The Africanisation of the University in Africa

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1. Introduction
The debate on the Africanisation of Universities in Africa has been ongoing for several decades, but little has been done to implement theories that have emerged. One might ask whether the debate was unfounded and even mistaken and/ or whether its expectations are simply unrealistic and naïve when one considers the historical and institutionalised socio-political challenges it faces. However, if we consider that the scientific enterprise, including that in Europe, has a vested interest in what African Universities or Africa does with regard to this issue, then it appears that we need to address it at least for our own benefit and the benefit of the people of our continent. Another reason why we need to address it, is that the so-called postmodern condition has opened a space for people faced with the realities and the disappointments of the modern condition and its programmes, to engage the uncovering and legitimising and meaning giving narratives about themselves and their communities. Further, African Renaissance discourse, couched within critical emancipatory indicatives, has created a need or at least an expectation of Africa's resurgence, re-invigoration, and reclamation of its own identity. If these conditions provide possibilities for the re-emergence of this topic, then, from African perspective, there is an even more pressing reason, namely the continued influence and impact of colonising culture on Africa. This, more than any other reason, calls for the re-invigorating of Africa's intellectuals, and the production of knowledge which is relevant, effective and empowering for the people of the African continent, and more particularly, the immediate African societies the universities serve.

In order to engage this topic, this article first addresses the issues of the counter-discursive nature of the debate and what we mean when we talk about the Africanisation of the university. This is followed with a focus on elements within African Renaissance discourse impacting on our topic, and the commitment of the African intellectual.

2. The Nature of Afrocentric Education as a Counter-Discourse to Eurocentric Education

Afrocentric education seeks to foster in its learners an African consciousness and behavioural orientation which will optimize the positive expression of African learners' fundamental humanity and ability to contribute significantly to the total growth and development of the African community of which an African learner is a member. According to Makgoba (1998:49) Afrocentric education is a process or vehicle for defining, interpreting, promoting and transmitting African thought, philosophy, identity and culture. It encompasses an African mind-set that permeates all sectors in society as they are influenced by (an Africanised) education apparatus.

This said, however, and given the colonial past of the African continent, Afrocentric education has not materialised as yet. In order to pave the way for this to happen, education needs to address the challenge of creating a mind-set shift from a Eurocentric to an African paradigm. Ntuli (1999:186) has this to say about Eurocentrism:

> ... eurocentrism is a culturalist phenomenon in the sense that it assumes the existence of irreducibly distinct cultural invariants that shape the historical paths of different people. Eurocentrism is therefore anti-universalist, since it is not interested in seeking possible general laws of human evolution. [Yet] it does present itself as universalist, for it claims that imitation of the Western model by all peoples is the only solution to the challenges of our time.

Afro-centric education then cannot exist without recognising its counter discursive challenges. Since education systems in Africa are by definition influenced by their colonial past(s), they need to engage this reality head-on. This needs to be done as Leifer (1969:111) showed, by analysing eurocentric social power, among other subjects, as this still impacts on educational institutions in Africa, and continues to influence the lives of individuals and

societies in our continent. Following Ntuli, eurocentrism's 'universalist' claims need to be exposed as in fact 'anti-universalist'. Central to Afrocentric education, is then too, to conscientise Africans of the subconscious conditioning practices of Eurocentric education systems wthat make them to respond habitually and unconsciously to Eurocentric social cues, to Eurocentric authorities and social contexts (cf. Leifer 1969:111). For the African, Eurocentric consciousness as a dominant discourse is a state of unconsciousness representing itself as consciousness, and it is part and parcel of Afrocentric education to expose this reality for emancipatory purposes.

An emancipatory Afrocentric education system is a system that makes African peoples aware of how the various education institutions and practices on African soil which defines Eurocentric culture are utilized to control Africans' mind and behaviour and prevents them from developing the social skills and produces knowledge necessary for them to master their own destiny. Africanised education on the other hand maintains African awareness of the social order and rules by which culture evolves; fosters the understanding of African consciousness; facilitates a critical emancipatory approach to solve the problems of their lives; and produces the material and capacities for Africans to determine their own future(s) (Nkoane 2002: 5).

In addition, an Afrocentric education system can successfully counter the hegemonic dominant Eurocentric discourse by helping African peoples to reclaim their African consciousness, identity and social interest, by founding their consciousness and behaviour and accurate perception of, and respect for, reality, and to passionately foster their love of truth. It fosters a knowledge and acceptance of their African heritage and cultivates a dedicated passion to achieve and maintain conscious, and thoughtful commitment. Central is to cultivate their ability to first love themselves, to maintain affectionate relations and positive regard among themselves, to cultivate the achievement of a collective, cooperative, unifying consciousness and behavioural orientation and, encourage the ability to engage in productive pro-social, proactive, rather than counterproductive, self-defeating and reactionary activities (Leifer 1969: 118).

It is true that many African learners continue to be caught in the West's mirror of fascination. Here, Afrocentric education is of critical importance, since this affects the direction(s) Africa must negotiate. It involves the interrogation of cultures that impacted on African cultures with

the purpose of identifying elements which need exclusion or incorporation. Ntuli (1999:189) asserts that since African people have been interpolated into the Western ideological machinery, they need to decolonize their minds. To be able to do so we need to carry out a detailed analysis of who we are as a people determined by various ideologies. Since, as Ntuli says, Eurocentric dominant discourse has deployed its notion of education and/ or culture to shape our thought and control our minds as African people, this needs to be interrogated by African people. As is the case in all cultures, African culture will adapt, integrate but also exclude values and practices. In this way, Afrocentric education will be infused by African visions and interpretations that will provide the dynamism, evolution and adaptation that is so essential for survival and success of peoples of the world. What is true for peoples of other cultures of the globe is also true for people of African origin in the global village.

An Afrocentric education is not only dynamic with regard to its own roots and socio-political realities; it is also alert to how Eurocentric social agents, attempt to mould an African learner's behaviour to fit particular Eurocentric self-serving legal, moral, political, social, and economic systems. In distinction, it defines and designates certain states of levels of consciousness and forms of behaviour relative to the needs of Africans and imbues life goals and methods for achieving them through the cultivation of social meaning, purpose and creative power.

3. Africanisation of Universities: What do We Mean?

Considerable ink has flowed to define and/ or deal with the concept of the Africanisation of universities. This article only aims to highlight and condense a few of the challenges which have been identified.

It has been stated that the projected Africanisation has not come about as expected. Seepe (1998: 63) for instance says that Africanisation has, for some, caused much anguish and anger, while for others, it has generated much enthusiasm. For some opposed to it, it is a form of insolent and misjudged provocation – 'education is education' – while for those supporting it, it is a flag around which to rally. For yet others, it has generated confusion, anxiety and irritation. Such confusion, we are told, is derived from lack of clarity, coherence and detail on the definition and implications of Africanisation. The anxiety is derived from the images that

Africanisation evokes. The images, poignantly cover a whole spectrum of existence: in politics, it is military coups, and unstable governments; in economics it is poverty and famine; in development terms it is a total lack of education, campus trashing and poor scholarship; in health it is memories of mutilated bodies, witchcraft, diseases etc. (cf. Makgoba 1996a: 26). These images are precisely not what Africansation means.

Ramose (cf. Seepe 1998: 64) proposes the following definition of Africanisation, i.e. that it

> ... holds that the African experience in its totality is simultaneously the foundation and the source for the construction of all forms of knowledge. On this basis, it maintains that African experience is by definition non-transferable but nonetheless communicable. Accordingly, it is the African who is and must be the primary and principal communicator of the African experience. To try to replace the African in this position and role is to adhere to the untenable epistemological view that experience is by definition transferable. Clearly, Africanisation rejects this view. It holds that different foundations exist for the construction of pyramids of knowledge. It disclaims the view that any pyramid is by its very nature eminently superior to all the others. It is a serious quest for a radical and veritable change of paradigm so that the African may enter into genuine and critical dialogical encounter with other pyramids of knowledge. Africanisation is a conscious and deliberate assertion of nothing more or less than the right to be African.

The majority in Africa are Africans and part of a historical complex which may be termed the 'African experience'. As such, all existing African knowledge articulate with African experience. It is therefore right to ask that all knowledge production by institutions of Higher Learning, link up with this notion of 'African experience'. They should be reflective and be informed by the culture, experiences, and aspirations of this majority on our continent. For Asante (cf. Seepe 1998: 64) this view recognises Africans as subjects of historical experiences rather than objects on the fringes of Europe. 'Experience' as primary unit of definition, then pays primary attention to 'data', and how one views data, and not categories derived from

ethnicity, race or even class. To Africanise universities means bringing change to African universities by making them relate to the African experience and the societal needs which have emanated and continues to emanate from such experience. For Seepe (1996: 35) this means making the African experience a source of ideas leading to the formation of institutional and public policy. This is true for both historically White and historically Black institutions. African ideas deriving from the African experience were not given an ear in these institutions equally and this needs to be changed.

More generally the Africanisation of universities means that they be grounded in African worldview and culture. Makgoba in his 2005 inaugural · Vice-Chancellor's address at the University of KwaZulu-Natal argues that:

> … African universities to be truly useful to Africa and the world have to be grounded in African communities and cultures. This does not mean that the African university is an insular or parochial entity …. African university is an institution that has the consciousness of an African identity from which it derives and celebrates its strengths and uses the strengths to its own comparative and competitive advantage on the international stage. The African university draws its inspiration from its environment, as an indigenous tree growing from a seed that is planted and nurtured in African soil (p. 15).

Given that the African university needs to represent the African experience, ideas and finds its resources from within African culture, it also has to play a pivotal humanising role both locally and internationally. It needs to help liberate African people as well as the international community, from inhuman and dehumanising ideas and practices. This should be one of the primary objectives of the Africanising university across the sciences, and needs to include mental decolonization from stereotypes and strictures from the past, and mental emancipation for socially and communally engaged scientific projects. Mekoa (2004: 16) argues that African universities should aim at providing Africans with ideas, methods and habits of mind with which they need to investigate their societies, to critically address everything which dehumanizes them and other people with whom they live and work.

The African university needs to be relevant and responsive to the needs of the African people from which it draws its identity. It needs to show respect and acknowledges the culture of the people it is serving. Given its

function as university, African universities need to imbue or permeate their clients and African communities with an African conscious science which will maximize the positive expression of fundamental humanity and ability to contribute to the growth and development of African communities of which the university is a member.

The main problem of African universities however, is that they have taken too much pride in maintaining themselves as copies of foreign institutions and systems, that they are not responsive to the needs and challenges of our continent, and that they show little or no regard for their own social milieu. African universities need to move away from Eurocentrism and move towards Africanisation. They should stop representing foreign erstwhile colonising powers' culture(s) even though they are constantly exposed to cultural neo-imperialism with no roots in African culture (cf. Mekoa 2004: 17). Ki-Zerbo (1990: 56) also shares the same sentiments when he says the African universities must not be a mere reflection of a foreign and strange light, but must be a flame which, lit from the inner recesses of the mind, is basically nurtured by the domestic hearth. Africanisation of universities is about turning the globe over so that we see all the possibilities of the world where Africa assumes a role of a subject rather than an object that is positioned at the margins. Presently, it can be argued, that the African universities continue to enhance individualism and an elitist westernised mentality. African students coming out of our universities hardly encourage communalism, which is a central African value (Msila 2004: 3).

Makgoba (1998: 50) states that African universities should avoid imitation of the 'great' nations (the so-called first world). African institutions should not be built through imitation. Universities in Africa should be trans-educating, trans-orienting, trans-socializing and harmoniz the various perceptions and paradigms in which the African community has its roots.

In addressing the concept Africanisation further, we also understand that it is not about simply having black faces in institutions. It is about the grounds for knowledge, about the epistemology, about objects of our intellectual inspiration. Africanisation and transformation are much more than change of structures of management, or change of the racial composition of both staff and students; it entails an interrogation of curricula and media of instruction and its relevance and appropriateness in addressing itself to continental objectives and societal demands. For this agenda to be

implemented, it is a basic requirement that the Africanisation of universities also means that these institutions not only show respect and acceptance of our culture, but are permeated with African cultural values. As such, the university is therefore, according to Yesufu, called upon to be

> ... committed to active participation in social transformation, economic modernization; training and upgrading of the total human resource of the nation. It should emphasize that which is immediately relevant and useful. The university should be the source of intellectual leadership. In manpower it should increasingly. involve itself in the more critical areas of the middle power, and should actively participate in the planning, organization, curriculum development and superintendence of institutions training such manpower (cf. Mekoa 2004:18).

It is not only the academic focus of the university that needs redress, but also the actual management and functioning of the university. On this level, equity, governance, access, affirmative action, and similar topics need to be addressed from within the Africanisation paradigm – African cultural values and how they impact on the Africanisation of the university in its totality. These two perspectives on Afrocentric education and the Africanisation of universities now raise the issue of the African Renaissance paradigm and how it articulates with the topic of this paper.

4. Africanisation and the African Renaissance

According to *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 'Renaissance' first indicated the revival of art and letters under influence of classical models in fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe. The noun 'renaissance' means rebirth and/ or renewal, and the concept of renaissance was first used by those who thought of the Middle Ages 'as a dark, trace-like period' from which, according to Palmer (cf. Magubane 1999: 13) 'the human spirit had been awakened'. It was called a rebirth in the belief that fifteenth century Europe, after a long interruption, took up and resumed the 'civilization' of the Greco-Romans. Simultaneously, the Middle Ages began to be thought of as in the 'middle', i.e. between the glory of Greco-Roman civilization and the rise of modern Europea (Magubane 1999: 12).

Also signalling a new dawn, the 'African Renaissance' indicates a message of hope and simultaneously poses a challenge to the ingenuity and determination of Africans to meet its agenda (cf. Prah 1999: 43). Its central idea is that of a renewal, an awakening, a reawakening, a risorgimento for Africa. The origins of the idea go back to the nineteenth century and were born out of the spirit of westernized anti-colonialism and as a reaction to colonisation by the westernized African elite – freshly brought into the international capitalist order during the era of free trade which followed the end of slavery. The 1868 Fanti Confederacy nationalists are generally regarded as the earliest representatives of this viewpoint in Africa.

The term 'renaissance' has been appropriated in Africa because it captures processes of rebirth, revival, re-invigoration, re-animation, revivification, resurgence, reclamation, recovery, restoration, etc. Because of its fluidity the term refers to many human activities and areas of human life (Roscoe 1998: 67). Flowing from these, South African President Thabo Mbeki also used this term to capture the complex of challenges facing the African continent and its people(s). Whatever the divisions amongst Africa's peoples, the challenge is posed to all equally to collectively make constructive contributions to Africa's rebirth, its peace, prosperity and respect for its people(s). It needs to address all derogatory language used by fellow Africans with regard to one another; redress the effects of underdevelopment and miseducation; change material living conditions from abject poverty, exclusion, marginalization and ghettoised existence to self sufficiency and independence; change instability and uprootedness to stable societies; change living conditions from insecurity to security; and move from being consumers of material goods and knowledge, to owners of production and producers of knowledge. For this to happen, Africans need to redefine their African-ness, through hard work and committedness to our people and continent. Africans need to believe in themselves and their potential. African universities need to transform and transcend the negativity of our unfortunate educational and social legacy, draw on our own African ontology and epistemology, and play a central role on the continent for this to come about. There is no shame in this, because as Ntuli (1999: 185) says,

> ... if Africa was perfect would she need the renaissance? If Europe did not have a third of its population die of Black Plague and the

> church being so corrupt would Europe have needed a renaissance? It is precisely because things are not right in Africa that we need to find solutions to our problems.

To meet the challenges the African Renaissance poses, the contribution of the Africanisation of the universities in Africa means at least five things: 1) a redefining of African-ness; 2) a recollection of the roots of knowledge production; 3) the adaptation of curricula to African needs and aspirations; 4) the fostering of indigenous languages as media of instruction; and 5) the responsiveness of education to African culture.

4.1. Redefining African-ness

According to Mamdani (1999: 128) the concept Africa is not African in its origin. He points out that,

> ... Africa, in the beginning, was a name Romans gave to their province in North Africa. Africa then was Africa north of Sahara. It is from the Romans that the Arabs took the name 'Ifriqiya'. The Arab name for Africa south of the Sahara was 'Bilad-as-Sudan', the land of the black people.

This is an indication that the meaning of the concept 'Africa' is foreign and not the making of Africans themselves. Further, during the centuries of slavery, it was referred to negatively, as the part of the continent ravaged by slavery. This indicates that as is the case with any name, 'Africa' too is fluid and dynamic. More substantially, the appropriation of this name means that within the context of the African renaissance, the notion of African or Africanness, is still in the making. Chinua Achebe spoke about the difficulties of defining the 'African Identity' and then continues to say,

> African identity is still in the making. There isn't a final identity that is African. However, at the same time, there is an identity coming into existence. And it has a certain context and a certain meaning ... Africa means something to some people (cf. Makgoba 2005:13).

Africanness is then primarily defined by its dynamism – it is something in the process of developing and becoming, and is dynamic and

vibrant, and not fixed or static. It is not overdetermined by geo-political, socio-economic, ethnic or cultural definition. Rather, given the history of the continent and the conditions and challenges its people(s) face today, 'African-ness' implies a positioning in discursive spaces and practices of power and knowledge relations which are fluid. The recognition of the fluidity of such definition, opens the way for Africans to take hold of their own destiny in order to shape it according to their own socio-political dynamics. Similarly, Mahlomaholo (2004: 4) says that African-ness is not about biology or anatomy – these are nothing but *markers* that people have used to single out and target people for oppression, exclusion and marginalization. African-ness just like the concept Blackness exists more in people's minds than in reality (Mahlomaholo 2004: 5). The colonial system and apartheid had to find ways that would justify the marginalization, oppression, exploitation and social degradation of people and they used negatively charged cultural constructions to achieve this goal.

As part of a counter-discursive strategy, African-ness and Blackness similarly refer to positions from which people can assert themselves. Such positions, because of history and the experiences that this category of humanity (people) have had (and still have), cannot be denied, because to some extent it has come to define who they are, and it is an important position from which their human rights, privileges and interests can (and should) be argued, advocated and struggled for (Mahlomaholo 1998: 45). This implies having a particular state of mind, and comprises of individuals who have been victims of colonization, disempowerment and marginalization and who have been thrown into social dustbins by dominant western ideologies. There is a need to re-invest African-ness or Blackness with beauty as espoused by African intelligentsia such as Marcus Garvey, William DuBois, Steve Biko, Mwalima Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah and many others who see it as a symbol of beauty. These African intelligentsia have constantly alluded to an expected resurgence of Africa, spoke of an awakened Africa which will not go back to sleep. They conceptualized it as the emergence of the African personality and offered pan-Africanist solutions.

4.2. Knowledge Production: The Pre-colonial Era

A rebirth· means the re-constituting of that which has decayed or disintegrated. This is especially true of our institutions of learning. Despite

claims by colonial scholars and historians that universities are not African but were transplanted on this continent as a central feature of Western or the dominant tradition of education, it has been proven beyond any reasonable doubt that Africa has actually been the birth place of civilization (cf. Lebakeng 2003: 5). It may be true that Euro-centric history books have emptied Africa of any contribution to the international human civilization, but the truth remains that this is where civilization was born but also where the very significant institutions of learning were based.

Ki-Zerbo (1990: 15) reminds us about the fact that well before other continents, Africa was a producer of knowledge and of teaching systems:

> ... it is forgotten, all too often, that Africa was the first continent to ... institute a school system. Thousands of years before the Greek letters alpha and beta, roots of the word alphabet, were invented, and before the use of the Latin word schola, from which the word schools derives, the scribes of ancient Egypt wrote, read, administered, philosophized using papyrus.

The university tradition in Africa predates colonization and any institution of learning in the world (cf. Labakeng 2003: 8). The existence of educational institutions and traditions in pre-colonial Africa, particularly the universities of Djenne, Timbouctou, Djami al-Karawiyyin in Fez and al-Azhar in Cairo and the great university of Alexandria and universities of Northern Sahel – Egypt – represent examples of a long tradition of higher education that historically preceded the colonization of the continent (cf. Lebakeng 2003: 8). Nowhere in the world has sophisticated mathematical computation produced the mammoth pyramids we witness in Africa. Even great ancient trade and business ventures existed in Africa. After all, how does one explain the great ruins of Great Zimbabwe, the remains of Thulamela and Mapungubwe found in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces? There is a new orientation in academia that has begun to recognize the contribution of experiential knowledge that does not necessarily derive from Europe. This orientation has produced a growing research industry in ethno-mathematics, ethno-botany and ethno-chemistry. For instance, ethno-mathematics studied the mathematical patterns embedded in murals of the Ndebele homes in Mpumalanga, and the notion of a circle embedded in the huts in Southern

Africa. Research interests in local herbs which have been used from time immemorial to cure certain illnesses, some of which have stood the test of scientific and medical scrutiny, continue to grow (Seepe 1998: 64). It is not the intention of this paper to go back into history and extol evidence to show how powerful and great Africa has been. It only attempts to outline some facts and encourage the African intelligentsia to not discount the greatness of Africa's past. The recognition of this fact is important for a focus on the future and the African Renaissance. The African intelligentsia need to move away from dependency syndromes, recognise the universal significance of knowledge production on the African continent, and take up the challenge to produce knowledge(s) and technologies which are relevant to our people and not rely on others and knowledge(s) and technologies from elsewhere.

4.3. Transforming Curricula

Eurocentric and dominant western discourses have monopolized the parameters for the interpretation of realities. This domination was secured by marginalizing whatever has not been determined by the Northern hemisphere or western conquest, and by domesticating other subject positions as historically obsolete, irrational, pre-modern, non-modern, non-literate, un-democratic etc. (cf. Odora-Hoppers 2000: 7).

The dominant discourse has continued to teach African people that everything indigenous and African is posited as being most pitiful, despicable, and embarrassing and should be the object of consistent fumigation and cosmological cleansing with western tools (Odora-Hoppers 2000: 10). This is quite evident in African Universities where the spontaneous process of symbolic fumigation, cosmological cleansing and mandated acculturation begins with the first academic year in the university. It can be seen in the nature of curricula and the medium of instruction. African academics and students unconsciously participate in a process of subjugating local indigenous values, by starting a process of preparing students in a one-way conveyer belt system that moves outwards, and westwards on a journey of no return (Odora-Hoppers 2000: 14). To counter this dynamics, the Africanisation of curricula is of central importance.

Africanising our universities in broad terms is about changing our curricula, the centre in which teaching and learning takes place and/ or organized. It is true that some intellectuals do not support this idea, holding

that knowledge is not culture and context relative. However, we need to recognise that animals are not skinned in the same way all over the world, and also not for the same purposes.

Most modules and/ or academic programmes (such as education, science, law, psychology, sociology, political science, law) in different disciplines at African universities are not anchored in or linked to African cultures and realities. The disciplinary problematisations, classifications, examples, illustrations, comparisons, models, social systems and structures, institutions, interpretations and misinterpretations, mistakes and solutions all come from Western realities and socio-cultural constructs. African students are trained in these systems but expected to work and follow a career on African soil. African culture is often only brought up in passing. It is presented as devoid of any epistemological content. This practice perpetuates the myths of either European superiority or its purported valour.

Now that African intelligentsia and Higher Edcuation institutions are on the move to self-realization, their voices can now invoke issues of intellectual justice, reciprocal valorisation of knowledge systems and strategies for linking epistemology with African cultural and societal realities. In order to provide this drive with more pace, African intelligentsia need to deconstruct the dominant discourses and their practices embedded in curricula and prescribed materials and replace these with African-focused content and values. As Mazrui (1998: 19) shows, this will lead to a more humane and tolerant society than the one enforced on Africa and into which African students are still being groomed. As he says, African scholarship should be protected, saved and not be trampled upon because it does not have the greed and killer instincts of Europe. African scholars are beginning to make a case that no system – whether legal or political for example – into which students are trained can claim to establish itself as a social system and work effectively and efficiently if it is not founded on the fundamental cultural rhythms of the masses of the continent (cf. Odora-Hoppers 2000: 23).

4.4. Media of Instruction

It is indeed difficult for African universities to enter the global scientific dialogue on equal terms with scientists from elsewhere, because during colonization – which had apartheid crystallize in its wake in South Africa – Africans were made to believe that the only scientific language is English

(and later Afrikaans). These were the dominant languages and used in courts, universities and other public institutions while other African languages were marginalized. The development of the indigenous languages as scientific languages addressing local realities has been sidelined, which in turn means that scientific discourse engaging these realities did not come into being. Central to the African Renaissance, is that this historical accident be rectified. This move will assist in eradicating and demystifying the thinking that being educated in language other than English retards one's intellectual development. Kwesi Prah reflected as follows on this subject:

> ... the use of French or English in the elementary school is but a destruction of the African mind because these fragile minds are impressionable ... when you impose a foreign language as a language of culture, you are systematically destroying them ... the use of a given language leads you to assimilate at the same time the culture and the vision of life of those whose language you have borrowed .... the problem we face here is that through the colonial encounter Africans in most areas of human activity have acquired a syndrome of inferiority. The language problem and dependency on colonial languages is a reflection of this (Prah 1998: 4-5).

According to Vilakazi (1998: 72) European languages became dominant in their areas of influence because they 'have had to develop new concepts, words, and flexibility, in order to be the means of communication for industrialization and scientific revolution'. The languages of the colonised were marginalised at the expense of the developing of the colonising languages. For instance in South Africa, Afrikaans was developed to be used in education, medicine, law and many other disciplines and was promoted as a second dominant language during the apartheid era, using massive state resources to achieve this objective.

Promotion of indigenous languages as media of instruction (teaching *in*, and not about) appears to be an absolute necessity for the recovery and revalorization of African knowledge and culture. The fact that this question raises a Pandora's Box of technical linguistic problems notwithstanding, it is clear that colonial history has considerably distorted the whole field of indigenous languages. The work of scholars like Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) and Kwesi Prah (1994; 1995) not only points to the urgency of the issue but

also to a variety of ways in which the problem can be addressed. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in *Writers in Politics*, raises this issue by saying,

> ... who is the audience targeted by African writers when they write in languages such as French, English and Portuguese? ... if a Kenyan writer wants to speak to peasants and workers of any one Kenyan community, then s/he should speak in a language they speak and understand. If on the other hand one wants to communicate with Europeans and all those who speak European languages, then s/he should use English, French, Portuguese, Greek, German, Italian and Spanish (wa Thiong'o 1986: 27).

The Language issue in education is very central, because it is through language that people understand culture, produce knowledge and interact with the world. The mastery of language in which any discipline is taught is the perquisite to the mastery of subject matter. The problem for non-English speakers, in institutions of learning in which English is the language of instruction, seems to be that such teaching and learning does not build upon the linguistic and conceptual resources derived from one's lived experience or home environment, but seeks, as it were, to implant linguistic and conceptual apparatuses from somewhere else, and as such cultivating a learner who is alienated from his or her home environment and the challenges the local context faces (Vilakazi 1998: 84).

These perspectives on the language issue show the interrelatedness of language, culture and knowledge production and possession, interactiveness, meaning-making and relevance. Moreover, they follow the view that language and knowledge development always originates, and moves from the local to the universal, thus meaning African indigenous languages are as vital to our own development as European languages are and have been for Europeans.

It is true that knowledge is a universal heritage and a universal resource. It is also true that the development of the European languages matched the diverse and varied developments in knowledge. However, the various forms of underdevelopment, marginalisation and suppression colonised societies suffered is equally true. In order to turn this tide, the scientific development of African languages is of absolute necessity. It will make both universal and localised knowledges more widely accessible and

also provides African people with greater opportunities to be recognised for their contributions to knowledge production.

4.5. Education Responding to African Culture

Intelligentsia in Africa are imbued with *xenophilia*, having to survive by denying their identities. It is perhaps understandable that indigenous education can be swept under the carpet as 'static' , 'restricted', 'inadequate', 'unscientific' or even 'undemocratic'. None of these proclamations can, however, cover up the sheer monstrosity one sees in the education system of the type in vogue today in which education is divorced from African values and norms, and is unfamiliar with, and alienated from the socio-cultural environment of the great majority of its clients (Odora-Hoppers 2000: 30). The values and norms embedded in, and cultivated through any education system should suit or meet the cultural needs of a particular society. Culture includes education, which, put in the simplest terms, is the learning process in which the mind, the body and the spirit grow up and mature. Culture helps us to master our environment and live creative lives. Education is a carrier of culture while it is itself part of culture (Mphahlele 2002: 91). If education play its cultural role, the kind of moral society a particular community wants can be realised. It is the vehicle through which a society can ensure its continuation and the creation of the kind of community its wants. Mphahlele further asserts that,

> ... African culture can provide this moral force if we listen to voices that echo the wisdom of our African ancestors. Knowing who we are, where we have come from and what has happened to us as a result of the dominant discourse that determines our lives, this will help us map out our cultural destiny (Mphahlele 2002:91).

University Africanising processes, will give a sense of purpose and destiny.

It should be understood that African culture is not a museum specimen. It is a dynamic feature of our lives. Dynamism means that African culture is not static, ever changing and evolving. This should be the nature of African universities too, both in their continuously becoming more relevant to the African continent, and excluding dominant European discourses. It is only Africans who can both draw on indigenous cultural values for society's

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reinvigoration, as well as decolonize our institutions, to liberate them so that we can be able to determine the quality of our emancipation with moral strength derived from the freedom of our academia, and our intelligence (Mphahlele 2002: 101).

5. African Intellectuals: Are We Expatriates in our Own African Institutions?

When lost, it's better to return to a familiar point before
rushing on (African proverb).

Quoting the famous African proverb above, Ki-Zerbo (1990: 48) urgently calls on African Intellectuals to design an education that is *of* Africa and *for* Africa. He notes how the anachronistic system of colonial epistemology has replaced African education with an absolutely different epistemology designed to serve the overall aim of the subjugation of the African continent to a European dominant and dominated discourse.

Captured in the heading of this section is the metaphor of exile. To be exiled is one of the saddest fates that can befall a person. It does not only signify geographical, social and cultural displacement, but may also mean feelings of never being at home, being not accepted in new circumstances, being an outsider, being always at odds with the environment, inconsolable about a lost past, and bitter about the present and the future. Exile here, indicates restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others in meaning making (cf. Said 1996: 47).

If universities are not Africanised, if they do not represent African culture, values and aspirations, if they are conduits of foreign influence, then they play an exiling role. Its intellectuals become the exiling agents, and its students, the exiles as they are being alienated from their own geographical, social and cultural locations. The irony is that even though these people still live and exist in their own areas, they are being alienated through the university system. In this case, to be exiled or to have experiences similar to that of an exile, does not have to mean that one is totally cut off, isolated, and hopelessly separated from one's place of origin. One is immersed in these experiences without even the consolation of knowing that what you have left behind is, in a sense, still there. African intelligentsia know what is

needed in African institutions of learning, however, they do not engage this task. An African intellectual who considers him/ herself to be part of a more general condition affecting the displaced African masses and who attempts to address this issue is therefore likely to be a source not of acculturation and adjustment, but rather of volatility and instability, recruiting others to join him/her in the world of the unknown. It is in this situation, that African universities have to go back to their African cultural roots.

6. Conclusion

The theorization that this paper is contesting is that African universities are 'static' or predestined to assume a colonised disposition. It also focused its outline of items to be addressed on the local realities. If colonisation means the almost literal removal from history (cf. Odora-Hoppers 2000: 5), the genealogical death of the defeated lineage and institutionalized marginalisation of the alienated person (Miller 1991:16), then the Africanisation of the university signals the institutionalized reintegration of the institution and its agents into history and the lineage system of our continent.

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