverty, and advancing economic growth.²⁹

Curriculum Delivery Method

Collaborative production of knowledge should be embraced in place of the idea that curriculum should be something that is simply acquired in order to ensure effective curriculum restructuring.³⁰ Students must be seen as active creators of information rather than as passive consumers in order for this shift to take place.³¹ However, as Santos points out, there has been a general movement toward Western academic models in South African colleges, rejecting and undervaluing the knowledge of colonized people.³² The current academic framework, rooted in Western disciplinary knowledge established during the apartheid era, remains largely unchanged.³³ This transition was the result of negotiated agreements and the embrace of liberalization in a rapidly globalizing world. Despite substantial shifts in student demographics, particularly at traditionally white campuses, faculty demographics in South African universities have remained relatively unchanged.³⁴ Boughey and McKenna emphasize that a decolonization perspective focuses not only on what is taught but also on how academic

²² Zingiswa Jojo, "Mathematics Education System in South Africa," in *Education Systems Around the World* (IntechOpen, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.85325>.

²³ Mbembe, *Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive*.

²⁴ Catherine Manathunga, "Decolonising Higher Education: Creating Space for Southern Knowledge Systems," *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the South* 4, no. 1 (2020): 4–25.

²⁵ Amasa Ndofirepi, "African Universities on a Global Ranking Scale: Legitimation of Knowledge Hierarchies?," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 31, no. 1 (2017): 155–74.

²⁶ Badat, *Trepidation, Longing and Belonging: Liberating the Curriculum at Universities in South Africa*.

²⁷ Ndofirepi, "African Universities on a Global Ranking Scale: Legitimation of Knowledge Hierarchies?"

²⁸ Manathunga, "Decolonising Higher Education: Creating Space for Southern Knowledge Systems."

²⁹ Nqabeni and Buka, "Post Covid-19: Exploring the Decolonisation Factor in a Mathematics Classroom in South African Schools."

³⁰ Saleem Badat, *Social Justice in Higher Education: Universities, State and Philanthropy* (Cape Town, 2015).

³¹ Badat, *Social Justice in Higher Education: Universities, State and Philanthropy*.

³² Santos, "Google Classroom: Beyond the Traditional Setting."

³³ Santos, "Google Classroom: Beyond the Traditional Setting."

³⁴ Chrissie Boughey and Sioux McKenna, "Academic Literacy and the Decontextualised Learner," *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning (CrisTAL)* 4, no. 2 (2016): 1–9.

literacies are experienced, leading to a comprehensive understanding of decolonization.³⁵ Therefore, for successful curriculum restructuring, it is crucial to clarify the notion of a decontextualized student, which underlies the current "mainstream" teaching approach in South Africa.

The key claim made here challenges the idea that "academic literacy" only consists of unbiased abilities that may be gained by students by focusing on the connection between students and learning. Instead, it contends that academic literacies are socially constructed and may be seen as colonial or alienating, especially by students who are ignorant of the subtexts that underlie speech that appears to be neutral.³⁶ In the context of South African higher education, the idea of "epistemological access," which became well-known through Morrow's work in the early 1990s, has long been linked to social notions of literacy. The literacy dispute results from this investigation of alienation, which motivates the call for decolonizing the curriculum.³⁷ In academia and its diverse disciplines, implicit meanings, norms, codes, practices, and values deny students the chance to gain full knowledge and understanding.

To address this, a deliberate focus on revealing and involving students in the meaning-making processes becomes essential for curriculum restructuring and decolonization. In this view, the curriculum is no longer perceived as something received but, rather, as something created jointly.³⁸ Consequently, students are increasingly recognized as active participants in their own education rather than passive recipients of knowledge.³⁹ Boughey and McKenna note that despite a wealth of theoretical research on the socially constructed nature of literacy practices in universities and the implications for enabling or limiting "epistemological access," this has had little influence on the prevailing "autonomous" model of literacy prevalent in classrooms and the creation of generic academic literacy courses centered on technical accuracy and structure.⁴⁰ They claim that "current events are deeply entwined with the continued dominance of the autonomous model." In addition to outrage over growing tuition costs, declining state support, widespread political unrest, and discontent with ongoing social injustices, academic literacy practices are perceived as neutral, which decontextualizes the students.⁴¹

Thesen et al., assert that adjusting how something is taught or learned is just as important as changing the curriculum as a whole.⁴² They contend that incorporating science knowledge into a transformative approach can counteract the curriculum's "scientism" and its image of science as a separate topic. In order to avoid alienating students, this method sees science as a process of simulating and forecasting actual phenomena. It also examines how scientific information is created and contrasted with other types of knowledge. Thesen et al. ask why, despite being a significant barrier to earning a degree, mathematics and science education have generally escaped examination.⁴³ Furthermore, Badat contends that in order to grasp the curriculum critically, considering the ideas of "identity" and "power," it is vital to rethink mathematics and science instruction beyond deficit viewpoints.⁴⁴ The "Proposal for Undergraduate Curriculum Reform" in CHE's 2013 report, which contends that curriculum change goes beyond what and how topics are taught, is supported by the author. According to the research, in order to achieve equitable access and results in South African education, structural and systemic changes including the implementation of an extended curriculum are required. These adjustments are essential for the achievement of a decolonized curriculum that addresses alienation and makes sure that having access to higher education results in success.⁴⁵ According to Badat, who was commenting on the CHE proposal, if necessary academic changes aren't made, people from socially marginalized groups will be denied opportunities, which will tragically waste their talents and potential while sustaining injustice and undermining democracy.⁴⁶

³⁵ Boughey and McKenna, "Academic Literacy and the Decontextualised Learner."

³⁶ Rajendra Chetty and Christopher B Knaus, "Why South Africa's Universities Are in the Grip of a Class Struggle," *Sunday Times*, 2016.

³⁷ Wally Morrow, *Bounds of Democracy: Epistemological Access in Higher Education* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009).

³⁸ Morrow, *Bounds of Democracy: Epistemological Access in Higher Education*.

³⁹ Sumari O'Neil and Eileen Koekemoer, "Two Decades of Qualitative Research in Psychology, Industrial and Organisational Psychology and Human Resource Management within South Africa: A Critical Review," *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology* 42, no. 1 (2016): 1–16; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, "The Ecology of Development Process."

⁴⁰ Boughey and McKenna, "Academic Literacy and the Decontextualised Learner."

⁴¹ Boughey and McKenna, *Understanding Higher Education: Alternative Perspectives*, 48.

⁴² Lucia Thesen, Cecilia Jacobs, and Moragh Paxton, "Special Issue: 'Literacy, Language and Social Justice in the Changing University,'" *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning* 4, no. 2 (2016).

⁴³ Thesen, Jacobs, and Paxton, "Special Issue: 'Literacy, Language and Social Justice in the Changing University.'"

⁴⁴ Badat, *Trepidation, Longing and Belonging: Liberating the Curriculum at Universities in South Africa*.

⁴⁵ Manathunga, "Decolonising Higher Education: Creating Space for Southern Knowledge Systems."

⁴⁶ Badat, *Social Justice in Higher Education: Universities, State and Philanthropy*.

The Role of HEIs in Curriculum Reform

Mgqwashu asserted that HEIs make substantial contributions to curriculum development and educational reform.⁴⁷ They participate by offering programs for teacher training, carrying out research, and creating collaborations with educational institutions and decision-makers. Boughey, and McKenna, concur with Le Grange and assert that these HEIs have the knowledge and resources required to assist with initiatives to restructure the curriculum and raise the standard of education in the nation.⁴⁸ The comprehension and knowledge of the subject matter, as well as the viewpoints of the researchers on the subject being taught, are essential for curriculum reform in HEIs.

The Knowledge thus taught

The discourse on decolonization involves questioning not only the Western knowledge that shapes the curriculum in South African universities but also who conducts research and teaches it. The restructuring of the curriculum should embrace indigenous and alternative perspectives on the world.⁴⁹ In this regard, decolonization aims to bring forth marginalized knowledge and restructure the university's knowledge project from a different standpoint.⁵⁰ In the pursuit of an ontological project that reaffirms African identity, two tendencies emerge. The first tendency idealizes pre-modern societies and presents a static view of tradition. Makoni argues against the ahistorical representation of social life, emphasizing the rich cultural histories of indigenous peoples that have been impacted by European colonization.⁵¹ It is crucial to reintegrate these authentic histories into higher education curricula.

Ndofirepi, criticized the focus on global norms and competitiveness in international university rankings, questioning why African universities should strive for higher positions in rankings that prioritize commercialization.⁵² Ndofirepi suggested a return to knowledge that embodies African identity. Nkoane argues that the African experience is unique and should be communicated primarily by Africans themselves, rejecting the idea that experience can be transferred universally.⁵³ Essop warns against considering societal divisions as homogeneous in diverse knowledge systems, emphasizing the social origins of knowledge.⁵⁴ This perspective highlights two risks: social conservatism opposing tradition to modernity and racial essentialism replacing one dichotomy with another. Essop concludes by stating that addressing African challenges requires African solutions and recognizing that tradition is dynamic, evolving in response to changing social and economic contexts.⁵⁵

Epistemological Understandings (Research)

The discourse surrounding curriculum restructuring and decolonization raises important questions about the knowledge included in the curriculum of South African universities. It is not only a matter of whose knowledge shapes the curriculum, but also who conducts research on it and who teaches it.⁵⁶ In South Africa, higher education institutions (HEIs) should return to knowledge that acknowledges their Africanness.⁵⁷ The movement to decolonize the curriculum challenges the prevailing notions of knowledge that form the foundation of universities. Odora Hoppers, asserted that, critics often argue that academia, rooted in Cartesian dualism, separates knowledge from lived experience and heavily relies on scientism and Western rationality.⁵⁸ However, this perspective has come under scrutiny in the postcolonial era, which questions the assumptions underlying Western scientific paradigms. These paradigms are accused of promoting the superiority of empirical and detached ways of knowing, while disregarding non-Western ways of knowing and perpetuating the idea that

⁴⁷ Emmanuel Mgqwashu, "Universities Can't Decolonise the Curriculum without Defining It First," *The Conversation*, August 22, 2016, [https://theconversation.com/universities-cant-decolonise-the-curriculum-without-defining-it-first-63948#:~:text=If "curriculum" encompasses a broader,with the process of decolonisation.](https://theconversation.com/universities-cant-decolonise-the-curriculum-without-defining-it-first-63948#:~:text=If%20curriculum%20encompasses%20a%20broader,with%20the%20process%20of%20decolonisation)

⁴⁸ Boughey and McKenna, *Understanding Higher Education: Alternative Perspectives*; Le Grange, "Decolonising the University Curriculum: Leading Article."

⁴⁹ Joseph Mbembe, "Decolonizing the University: New Directions"; Kamanzi, "Decolonising the Curriculum – A Student Call in Context."

⁵⁰ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Why Are South African Universities Sites of Struggle Today?"

⁵¹ Makoni, "Urgent Need to Decolonise Intellectual Property Curricula."

⁵² Ndofirepi, "African Universities on a Global Ranking Scale: Legitimation of Knowledge Hierarchies?"

⁵³ Molebatsi Milton Nkoane, "The Africanisation of the University in Africa," *Alternation* 13, no. 1 (2006): 49–69.

⁵⁴ Ahmed Essop, "Decolonising Debate Is a Chance to Rethink the Role of Universities," *The Conversation*, 2016, [https://theconversation.com/decolonisation-debate-is-a-chance-to-rethink-the-role-of-universities-63840.](https://theconversation.com/decolonisation-debate-is-a-chance-to-rethink-the-role-of-universities-63840)

⁵⁵ Essop, "Decolonising Debate Is a Chance to Rethink the Role of Universities."

⁵⁶ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Why Are South African Universities Sites of Struggle Today?"

⁵⁷ Ndofirepi, "African Universities on a Global Ranking Scale: Legitimation of Knowledge Hierarchies?"

⁵⁸ Catherine Odora Hoppers, "Research on Indigenous Knowledge Systems: The Search for Cognitive Justice," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 40, no. 4 (2021): 310–27.

African subjectivity is in a perpetual state of becoming rather than being. Scholars argue that Western (Eurocentric) epistemology has colonized African visions of the future by suppressing indigenous knowledge systems.⁵⁹ The privilege of Western knowledge systems in universities is a sentiment echoed in various other contexts. For example, in a paper on Decolonizing Pacific Studies, Muswede builds upon the arguments of Fanon and Said, emphasizing that decolonizing formal education requires embracing indigenous and alternative perspectives in order to truly understand the world.⁶⁰

By decolonizing the curriculum, marginalized knowledge is unearthed and the university's pursuit of knowledge is reconfigured from an alternative perspective. The discourse of decolonization curriculum in South African HEIs is influenced by postcolonial studies, which empower oppressed groups and classes. According to Boughey and McKenna, this discourse, which is influenced by French poststructuralism and postmodernism (Spivak, Said, Bhabha) as cited in Sawant, has primarily developed in South Asia.⁶¹ Recent South African works on curriculum decolonization appear to be influenced by the Marxist dependency theory-based Latin American decoloniality theory.⁶² Both schools expand on Fanon's theories by highlighting subjectivity battles, inaccurate portrayals, the adoption of Euro-American epistemologies, exploitation, and dispossession. According to Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, the decolonial epistemic viewpoint aims to create new conceptual frameworks, subjectivities, and modes of being and becoming.⁶³ Decoloniality theory also emphasizes the existence of colonial power and control outside of direct colonial administrations, even as postmodernism, postcolonialism, and similar movements reject dominant Western discourses in favor of amplifying marginalized voices.⁶⁴

As described by Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "coloniality of knowledge" describes how Euro-American technoscience displaces, disciplines, and destroys alternative knowledge and appropriates useful elements for global imperialism.⁶⁵ Ngugi wa Thiong'o popularized colonial languages in his post-colonial novels and essays as a means of perpetuating subjugation through the colonization of the mind. Latin American decolonial theorists, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, expose "coloniality" as a global structure of power affecting knowledge and modern human life. They reintroduce decolonization/decoloniality as a diverse set of positions that identify coloniality as a fundamental problem in the modern, postmodern, and information age.⁶⁶ They reintroduce decolonization/decoloniality as a diverse set of positions that identify coloniality as a fundamental problem in the modern, postmodern, and information age.⁶⁷ In this argument, the decolonization project of the 1960s in Africa failed to establish genuinely African universities but instead altered the demographics of participants while maintaining a Eurocentric epistemology, merely adding African experiences and agency to existing disciplines.⁶⁸ From this perspective, knowledge is inseparable from the essence of the university as an institution. Therefore, in this interpretation, the curriculum encompasses the entirety of the institution's identity, nature, values, orientation, and contextual reality. Decolonizing the curriculum, in turn, involves a fundamental transformation of the university as an institution and, on a broader scale, a shift in the existing global power structures of knowledge.⁶⁹

According to Gatsheni-Ndlovu, student protests in South Africa aim to decolonize universities and embrace African principles inspired by Steve Biko and Franz Fanon. The students criticize the European, anti-black, racist, and patriarchal institutional cultures and seek a shift in the university's nature and connection to colonialism. Kamanzi raises concerns about whether South African universities address the country's social inequality and provide spaces for critical analysis and research on societal contradictions.⁷⁰ Makoni sees

⁵⁹ Ndofirepi, "African Universities on a Global Ranking Scale: Legitimation of Knowledge Hierarchies?"; Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Global Coloniality and the Challenges of Creating African Futures," *The Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 36, no. 2 (2014).

⁶⁰ T Muswede, "Colonial Legacies and the Decolonisation Discourse in Post-Apartheid South Africa-a Reflective Analysis of Student Activism in Higher Education," *African Journal of Public Affairs* 9, no. 5 (2017): 200–210; Frantz Fanon, "Black Skin, White Masks Grove Press," *New York*, 1967; Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient* (Pantheon: New York, 1978).

⁶¹ Boughey and McKenna, *Understanding Higher Education: Alternative Perspectives*; Datta G Sawant, "Perspectives on Postcolonial Theory: Said, Spivak and Bhabha," *Literary Endeavor* 2 (2011): 129–35.

⁶² Ramón Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (2007): 211–23.

⁶³ Nontyatyambo Pearl Dastile and Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Power, Knowledge and Being: Decolonial Combative Discourse as a Survival Kit for Pan-Africanists in the 21st Century," *Alternation* 20, no. 1 (2013): 105–34.

⁶⁴ Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms."

⁶⁵ Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Power, Knowledge and Being: Decolonial Combative Discourse as a Survival Kit for Pan-Africanists in the 21st Century," 110.

⁶⁶ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Why Are South African Universities Sites of Struggle Today?"

⁶⁷ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Why Are South African Universities Sites of Struggle Today?"

⁶⁸ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Why Are South African Universities Sites of Struggle Today?"

⁶⁹ Mgqwashu, "Universities Can't Decolonise the Curriculum without Defining It First."

⁷⁰ Kamanzi, "Decolonising the Curriculum – A Student Call in Context."

decolonization as a way to challenge dominant perspectives and dispel the myth of African inferiority, ultimately shaping an entire way of being.⁷¹

Contemporary Curriculum Development (CCD) is a curriculum development initiative that emphasizes four key areas: modifying the curriculum for students and the method by which it is delivered, along with the knowledge thus taught and epistemological understandings from the research conducted, represents a significant shift in the nature and identity of university curricula, marking the end of the colonial legacy.

New Model Contemporary Curriculum Development (CCD)

This is a pedagogy shift from a traditional model to a new approach which is a contemporary curriculum development (CCD), the modernised type of curriculum dissemination. In this model tons of books, heavy and time consuming, also expensive to purchase are exchanged for mobile, portable easy to handle and use gadgets.

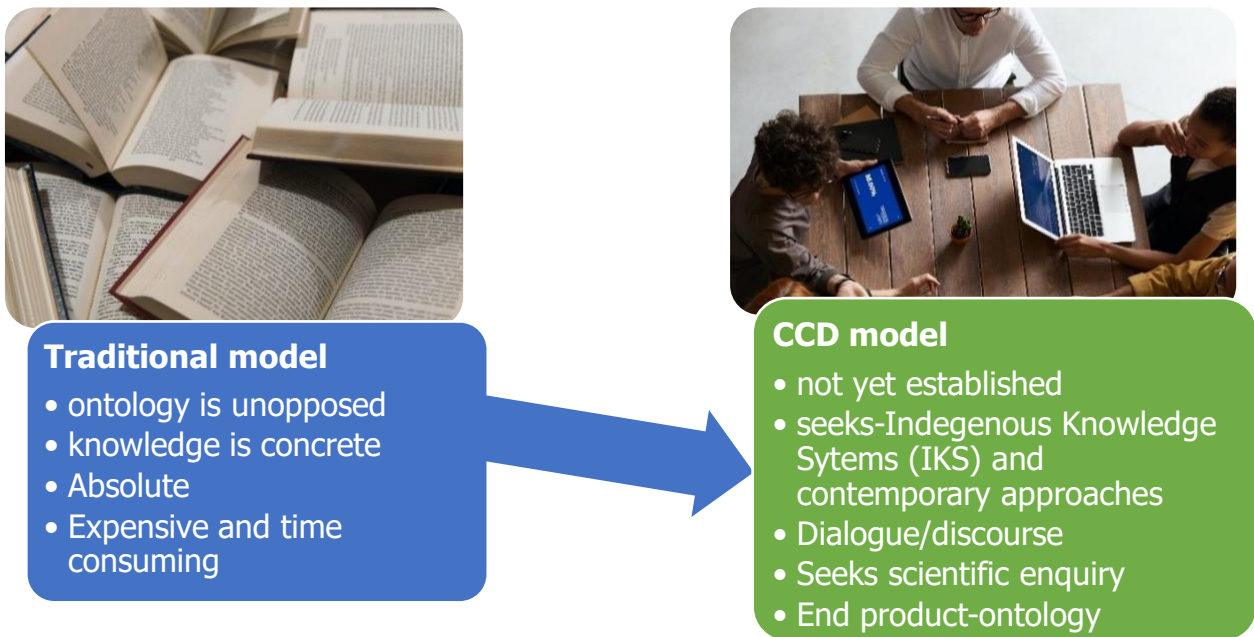


Figure.1: Contemporary curriculum development

The use of these gadgets allows for use anywhere as they are easily carried and they normally fit in a small size bag or carry case.⁷² On the other hand, with the traditional way, carrying loads of books that address the same subject content becomes a hassle, as shown in the picture above. This model highlights the significance of incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into curricula for higher education. Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), which include the customs, practices, and worldviews of distinct indigenous tribes, have a great historical, cultural, and economic significance in South Africa. Manathunga avowed that IKS are incorporated into curricula for higher education to encourage holistic learning, rectify historical injustices, and boost cultural diversity.⁷³ As a result, institutions can support the preservation of cultural heritage, redress historical injustices, promote sustainable practices, and enable students to learn to interact deliberately and respectfully with a variety of knowledge systems.⁷⁴ This integration improves South African education not only by recognizing the past but also by making investments in a future that is more diverse and inclusive. Through the integration with IKS and Contemporary Curriculum Development (CCD), South African Higher Education Institutions play a pivotal role in Curriculum Restructuring. Integrating IKS with technology allows for HEIs to acknowledge that past knowledge is still relevant today.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Makoni, "Urgent Need to Decolonise Intellectual Property Curricula."

⁷² Santos, "Google Classroom: Beyond The Traditional Setting."

⁷³ Manathunga, "Decolonising Higher Education: Creating Space for Southern Knowledge Systems."

⁷⁴ Odora Hoppers, "Research on Indigenous Knowledge Systems: The Search for Cognitive Justice."

⁷⁵ Mark Coeckelbergh, "The Postdigital in Pandemic Times: A Comment on the Covid-19 Crisis and Its Political Epistemologies," *Postdigital Science and Education* 2 (2020): 547–50; Mgwashu, "Universities Can't Decolonise the Curriculum without Defining It First."

From the Valedictory Point of View

The student protests that began in 2015 have sparked a renewed interest in transforming and decolonizing university curricula.⁷⁶ Various responses, including those from the Minister of Higher Education and Training, have emerged in support of decolonizing universities. These responses are long overdue, as the organization and content of academic institutions, including their curricula, have remained largely unchanged and unchallenged since the post-apartheid era. In his book "Violence," Slovenian philosopher Žižek tells a tale of a worker who was thought to have committed a theft.⁷⁷ Every evening, his wheelbarrow was thoroughly searched, but nothing was discovered. It was eventually discovered that the employee was stealing the wheelbarrows directly. This narrative is meant to illustrate how frequently scholars concentrate on the subjects of their research without considering the carriers of those subjects. While this work views the curriculum as a carrier of colonialism, Žižek, in agreement with Nqabeni and Buka, sees language as a carrier of violence.⁷⁸ The concept of curriculum, in particular its prevalent conception, needs to be reevaluated, according to the writers. They explored the meaning and significance of decolonization, the reasons behind the need for decolonization, the importance of rethinking the curriculum, and possible approaches to decolonizing it. These suggested strategies are not exclusive of one another. The writers add to a crucial and continuing discussion while also recognizing that there is still more to be said. Their goal is to inspire a change in the transformation of university curricula rather than to offer straightforward solutions to difficult challenges.⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

A full discussion is necessary when discussing curriculum restructuring at South African HEIs. Decolonization and curriculum reform, in the author's opinion, have led to misgivings and concerns about issues like parochialism and declining quality at South African universities and institutions of higher learning. The quantity and quality of graduates are the main repercussions of economic underfunding on South Africa's higher education system. The author also draws attention to the limitations imposed by a neoliberal environment that commercializes education in addition to the political dimension, where students express resentment and a sense of betrayal over the unfulfilled promises of social justice and equity in the post-apartheid era. In a setting of uneven social connections, the scholar underlines how closely curriculum is tied to profound concerns of values, epistemology, ontology, and knowledge production. This paper raises some fundamental concerns about decolonizing the curriculum, drawing on Badat's work that emphasizes that ontology should be the determining factor. Therefore, the author advocates for a new model called Contemporary Curriculum Development (CCD), which proposes that South African universities restructure their curricula to address the country's identity and advance its ambitions.

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⁷⁶ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Why Are South African Universities Sites of Struggle Today?"

⁷⁷ Geoff Boucher, "Slavoj Žižek, Violence" (Taylor & Francis, 2009).

⁷⁸ Nqabeni and Buka, "Post Covid-19: Exploring the Decolonisation Factor in a Mathematics Classroom in South African Schools."

⁷⁹ Nqabeni and Buka, "Post Covid-19: Exploring the Decolonisation Factor in a Mathematics Classroom in South African Schools."

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ABOUT AUTHOR

Nozuko Nqabeni is a Part-time Lecturer at Walter Sisulu University in the Department of Adult Foundation Phase and Educational Foundations, Faculty of Educational Sciences. She is currently enrolled for a PhD in Mathematics Education with the University of the Free State, South Africa.