A Rich Linguistic and Cultural Heritage: African Folktales as Transformative Agents in our Curricula

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Abstract

Much of what is taken for education in Africa is not African, but rather a reflection of Europe in Africa. Our curriculum is a site where the English language is sacralised, and the internalisation of bourgeois European values in our curricula is interpreted as an index of progress. This study eclectically draws on decolonising scholarship to critique a curriculum that continues to perpetuate stereotypical and patronising views of Africans. It challenges overt and covert Eurocentric assumptions and rationality that alienate and 'other' Africans by referencing the rich cultural and linguistic heritage of Africa. It strategically draws on African folktales, aphorisms, and praise poetry that have been excluded from the curriculum by colonial and apartheid malfeasance. This study argues that this African corpus has profound and liberating pedagogical utility. Moreover, it provides a space in which Africans experiences of the social world are validated and in which Africans may recognise themselves. This study postulates that there is a plethora of African folktales, dirges, lullabies and other creative works that are transformative, speak to African ways of knowing and embody an ideology that honours and is progressive of the African psyche. Finally, this study adroitly rebuffs Eurocentric prejudices and fallacious assumptions that the linguistic heritage of Africans is not worth knowing. It does this by persuasively demonstrating that African aesthetics, philosophies and cultural artefacts should contest western capitalistic individualism and serve as powerful transformative agents in our curricula that motivate an inclusive, thoughtful, equitable and dignified existence**.**

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Introduction

In February 1960, British Prime Minister Harold McMillan had signalled the end of empire in a speech delivered to the white only arliament of South Africa, which was then, still a British dominion. 'The wind of change is blowing through this continent', he solemnly observed, 'And whether we like it or not this growth of national consciousness is a political fact' (Christie 2020: 197). McMillan also voiced his concern that the 'achievements of western civilisation' – the 'freedom, order and justice' of its way of life – would be cast aside by nationalist movements seeking to rupture ties with their colonisers fact' (Christie 2020: 197). At the same time as McMillan's valedictory to empire, Franz Fanon published his excoriating critique of colonialism in *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004) writing in Algeria, at the other end of Africa. Fanon declared in no uncertain terms that colonised peoples experienced 'western civilisation' in quite different terms to the 'freedom, order and justice' set out by McMillan (2004).

In the super exploitative relations that characterised colonial rule, indigenous people's experience was of violence and forced labour; their natural resources plundered and pillaged; their land and property dispossessed, their histories trampled into ignominy, their social world reduced to the experience of abject and institutionalised racism and a collective brutalisation of their humanity. In fact, what was trumped as 'freedom, order and justice' was bitter irony feeding on the intellectual, political and economic oppression that comes with mercantilism- a policy that ensured the wholesale plunder of resources and the exploitation of indigenous labour for the accumulation of wealth by its colonial masters. Colonialism did more than exact tribute, goods and wealth from the conquered countries; it restructured its economies, including its education and political systems, to facilitate and perpetuate plunder (Loomba 2015). This legacy of crass underdevelopment persists as The World Inequality Report (Alvaredo *et al.* 2018: 149) notes that South Africa is not only one of the most unequal countries in the world but also that inequality has increased significantly since 1994, albeit, with the advent of democracy.

The genesis of this appalling inequity lies in a confluence of factors that manifest in the aftermath of colonialism, chief of which was the spatial and social engineering of apartheid and the Bantu education policies designed to confine blacks to unskilled and semi-skilled jobs and thwart the aspirations of the majority of its citizens. Sadly, the democratically elected African National Congress, in over twenty years of power, has not taken the country much further as infrastructure, its economy, educational, social and health institutions languish in various states of decline. This as the burdens of poverty and unemployment continue to be skewed towards black people; 'race' has certainly not disappeared as the major predictor of social and schooling outcomes; African languages are still subordinate to English in the school curriculum; the schooling system systematically fails the majority of students (who are black); and the racial geography of apartheid remains all too evident in practices of daily life including schooling (Christie 2020: 4). Students are faced with a curriculum that privileges Eurocentric thought and rationality. Indeed, Teffo (2000), Vilakazi (2002), and Seepe (2001) make the point that much of what is taken for education in Africa is in fact not African, but rather a reflection of Europe in Africa. Our curriculum is a site where the English language is sacralised, and the internalisation of bourgeois European values is interpreted as an index of progress (Sheik 2020: 10).

How then do we replace Eurocentric hegemony in a curriculum designed to reproduce western epistemologies and in which the majority of our students are poor, black and rural? What strategies can we avail to redress deep, persistent and historic inequalities? With this in mind, the focus of this study is on how we may use African folktales as a resource to address the inequities in the South African educational system. This also assumes a corresponding call to reimagine the language curricula in schools with a social mandate advocating an Afrocentric corpus that recognises and validates the experiences and aspirations of its black majority. The latter statement is too often glossed over and requires deeper analysis considering that almost all of the poorly performing schools are black schools in rural areas and townships. The issues at hand are as follows: what are the reasons for these persistent poor performances that prevent most rural children from accessing tertiary education and entering the job market? Why have not post apartheid educational policies, aimed at achieving redress and equity, failed so dismally?

One of the reasons from a complex of factors is elaborated in Pam Christie's (2020: 113) seminal study, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa: the Impossible Dream?* Citing Bourdieu as follows:

> In fact, to penalize the underprivileged and favour the most privileged, the school has only to neglect, in its teaching methods and techniques and its criteria when making academic judgements, to take into account the cultural inequalities between children of different social classes. In other words, by treating all pupils, however unequal they may be in reality, as equal in rights and duties, the educational system is led to give its de facto sanction to initial cultural inequalities.

Christie points out the gloss and fallacy of 'equal education' in an economically and linguistically diverse polity that constitutes South African schools. Referencing township argot, 'same, same but different' (2020: 19) she points out how cultural and economic inequities cannot be addressed by treating all students the same. This merely perpetuates existing inequalities. As Christie avers:

> The structure of the current system limits its capacity to redress past injustices and to produce equal experiences and outcomes for all students. The implicit assumption that all public schools will be able, with sufficient effort and 'quality control' improvement measures, to progress towards providing the same quality of education as that provided in the well-performing and well-resourced parts of the system is not realistic. It is a myth of progress which distracts from the important tasks of repair and rebuilding at the moment of decolonial change (2020: 203).

Fleish, in his study, *Primary education in crisis: Why South African schoolchildren underachieve in reading and mathematics*, corroborates this view, by pointing out that the structural inequalities manifest in the educational system today in that there are effectively two education systems within one in South Africa. The difference between the two systems is rooted in the historically separate administration of education for each race group. The majority of South Africa's students (80% – 85%) are located in the

historically disadvantaged system and demonstrate very low proficiency in reading, writing and numeracy. The second system produces educational achievement that is closer to what would be expected in the developed world. This system serves mainly white and Indian children, and a growing number of black and coloured middle-class children. The vast majority of university entrants are produced by this second group (2008).

I argue that one way to complement the measures required to address these inequities is to effect changes in the curriculum, which remains largely Eurocentric and continues to perpetuate white and Western dominance and privilege while at the same time disseminating stereotypes, overt and covert prejudices and patronising views about Africa and Africans (Sheik 2020: 4). Additionally, African epistemologies are rendered invisible and inferior in comparison to Eurocentric, capitalistic modes of learning and knowing. My resource of choice for this enterprise is the rich tapestry of oral wisdom manifest in folktales that speak of African triumphs and foibles, African angst and perspectives, embedded in an African landscape with African protagonists and African ways of knowing. Moreover, these narratives are one in which African students may recognise themselves and relate to the values, social relations and cultural preoccupations ventilated in these tales. In addition, I use a comparative strategy elucidating selected colonial discourses which are deconstructed against contemporary African scholarship. My rationale for these choices resides in the conviction that drawing upon the rich cultural heritage and episteme of African folklore and critiquing the pejorative representations manifest in colonial narratives will foreground African epistemologies in which African students are afforded the opportunity to learn about the wealth of knowledge and sustainable wisdom generated by their own home communities and that figure as ancestral wisdom.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study that uses secondary sources (selected African folktales) as a basis for motivating their inclusion in the school curriculum. The study is situated in a critical paradigm that enables the researcher to practice 'deep democracy' which involves identifying and transforming socially unjust social structures, policies, beliefs and practices. Its primary purpose is to identify, contest and help resolve 'gross power imbalances' in

society that contribute to systemic inequalities and injustices (Taylor & Medina 2013). Data was harvested from peer reviewed journal articles, books and online resources. The criterion for selection of data was whether the data best exemplified the aims of this study (i.e. shed light on educational inequity in South Africa, are insightful studies on decolonization and education in Africa as well as African folklore which may have pedagogical utility in an Afrocentric curriculum). I began with what Carvalho (2008) calls an 'open-ended reading' to 'help identify significant debates, controversies, and silences, and possibly to suggest specifications and amendments to initial research goals and questions' (p.166). In addition, I often returned to my research aims and modified them until I was satisfied that the corpus collected could provide credible answers in sync with my own reflection and critical judgement.

Decolonisation

The reader is guided to a detailed discussion of decolonisation is to be found in Dane Keith Kennedy (2016), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007; 2017), Walter D. Mignolo (2000; 2011) and Achille Mbembe (2001; 2007), which is beyond the purview and constraints of this study.

Le Grange (as cited in Jansen 2021: 31), has some prescient insights into a negative definition of decolonisation which are pertinent to this study:

1. There is no single meaning to decolonisation
2. Decolonisation does not mean or involve destruction
3. Decolonisation is a process- not an event
4. Decolonisation does not necessarily mean turning back the clock to a primordial past - it needs to speak to challenges faced in a contemporary world.

For the purpose of this study, the theoretical constructs of decolonisation explained in Bagele Chilisa's study, *Indigenous Research Methodologies* (2012) and extrapolated from Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), who identifies the following elements of decolonisation, are recruited. The first element is *deconstruction and reconstruction* and involves interrogating what has been wrongly written by way of pathologizing interpretations of others, negative labelling and subscribing to culturally deficit models. This is followed by

retelling the stories of the past and envisioning the future- which I aim to contribute to by a discussion of folklore that will ensue. The next tenet is *self- determination and justice*, which relates to the struggle of those who have been marginalised by the western academy and who are seeking legitimacy for knowledge embedded in their own histories, experiences and ways of viewing reality. *Ethics* refers to the formulation, legislation and dissemination of ethical issues related to the protection of indigenous knowledge systems. *Language* refers to the importance of teaching and learning in the indigenous language. *Internationalisation of indigenous experience* refers to the internationalisation of indigenous experience by scholars sharing the struggles and issues of colonised people in global and local spaces. *History* refers to recovering the history, culture and languages of colonised people and to use it to inform the present. Finally, *Critique* refers to a critical appraisal of the imperial model of the academy that continues to deny the colonised and historically marginalised 'other' to communicate from their own frames of reference (Chilesa 2012: 19).

Decolonisation and Equity in Education in South Africa

For Ngugi wa Thiongo, the starting point of decolonisation is language, not geo-politics. Consequently, relevance must be strived for before excellence (Christie 2021: 212). Linguistic decolonisation must take cognisance of the fact that colonial languages were granted official statuses, developing then into status languages of popular culture, teaching and learning as well as that of scientific reasoning. Correspondingly, indigenous languages were relegated to a folkloric condition due to a lack of recognition and resources, shut out from high culture, law, learning and government (Christie 2021: 212).

Heleta argues for the end of domination by 'white, male, Western, capitalist, heterosexual, European worldviews' in education and the incorporation of other South African, African and global 'perspectives, experiences and epistemologies' (2016: 1). This would grant space for an African paradigm of ways of knowing and communal responsibility to gradually take root in the face of Western individualistic, capitalistic practices (Sheik 2020: 3).

Through the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) and South African Schools Act (SASA), racially based departments were dissolved and

replaced with national and provincial departments; a strongly decentralised form of school-based management was introduced; and a different funding model was put in place, introducing fees to supplement state allocations. In addition, provision was made for a relatively small portion of the budget to be allocated on equity principles. However, it is patently clear that the stated goals of 'redressing past injustices in educational provision' and 'providing an education progressively high in quality for all' (as set out in the Preamble to the South African Schools Act) have not been met (Christie 2020: 201). Though the Constitution had declared education a basic right and outlawed discrimination on the basis of race, this did not manifest as equity in the provision of education.

I posit that decolonisation of education in South Africa would have to recognise and implement strategies to accommodate the rich linguistic diversity in our schools. Additionally, the Eurocentric bias in the curriculum is uncritically accepted as a norm to aspire to- discounting the thought that there are other ways of mediating knowledge- ways that take into account the inequities and cultural predilections of South African students. I will now demonstrate this by referencing aspects of African Folklore by way of example.

The Pedagogical Utility of African Folklore

Storytelling is a way of codifying truths and dramatizing the rationale behind traditions and social relations. It embodies the inherited wisdom (social, personal and moral) of the people whose world we see through the filter of folklore (Abrahams 1986). Under the imperial sway of colonialism, the curriculum has been 'whitewashed' to reflect Eurocentric bias that privilege European values, epistemologies and taste, whilst surreptitiously consigning African narratives to the margins, with the added stigma of barbarism, paganism, witchcraft and as being unfit for cognitive engagement and without an aesthetic design of note, the classic malaise of 'othering'. Linda Tuhiwa Smith's theoretical tenet of *deconstruction* and *reconstruction* may be productively deployed here. Firstly, in deconstructing the ill-founded myths of aesthetic paucity and inferiority. Secondly by retelling African narratives that serve their intended purposes i.e. provide entertainment, communicate cultural and community wisdom and foreground the ethnic values, morals, histories, aesthetics and identity of a community.

African orature constitutes a rich cultural reference that is communal in nature, meant for performance (including dancing, acrobatics, responses from the audience and music). In fact, oral traditions in pre-literate Africa served not only as sociological tools for enculturation but also as a people's artistic expressions and memoirs. For example, folktales were a people's record of the collective ideology, while riddles, proverbs, and other short forms of oral literary production reflected both linguistic and cultural aesthetics (Akinyemi and Falola 2021: 32).

I will now look at two aspects as imperative to the realisation of equity in education from a linguistic and cultural perspective. I contend that a necessary pretext for equity is to challenge colonial overwriting and distortion of African cultural practices and knowledge systems. I do this by looking at the isiZulu/isiXhosa praise poem and analyse its literary representation by Charles Dickens (the much vaunted literary doyen of colonial ambition and profligate in our school and university curricula , in fact a staple diet of South African education) against the insights offered by Jeff Opland, a renowned scholar of isiXhosa history. The selection of Dickens by way of illustration is purposeful as he is perhaps the most widely read of canonical literary texts in South African schools and universities.

The reductive, one dimensional view of the Xhosa Imbongi as a mere reciter and chanter of poems by Dickens warrants critique. As a pretext for a decolonial reading I would suggest referencing Dicken's diatribe on witnessing a display of scenes from Zulu life by a group of performers at the St George's Gallery, Hyde Park Corner, London, in 1853. Note the description of the *imbongi*:

> The chief has sometimes the condescension to come forth .... But lest the great man should forget his greatness ... there suddenly rushes in a poet, retained for the purpose, called a Praiser. This literary gentleman wears a leopard's head over his own, and a dress of tigers' tails; he has the appearance of having come express on his hind legs from the Zoological gardens; and he incontinently strikes up the chief's praises, plunging and tearing all the while. There is a frantic wickedness in this brute's manner of worrying the air, and gnashing out: '0 what a delightful chief he is! 0 what a delicious quantity of blood he sheds! 0 how majestically he laps it up! 0 how charmingly cruel he is! 0 how he tears the flesh of his enemies and crunches the

> bones! 0 how like the tiger and the leopard and the wolf and the bear he is! 0, row row row row, how fond I am of him!' (1853: 338-339)

Jeff Opland, offers a contesting, more scholarly and informed view. Opland points out that the *imbongi* is also the custodian of public opinion about the state of affairs and the exercise of authority by the powers that be:

> He can be seen, therefore, as an important mediator between chief and commoner. His ability to arouse emotions was especially noticeable in times of war, when he inspired the warriors to acts of bravery. By constant reference in his izibongo to the chief's genealogy and the history of the group, he not only acted as an ethnic history book but also moulded communal solidarity. At tense moments, he could make people laugh, but he was not a buffoon: his office was too dignified. Herald, spokesman, mediator, historian, entertainer – all these were elements in the complex role of the imbongi in tribal life; overriding all was the peculiar ability of the good imbongi to arouse intense emotions in his audience, especially pride, loyalty and bravery. All this made the imbongi an important personage in rural life .... He was a highly respected figure whose opinion was valued. Indeed, he could not rise to become an imbongi if his opinions were not acceptable or cogent, for the imbongi was committed to speaking the truth as he saw it. Other qualities that were desirable were fluency, eloquence, socio-historical knowledge, and the ability to inspire (Opland 1998: 17).

Students could be asked to tease out the misconceptions as to the nature and function of the izibongo, alongside the manichean allegory evident in this text. Amongst the earliest first-hand accounts of the performance of Zulu praise poetry in South African history was by the American missionary, Reverent George Champion who visited the court of the Zulu king, Dingane. Amongst his records of the meeting is the following observation:

> A man stood not far from the great houses full of praise, shouting at the top of his voice and calling Dingan, the elephant's calf, the black one, the conqueror of all the lands &c. We waited a little for the monarch to hear his flattery, and at length the servant whose post is

at the gate told us he wanted to see us (1967: 90 - 91).

In these lines Champion describes one of the most important cultural and political institutions of Zulu society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the praise poetry of the king or chief (Brown 1995: 66). Despite his detached and somewhat condescending tone - he dismisses the izibongo as mere 'flattery'. This is another instance of Eurocentric pretentiousness overwriting African cultural practices. This form of praise singing is highly complex and is regarded with great seriousness by king and subjects alike. The izibongo was in fact an act of rhetoric with the capacity to persuade, to mobilise, or to negotiate relations of power (Brown 1995: 66). It was also a conscious effort by the imbongi to strive for an evocative, emotive and memorable use of language- this dimension has added significance when one considers the euphonic nature of isiZulu and the dynamic impression it would create in performance. Students may be prompted to analyse the rhetoric of the izibongo along these lines by drawing upon their bilingual dexterity. This act would also signify that isiZulu is a status language with an equivalence to English. It would also exemplify Smith's theoretical tenet (outlined earlier) of decolonisation in the domain of language, which emphasises the importance of teaching and learning in the indigenous languages as a precondition for educational equity.

Champion's record is certainly useful in teaching the izibongo. It would be instructive to critique Champion's dismissal of the izibongo as 'flattery' by asking students to develop counter arguments in a transdisciplinary response. Given our apartheid history, it would also be instructive to draw to students attention as to how the colour, black was valorised and considered praiseworthy by no less a figure than the great king, Dingane himself. Compare this to popular culture where millions of rands are spent each year by blacks aspiring to be the proverbial 'Snow White' – a standard of western aesthetic for beauty which has drowned out African aesthetics. This tells you how far Eurocentric hegemony has replaced African sensibilities, so much so that the hapless African is driven to what Franz Fanon (see *The Wretched of the Earth 20*04) decries as self-hate and misrecognition, imbibing a culture which casts him as inferior and in perpetual adulation of 'whiteness' in all its political, cultural and social manifestations. This is also illustrative of how our curricula, including our aesthetic, cultural and educational predilections, have been 'whitewashed'

by Eurocentric determination.

Champion's colonial interpretation and representation seriously injures and undermines the complex role of the *imbongi*. This stands out as just a single example of Eurocentric fallacy in representing significant cultural tenets of African ritual and traditional practice. It validate a call for Africans rewriting their own histories using African ways of knowing which would uncover an entirely different dynamic beneath colonial malfeasance. This rewriting of the African past, in both its historical and literary manifestations, is as Smith points out, a necessary step of deconstruction and reconstruction of our knowledge base. I contend that equity can never be realized as long as pathologizing, stereotypical, reductive and derogatory interpretations of Africans and the lore that constructs them go unchallenged. It is indeed a necessary pretext for what Linda Tuhiwai Smith's precept of decolonisation references as the need for a sense of self determination and social justice for those who have been politically and intellectually colonised – these requirements that cannot be compromised if we are to achieve equity in education that is free from prejudice, European narcissism and stereotyping.

I will now focus on the African dilemma tale and expound on its rich pedagogical utility in an Afrocentric curriculum. The African dilemma tales constitute a large, diverse and fairly widespread sub genre of folktales in Africa. Goldberg (1997) points out that these tales were much more popular in Africa than in Europe. In fact, Thomas claims that in many tribes in Africa 'they were taken seriously and considered a highly prized form of intellectual activity' (cited in Knappert 1973). These tales are a rich cultural repository and integral to the function of moral and ethical pedagogy in African societies. It also constitutes an insightful expose of the African social world, its cultural norms and expectations and codifies the values, mores, myths and legends that validate identity and a healthy, progressive perception of self and community.

An interesting feature that invites pedagogical engagement is the resolution of the dilemma tale. The ending is either morally ambiguous or invites conjecture as to the correct course of action that is required. As Bascom explains, the end is not quite…the end. The adventure is finished but it is the audience that gives the conclusion. The end is an enigma to resolve (1975). Berry (1961), quite aptly, calls them unfinished tales. Thomas (1958), observed in the Dyola country the fairly widespread existence of the dilemma tales, or 'tales of conscience' as he called them. These tales were

mostly shared in the evenings and during siestas in the dry season and a spark for indeterminable palavers between young and old, each expounding the argument which in his opinion ought to triumph. They permit the confrontation of multiple points of view and a sharpening of a critical sense.

Bascom describes the dilemma tale as one which presents the listeners with a choice between alternatives, such as which character deserves a reward, or which is the best. The choices are difficult ones and usually involve discrimination on ethical, moral or legal grounds. Sometimes they have a correct answer but often they do not. Usually, the narrator ends his tale with an unresolved question, often explicitly stated, to be debated by the audience. Typical issues raised involve conflicts of loyalty, the necessity to choose a just response to a difficult situation, and the question of where to lay the blame when several parties seem equally guilty. Other dilemma tales, which border on tall tales, ask the listener to judge the relative skills of characters who have performed incredible feats (Bascom 1972, 143).

The following is a dilemma tale from the Swahili:

> Lion and bushbuck, working on alternate days, built the same house, and when it was finished, both claimed it. Which owned the house? (Bascom 1972: 80)

A similar dilemma of choice hails from the Kono, a Mande ethnic group in Sierra Leone:

> A man was traveling with his wife, his mother, and his mother in law. When they were crossing a river, a large crocodile stopped their canoe and climbed in with them. He said that he would let the man go, but he must first give it one of the three women. What would you do? (Bascom 1972: 93).

Variations of this tale are to be found across the African continent. In the Bété tale, for example, the narrator weighs the costs associated with different courses of action:

> If you save your sister and leave your wife to drown, you must give bride-wealth again [i.e., incur significant expense to acquire a new wife] or labola in isiZulu parlance. If you save your wife and

> abandon your sister, your parents overwhelm you with reproaches. But if you choose to save your mother-in-law, you are an idiot (Bascom 1972: 93).

Our final tale is from the Pygmy, a group native to the Congo Basin:

> A man went to bring his friend's wife back from his mother's village, as his friend had been bitten by a snake. On the way home the woman was attacked by a leopard, which the man killed with his knife. She declared her love for him, saying her husband despised her because she had no child. The man refused her advances and had her lie beneath the leopard's body while he went to inform her husband. During the night she was terrified by the howls of the leopard's mate but she did not budge. The man reached home and told his friend that his wife as being eaten by a leopard. He rushed there and bare handed seized the leopard by the throat. His wife explained that the leopard had been killed and she just wanted to see if her husband loved her. Her husband made a charm with the leopard's mustache and his wife bore many children. Now, who was the bravest? The man who killed the leopard with only a knife? The wife who stayed alone under a leopard in the black of night? Or the husband who threw himself barehanded on the leopard? (Bascom 1982: 107).

This stylistic feature of these narratives stimulates participatory learning as students are creatively involved in the co-construction of knowledge and exposed to diverse perspectives and ideas. Other pedagogical assets that are stimulated include having an open mind, active listening and the development of persuasive rhetoric in argument. Too often in our teaching regime teachers succumb to prescriptive teaching, which tells students 'this is the way things are' or 'this is the correct answer'. Not only does this expose a tyrannical, myopic power relationship between the teacher and the students, but it also shuts out alternative thinking and reflection. In contrast, the dilemma tale invites a critical scrutiny of ideas and values and is much more consonant with developing critical thinking. The tales involve moral, ethical and philosophical reasoning. They demand marshalling of evidence in support of a claim and require rhetorical skills of persuading an audience (Sheik 2020: 8)

In addition, the African dilemma tale advances the development of interpersonal skills and provides an opportunity for peer to peer intellectual exchanges. Embedded within a multicultural framework, these tales provide insight into African narratives, values, beliefs and perspectives consigned to the margins in Eurocentric hegemony. It establishes a platform with which students may acquire new perspectives about themselves, their culture, and the culture of others, while engaging with their cultural heritage and multiple points of view in a positive, entertaining and thoughtful manner.

Conclusion

This study has pointed out just two possibilities in rewriting our own epistemological foundations and as a gateway to what Le Grange calls 'cognitive justice'. 'Cognitive justice' refers to the decentring of all knowledges so that they can coexist and be equitably compared. Hierarchies are effaced so that no knowledge system is subjugated by another. It also gives legitimacy to the knowledge of the global South that have been reduced to culture by Eurocentric scholars (2021: 33).

It is not the intention of this study to create its own binary as in 'good' indigenous knowledge in opposition to 'bad' western knowledge. My ideas are consonant with George J. Sefa Dei (2000: 113) who points out that indigenous knowledge does not reside in 'pristine fashion' but are complexly entangled with other knowledge systems. Dei argues that bodies of knowledge constantly influence each other, demonstrating the dynamism of knowledge systems. (Le Grange 2021: 35). Having established this, it must be recognised that decolonisation of the curriculum is necessary if we are to achieve a semblance of equity. What we teach is uncritically reproducing Eurocentric hegemony as a normative standard to the exclusion of other ways of knowing. It must be realized that colonialism decimated indigenous knowledge and that the universality of western knowledge is an ideological illusion.

Finally, this study adroitly rebuffs Eurocentric prejudices and fallacious assumptions that the linguistic heritage of Africans is not worth knowing. It does this by persuasively demonstrating that African aesthetics, philosophies and cultural artefacts should contest western capitalistic individualism and serve as powerful transformative agents in our curricula that motivate an inclusive, thoughtful, equitable and dignified existence**.**

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