Is the Decolonization of the South African University Curriculum Possible in a Neoliberal Culture?

Oscar Koopman

Abstract

The ascendency of neoliberalism in South Africa not only permeated the rhythms of every aspect of human life – political, economic, social and cultural – but also powerfully affected the landscape of higher education. Consequently, the higher education sector has become interwoven with complex neoliberal ideals and core principles that favour the subjectivity of a global entrepreneurial class. Given the immense impact of these ideals on the university landscape – curriculum in particular – this paper is an attempt to show, 1) what is the relationship between neoliberalism and decolonization? And, 2) how this super complex relationship (between neoliberalism and decolonization) shapes/influences the decolonization project. To this end the paper first provides a brief explanation of what is meant by the term 'decolonisation' of the university curriculum. Secondly, a brief explanation of the core ideals and principles of neoliberalism is provided. Thirdly, the paper discusses how these core ideals and principles, as a system of power, permeates the South African university curricula promoting a Westernised academic culture. Finally, the paper explains why decolonisation is important and offers some ideas on how to decolonise the curriculum landscape, despite the vice of neoliberal ideals.

Keywords: Neoliberalism, Decolonisation, Higher Education, University Curriculum, #FeesMustFall

Introduction

On 9 March 2015 Chumani Maxwele, a student at the University of the Cape Town (UCT), smeared the surface of the Rhodes statue with human waste, an act which marked the start of a new era in higher education in post-apartheid South Africa. Murris (2016) reports that Maxwele's action instilled a sense of urgency into post-apartheid transformation and the decolonisation of the university curriculum, which centres on Western epistemologies. A direct consequence of Maxwele's action, as students protested across the country in 2015 and 2016, was the #FeesMustFall movement and the intensification of demands for a decolonised curriculum, which led to a nationwide shutdown of all universities across the country[1].

At national level decisions were taken to transform and decolonise the university landscape, such as President Zuma's announcement of free higher education for the poor in 2017 and the Minister of Higher Education Blade Nzimande's response that the university curriculum must be decolonised. In the Western Cape we witnessed the appointment of a central curriculum committee to coordinate the decolonisation of the university at UCT, and an all-day colloquium on decoloniality at the University of the Western Cape in May 2017 (Le Grange 2017). In other provinces across the country universities hosted various panel discussions on these topics. Other discussions took place at national conferences such as the Southern African Educational Research Association on how to decolonise the curriculum, and two special issues of a local journal, the *Journal of Education*, were published in search of new ideas of how to decolonise the university curriculum.

Yet despite all these initiatives, the legacy of colonial education with its concomitant Western epistemological discourses, remains in evidence in our universities. Furthermore, university curricula continue to advance and promote the practices and demands associated with neoliberalism. Key among these demands is the focus on 'higher-level skills' (human capital) and 'problem-solving' research (intellectual capital) (DHET 1997; 2013), which are all directly linked to the objectives of a specific economic strategy (DHET 2012). In 2008 the World Bank linked growth and development in Africa to the quality of its university graduates. Thus, for universities to remain relevant

---

[1] For full details of the fees must fall movement and the call for a decolonised curriculum, see Chetty and Knauss (2016); Le Grange (2016); and Postma (2016).

abroad, they need to be competitive within the rules imposed by a global knowledge economy. This global knowledge economy advances global capitalism as a function of a market economy (Castells 2010). According to Bourdieu (1998), global capitalism not only restructures and rearranges human social relations, but is also governed by the principles and practices of neoliberalism (discussed in detail later in the paper). Giroux and Giroux (2004) argue that neoliberalism subordinates the needs of society to the market and reduces education to job training. If this is the case, this brings me to the aim of this paper which is an attempt to answer the following research questions:

(i) What is the overarching relationship between neoliberalism and decolonization in South Africa? and

(ii) How does this super complex relationship (between neoliberalism and decolonization) shapes/influences the decolonization project?

In what follows the paper first provides a brief account of what is meant by the term 'decolonisation'. Second, a concise history of the origin of neoliberalism is outlined. Third, the paper discusses how neoliberal ideals, as a system of power, have cascaded into university curricula and how Westernised academic subcultures continue to dominate education in South Africa. Finally, I offer some ideas, on how the university curriculum can be decolonized.

What does a 'decolonised curriculum' Mean?

The word 'curriculum' has its origin in the Latin for 'a course, or path, of life (curriculum vitae)' (Doll 2008: 190). This term was first invoked by John Calvin in the mid-1500s (Doll 2008: 190). After its inception the word 'curriculum' was always associated with a Protestant culture and a bourgeois, commercial or capitalist ideology. Doll (2008) points out that in the early 17th century the University of Glasgow in Scotland and the University of Leiden in the Netherlands adopted this notion of curriculum for their (strongly Protestant) Bachelor degree programmes. Although the Puritans in England and the Americas welcomed this idea of curriculum, it was vehemently critiqued by many scholars as being too narrowly set, as its main focus was on textbook knowledge. In their view this notion of curriculum was seen as being 'juvenile' and was considered as fit only for youngsters in their early teens not

for universities. Despite this critique of curriculum, Hamilton (2003) notes that this bourgeois and commercial notion of curriculum, with its narrow set of instructional methods, developed during the later 1500s, provides the underlying paradigms for modern schooling.

In 20th century the term 'curriculum' evolved as a grand narrative in universities to encompass an array of philosophical views that served as foundations for the way that knowledge should be methodically arranged, structured and delivered. The ideas of various North American curriculum scholars such John Dewey (1910), Franklin Bobbit (1918), Frank Taylor (1911) and Ralph Tyler (1949) permeated curricula across the world, including Africa and specifically South Africa. These scholars conceptualised the technical-rational or factory model (very similar to the 1500s), which meant that curricula were designed with capitalist agendas in mind to create an effective scientific society in America. Le Grange (2016) contends that all post-apartheid South African curricula for both school and university are all designed on these Tylerian principles. The main problems with this design of curriculum are twofold. *First*, the main focus is on mode 1 knowledge, which Gibbons, Limogens, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott and Trow (1994) describe as pure, disciplinary, homogenous, expert-led, supply-driven, hierarchical, peer-reviewed and exclusively university-based. According to Shay (2014) mode 1 knowledge prepares students for the workplace and not for 'educating the mind' (p. 139). In this system little regard is given to the lived-world experiences and the cultural worldview presuppositions of students. In other words, in most instances the knowledge is foreign or alien to the students (Aikenhead 1996; Ogunniyi 1988). *Second*, the curriculum is too prescriptive, content heavy, rigid, dogmatic, technical and theoretical in nature (Le Grange 2017). According to Pinar (2004; 2015) such knowledge is politically motiva-ted, psychosocial, and fundamentally intends to intellectually reconstruct the mindset of the student (self) and society in general.

Consequently, many African scholars like Etieyibo (2016), Makgoba and Seepe (2004), Le Grange (2016) and Ogunniyi (1988) argue for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in the university curriculum, which represents a form of decoloniality. But what is meant by the term decolonisation? Le Grange argues that decolonisation means to 'Africanise' the curriculum. This means the inclusion of a body of knowledge that is underpinned by an African philosophical thinking and social practices that have evolved for thousands of years. He emphasises the point that Western

science should not be discounted or completely removed from the curriculum, but infused with indigenous knowledge. According to Ethieyibo (2016: 405), decolonisation is the adoption, appropriation and incorporation of salient features or characteristics, experiences, practices, beliefs, values and modes of the African way of life that are representative and distinctive of Sub-Saharan black people. Ethieyibo is in agreement with Le Grange when he points out that instead of following a radical approach to decolonisation – i.e. the total exclusion of Western knowledge from the curriculum – a more moderate view should be adopted; Western and indigenous knowledge should be taught as complementary bodies of knowledge. This means a shift from mode 1 knowledge to mode 2 knowledge – applied, problem-centred, trans-disciplinary, heterogeneous and hybrid knowledge (Gibbons *et al.* 1994) could help to develop and nurture new ideas derived from experience. According to Ogunniyi (1988), if we continue to ignore these African insights, ideas and values in our universities, we become complicit with epistemic injustice. This raises the question: Are these suggestions for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge possible, given the powerful stronghold that neoliberalism has on universities? I will start to answer this question by first giving a concise overview of the core ideals and principles of neoliberalism.

A Brief History of the Rise of the Neoliberal Agenda

According to Stager and Roy (2010) the first systemic development of neoliberal economic principles was formulated by the Mont Perlerin Society (MPS). They aver that this society was founded by Friederich August von Hayek in 1947, an influential 20th century economist and member of the Austrian movement of economics. The MPS was made up of many individuals such as Hayek who believed in the 'practice of a free society' by studying the operationalisation and virtues of a 'market-orientated economic system' (Stager and Roy 2010: 16). Hayek's economic theory was anchored in the idea of 'undistorted price mechanisms' that were believed to serve to share and synchronise local and personal knowledge. This idea automatically allowed individual members of society to achieve diverse ends without state interference. Although the MPS's major focus was on material production, it projected itself as a profoundly political and moral force that shaped all aspects of a free and open society. Hayek's ideas of neoliberalism attracted the attention of Milton Friedman, who was an economics professor at Chicago

University and also the winner of the 1976 Noble Prize for Economics. Friedman further refined Hayek's economic theories and principles, and successfully guided neoliberalism from being a minority view in the 1950s to becoming the ruling economic orthodoxy in the 1990s.

Cornell (2013) reports that neoliberalism gained political prominence in 1973 under the dictatorship of the Chilean President General Augusto Pinochet, who militantly took over power through a CIA-supported coup. Pinochet's government replaced the previous government's agenda of democratisation and state-led industrialisation with a new strategy of economic development based on corporations pursuing comparative advantage within the world capitalist agenda. This shift of governance provided a gateway to the world markets and the privatising of the ownership of the country's social assets. This economic strategy was devised by a group of economist businessman who received their training at the University of Chicago under the watchful eye of Friedman. They were considered the first politico-economic entrepreneurs who became indispensable and powerful across the world. Other Latin American regimes, as well as developing countries such as Turkey and post-apartheid South Africa, soon followed in their footsteps and turned towards neoliberalism. Stager and Roy (2010) point out that to give neoliberalism more urgency the Reagan regime in the West and the new right regime of Thatcher in the UK strategically influenced the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to swing in favour of a neoliberal agenda and subsequently introduce structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). These SAPs quickly proved to be highly controversial. This was the start of a global shift towards deregulated markets associated with a search for comparative advantage in international trade. A major consequence of this shift was the de-industrialisation of formerly industrialised countries as manufacturing moved rapidly to low-wage regimes in East Asia such as China. The process of de-industrialisation made Hayek's ideas the gospel of modern free traders. Stager and Roy (2010) explain:

> Free trade amounted to a win-win situation for all trading partners involved because it allowed each country to specialise in the production of those commodities for which it had a comparative advantage. For example, if Italy could produce wine more cheaply than England, and England could produce cloth more cheaply than Italy, then both countries would benefit from specialisation and trade ... (p.5).

This statement signifies that neoliberal governments subscribed to a common set of ideological and political principles aimed at a worldwide spread of an economic model emphasising free markets and free trade. This economic model intensified and gained more prominence in the 1980s when the world's economic and political agenda was built and set around this neoliberal model.

From a different angle, Giroux and Giroux (2004) contend that neoliberalism is built on three intertwined features:

(i)   ideology;
(ii) a mode of governance; and
(iii) a policy package, which has a direct impact on tertiary institutional cultures.

Because of space constraints, this paper will briefly discuss only ideologies and governance of tertiary institutions. Ideologies are systems of widely shared ideas and patterned beliefs that are accepted as 'truth' by significant societies. In other words, ideologies organise a person's core beliefs and ideas that lead them to act in certain ways. The codifiers of such beliefs and ideas are global powers, which include managers and executors of large transnational corporations, corporate lobbyists and influential journalists.

The second dimension is based on Foucault's 'governmentalities', which promote certain forms and modes of governance based on power relations. 'Governmentality' presents a genealogy of the question of government and explains how governments establish successful social control over their citizens (Foucault 1991: 91). In his essay titled 'Govermentality' Foucault alludes to the task of government in its role of establishing continuity in both an upwards and downwards direction in the ruling of its citizens. Foucault writes: 'This downward line, which transmits to individual behaviour and the running of the state, is just at this time beginning to be called police …' (1991: 91). Thus, Foucault is clearly making the connection between the relationship of self and governing authorities.

The two manifestations of 'ideology' and 'mode of governance' are clearly visible in the university landscapes across the world, placing universities heavily under the sway of neoliberalism. Firstly the Foucauldian notion of 'governmentality', intrusive 'policing' and 'control of the subject' are felt by many staff members and students at various institutions across the world. This is done through performance management protocols designed to

develop a culture of performativity and efficiency geared towards meeting measurable objectives. Another key feature of neoliberalism is instrumenttality, in ensuring that prescriptive curricula and policy documents that govern higher education are adhered to through continuous testing. Managerialism (decision making by VCs, Deans and HODs) acts as codifiers ensuring that state-designed programmes for 'high knowledge and skills' are implemented. In other words, neoliberalism is not only concerned with governmentality (i.e. the work of governing others), but also with what Foucault refers to as the 'technologisation' of the self, which is a manifestation of dominant *ideologies*. According to Peters (2005), to Foucault the word 'governmentality' means 'mentality of rule' as a means to signify the emergence of a distinctive mentality of rule or ideological disposition that he alleged became the basis for modern liberal politics.

Other manifestations of neoliberalism are seen in the way students are now redefined as customers and university staff as 'human capital'. This shift encourages an entrepreneurial spirit. Funding mechanisms of power are structured through hierarchies and competition amongst universities for financial gain. This competitive nature has implications for attracting the best academics or experts in a particular field, which in turn has an impact on tuition fees. The opposite is also true in that some universities that struggle financially, have to make heavy budget cuts to faculties, which in turn force them to use cheap labour in which more part-time appointments are made and in some cases specialisation in certain disciplines is no longer a concern as the main objective is meeting profit margins irrespective of the consequences for student education. Also, the pressure placed on academics to publish or perish. In South Africa the situation is more complicated, as the accreditation system demands that academics publish in peer reviewed accredited journals. This raises the question of how neoliberal govermentality arose in South African universities.

The Rise of 'neoliberal governmentality' in South Africa

When the African National Congress (ANC) was unbanned in 1990, various education policy discourses were formulated to articulate the possibilities and limitations of educational change in South Africa (Christie 2006). Christie avers that the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) used the format of policy options to explore all the different possibilities of what an education

system that embraces the values of democracy should look like. This policy was maintained in the Implementation Plans for Education and Training, coordinated by the ANC's Education Desk and the Centre for Educational Policy Development. She notes that in the mid-1990s these policies came under scrutiny when education theorists and researchers began to question what had happened to the envisaged policy after the establishment of the new Government of National Unity (GNU) in 1994. The vision to shift to a 'People's Education' agenda of the 1980s was vehemently critiqued, as it did not constitute a coherent set of policies because it focused largely on the classroom. De Clercq (1997) pointed out that the proposed policy by the GNU was flawed in its conceptualisation of policy processes and cautioned that the new policies might not meet the ANC's objective of redress. She writes that 'these policies are in danger of creating conditions that will assist the privileged education sector to consolidate its advantages while making it difficult for the disadvantaged to address their problematic political realities' (De Clercq 1997: 127). Since then different policy themes have been explored by academics such as Motala and Pampallis (2001), Sayed and Jansen (2001), Chisholm, Motala and Vally (2003) through policy analysis of the policy processes and policy shifts as well as systemic changes in education in post-apartheid South Africa.

The final outcome in the analysis of educational policy processes was a shift in the ANC's vision for education in the 1980s and 1990s for the people of South Africa. Instead of following through with their vision as a 'Liberation Movement' for a 'People's Education', they shifted from notions of education for liberation to adopt neoliberalism after 1994. Commensurate with this shift was the adoption of a framework that promoted procedures, regulations and domains of knowledge. In changing its status from a banned 'terrorist' organisation to an elected government, the ANC wanted to show that it could think and act in a modern state. According to Christie (2006), the main objectives of the ANC were to build governmental capacity through addressing issues of population, the economy and security by engaging with particular technologies of practice and domains of knowledge. With this decision the ANC shifted its attention to the macro-economic arena in order to build confidence in the economy and to establish legitimacy and capacity as a leader on the African continent and a player in world affairs. The shift meant the adoption of practices and procedures that would favour neoliberal governmentality at the expense of core ethical African values and the develop-

ment of a strong African identity.

The official demise of the repressive apartheid system in 1994 resulted in a policy decision to implement neoliberal policies and practices in higher education. For example, *White Paper 1* on the Transformation of Higher Education (DHET 1997) argued for the restructuring of higher education (HE) to 'meet the needs of an increasingly technological economy with the capacity to participate in a rapidly changing *global context*'. Here the key phrase is the 'global context' in which graduates needs to be equipped with the required knowledge, skills and capabilities that they need to use and implement in a super-complex world that is constantly changing. This means universities move certain 'skills and capabilities' to the fore while other foundational 'skills' – such as critical thinking and self-directed learning – are increasingly marginalized'. Sixteen years later, this policy objective is substantiated by the Post-School White Paper (2013) and the National Development Plan (2013), which states that the two main objectives of the South African university are,

i)   to provide students with high level-skills for the labour market; and
ii) to be dominant producers of new knowledge.

The National Plan for Higher Education (2001) describes the main role of the university as,

(i)   human resource development;
(ii) high-level skills training; and
(iii) production, acquisition and application of new knowledge.

In other words South African universities frame their performative educational dis-course in terms of 'training for basic workplace skills' as well as 'student performance and competitiveness'. These policy objectives are the manifestation of an entire politics of higher education in which curriculum is built on neoliberal principles and subsequently views education in terms of 'efficiency protocols' (Au 2011). In other words these policy objectives form the basis of a 'so called' powerful and effective educational experience which frames the student body and university staff in terms of human capital within human capital theory (which I am not going to discuss as it goes beyond the scope of this article). In this paradigm, the emphasis is placed on bodily

performativity as a measure of effectiveness, and does not give students the space for critical thinking and self-directed learning, and to be playful partners in the knowledge construction process. This is because academics are under pressure to complete syllabi, which encourages them to neglect the foundational know-ledge that students require to master any subject. This, Giroux and Giroux (2004) argue, undermines the purpose of education. I will now turn to South Africa's involvement with BRICS, which further exacerbates the situation.

The Link between BRICS and South African Higher Education

The term BRIC was coined in 2001 by Goldman Sachs, a leading global invest-ment banking, securities and investment management firm. BRIC represents the much anticipated growing economic force of Brazil, Russia, India and China in the world over the next half a century. By 2007 these super-powers (BRIC) had exceeded Goldman Sachs' predications ahead of schedule with a combined world gross domestic product (GDP) weight of 15% versus an anticipated 10%. According to Martin Carnoy (2006), an economist from Stanford University, the sustained growth of the BRIC countries is directly depended on high-level human capital for the organisation and innovation required in today's (and tomorrow's) global information economy. This means the role of universities would be particularly important to the future of the BRIC economies. For full details see Carnoy's Report (2006) on why higher education policies are critical in achieving the BRIC goals and meeting the anticipated predictions.

In 2011, South Africa was granted full membership, ahead of countries such as Singapore, South Korea and Turkey, and the groups now became BRICS. One of the main focus areas of BRICS is the establishment of new enterprises. To do so, all these member countries embrace the notion of a 'knowledge economy' and adopt policies designed to encourage the development of venture capital industries in order to support economic innovations. For example, in China a decision was taken to develop high-tech industries as key drivers for the growth of an information-based economy. Consequently the Chinese government's main focus was on information technology (IT), biotechnologies, technologies of new materials and advanced manufacturing technologies. In Russia, Peters and Besley (2018) report, in

2014 Vladimir Putin made a key policy objective to move five universities into the top 100 of the world university rankings by 2020. This is because higher education and research systems are seen as the engine room of national economic strategies. Moreover, they state that Russia's strategy is to recruit talented scholars from both within China and abroad to build an 'innovation excellence culture' to,

(i)   enhance the level of research; and
(ii) to build a new type of university strategy 'think tank with core socialist values' (Peters & Besley 2018: 1075).

Giroux and Giroux (2004) echoes concern about such strategies and aver that when knowledge and the economy are so closely connected, higher education faces a crucial turning point as it is not only required to provide qualified personnel to fill high-level scientific, technical, professional and managerial positions, it is also expected to be the engine for the country's economic growth.

Thus the drive for high-level knowledge and high-level skills and for the advancement of an 'increasingly technological society' to participate in the global world is a response to the global demands made on BRICS. These goals for universities were set at the 6th BRICS Summit held in Fortaleza, Brazil in July 2014. While development cooperation policies and practices differ across BRICS, several areas of joint interest in higher education intersect. These are, briefly:

(i)   strengthening education systems for quality and equity;
(ii) promoting excellence in higher education; and
(iii) improvement of skills.

These goals were re-emphasised at the recently held BRICS young scientist summit in Johannesburg, South Africa in July 2018, for the establishment of the young scientist forum for the establishment of future co-operation between BRICS countries. This summit saw the introduction of the new innovator's award in which each country entered two scientists. These objectives imply that private interests trump social needs, and economic growth becomes more important than decolonisation or social justice.

As the BRICS discourse of neoliberalism leads to corporations becoming more deregulated, the government increasingly transforms the country into a business state, which in turn makes decolonisation even more difficult. Consequently, universities are hard pressed to respond to the neoliberal discourse successfully. McLaren (1998) argues that the global demands on governments result in the cannibalisation of the social sphere by the economy and the grand exploitation of Western modernity. In other words, the needs of the masses are no longer the predominant concern of governments. Thus it is undeniable that today the demands of a neoliberal agenda outweigh the needs of the masses which consequently makes the call for decolonization even more difficult. For example, over the last two decades the operation of the neoliberal discourse has been evident in South African universities: the weakening of unions; the role of the university as neoliberal machine; overloaded timetables and working hours; the appointment of more part-time academics; the 'publish or perish' rule, which means promotion is directly linked to publications; and overloaded curricula with a demand for high-level knowledge and high-level skills. Does this commercialisation of the higher education landscape make the decolonisation of the university curriculum an almost impossible task? Next I provide some ideas of how to decolonise a university curriculum that is held captive by a neoliberal system.

Ideas for the Decolonisation of the University

The design of a new curriculum – in this instance a decolonised curriculum – involves the restructuring of the entire educational space, which is constituted of:

(i) epistemological space (deep understanding of knowledge with an attitude of inquiry);
(ii) practical space (practice-based skills for purposive action); and
(iii) ontological space (personal capabilities and professional identity).

This raises the question of how we could design a new curriculum by shifting the focus from the 'economic good' to a 'public good'.

Epistemological Space

The late Wally Morrow (2009) invoked the term 'epistemological access' to describe what he considers to be the core purpose of universities. Simply put, the main function of universities should be to give students access to knowledge. Here access means gaining a route to 'epistemological values' in which students are introduced to and nurtured in forms of inquiry in the respective disciplines. In other words, to Morrow (2009) university training should not only be concerned with imposing disciplinary knowledge on students, but more with guiding them to understand the constitutive grammar of inquiry. Nurturing these epistemological values, Morrow (2009) argues, means lecturers become catalysts for innovation and growth. Such approaches to a curriculum will empower students to think critically. These values that promote critical thinking not only empower students to manipulate information and knowledge, but also to produce new configurations of their world. This means they no longer see the world through the tiny slice of disciplinary knowledge, but look beyond conventional knowledge paradigms to critique the world.

Epistemological access has its roots in ontology, because true understanding stems from knowledge that is experienced or lived through in some real world. This means knowledge is always about someone or about something. As evinced in the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962), a person's perceptive mindset (or perceptual field) is embedded in the lived world and embodied knowledge. Therefore phenomenological scholars argue that without lived experience there can be no vital knowledge. Knowledge generated outside of a person's lived world experience can be described as conceptual, and therefore has no concrete connectedness to the information. According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), a person's knowledge is always connected to his or her cultural, historical, social and environmental engagements with other human beings and objects in the world. Therefore all this knowledge (cultural, historical and social) has important implications for the way that different disciplines such as engineering, science, law, mathematics, geography, languages and so forth are understood. This means students draw from their localised reservoir of information to filter, interpret and understand the world. The following practical example provides some insight into how indigenous knowledge could give life to Morrow's idea of cultivating epistemological values.

In 2005, in an attempt to help the people of Malawi, the United Na-

tions International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) developed a plan to hand out mosquito nets to combat the spread of malaria (Munyai 2017). But instead of using the nets to cover themselves when sleeping, the Malawians used them for fishing. UNICEF believed that the most important need of the locals was to control the spread of malaria, whereas their most urgent need was for basic sustenance. UNICEF was not aware that most African communities sprinkle the urine of cows around their houses to fight off mosquitoes and that this can prevent the spread of malaria. In other words, to avoid such a misunderstanding, the main ideas this example illustrate are as follows:

(i)   UNICEF did not understand the cognitive architecture of the Malawian people that guides their actions and activities;

(ii) they had a preconceived idea of how the Malawian people are embodied; and

(iii) most importantly, understanding how a person's action can be guided in a perceiver-dependent world (Varela 1999).

This example also illustrates that a person's perceptual field (that is constituted by a combination of lived experience and embodied knowledge) cannot be ignored in the teaching and learning process.

In 2004 the South African Department of Science and Technology adopted a policy on indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) with the aim of promoting an African identity in the face of globalisation (IKS Policy, Chapter 5: 9). This policy unpacks the role of IKS in the economy and the contribution it can make. One of the main objectives of this policy, among others, is to involve academics and applied researchers to further develop new and innovative ideas and information in respect of IKS. Thus, to build on this body of knowledge what is needed is the establishment of new research communities that can document and report on the everyday experiences and realities of local peoples. These new research communities can develop and provide a more robust understanding of the perceptions and knowledge of local communities. The information that emerges from these dialogues and discussions can be used as a basis for the development of new courses and learning materials. Such an approach is at the heart of decolonisation. Instead of imposing only Western knowledge upon the students, indigenous knowledge should also be incorporated into curriculum development.

Practical and Ontological Space

When the main goal of a university, according to Morrow (2009), is to nurture students in ways of thinking critically, they learn to see who they are in relation to the world from their own perspectives. When students understand their role in relation to the world (ontology), they can challenge orthodoxies and dominant discourses of power through action. Here 'action' is not about finger pointing and being judgemental, but about creating a space for generating new and unique ways of being and becoming (practice-based skills and identity formation). Cultivating or nurturing such thinking should start with the lived world of the student. According to Patočka's (1998), 'the lived world' means the whole physical plenum of things and structures within which their bodies are submerged. Students need to understand, the 'unfree' parts of their existence, such as their cultural worldview presuppositions and strongly held African and other views, to critically engage with such dominant discourses. When students are trained to question these things (cultural and historical ways) they learn to understand their nature and their role in these different capacities. This means revisiting the question: What is it that stands between the body and its history? Thus, when lecturers promote such thinking, they nurture thinking that has the potential to transcend the world of the students beyond their historical, political, cultural and social perceptual boundaries, or what Maxine Greene calls 'perceptual landscapes' (1978: 103).

These landscapes open up avenues to cultural and historical memories that allow students to reflect on the depth and quality of their perceptions of themselves in the world. By so doing, they unconsciously find themselves in new learning spaces that allow them to become more creative and authentic, features which can only be nurtured through open engagement and dialogue. This is because as humans we are inchoate and our perceptions are always shifting. This space of learning could allow their imaginations to explore new ideas and discoveries. This is what I consider to be 'decolonisation': instead of making students imitate the professoriate, or to pass tests and examinations, they must be encouraged to use their intellectual engagement with the world through personal lived experiences to arrive at new understandings and perceptions of the world. When this happens, education becomes redefined as a process and not a product.

Conclusion

This study strove to develop a robust understanding of what is meant by the term 'decolonisation of the university curriculum' and the impact of neoliberalism on this process. *Firstly*, it is argued that neoliberalism as an economic ideology has not only become more utilitarian and vocational, but in the process undermines the academic project of training students how to think critically. *Secondly*, the tension between decolonisation and neoliberalism makes the higher education landscape a complex and messy affair, which is not a situation that can be resolved easily. Research over the last few decades has shown that most Africans are becoming more anti-Western and want to develop their own modern African knowledge systems that does not privilege Western epistemologies. In order to make any headway in higher education, this paper attempted to provide a better understanding of the higher education landscape and the contestations that have given rise to polarised discourses. Some suggestions were proposed about how the curriculum can be decolonised by addressing the epistemological, practical and ontological spaces occupied by students. It is argued that the role of the university should be to nurture students to develop ways to think critically. Such thinking has the potential to bring the student to a closer understanding of the self, which could in turn lead to new insights that could break down existing political orthodoxies and dominant discourses in their thinking. The fundamental objective of any curriculum, especially in a university, is to provide students with critical and self-directed learning epistemological skills, and expose them to knowledge and ideas that will make them critical and knowledgeable citizens.

References

Au, W. 2011. Teaching under the New Taylorism: High Stakes Testing and the Standardization of the 21st Century Curriculum, *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 43,1: 25 - 45.
https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2010.521261

Bobbit, J.F. 1918. *The Curriculum*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Bordieu, P. 1998. *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*. New York: The New Press.

Chetty, R. & C. Knause 2016. Why South African Universities are in the Grip of a Class Struggle. *Sunday Times.* http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/opinion/2016/01/13/why-South-Africa%E2%80%99s-universities-are-in-the-grip-of-a-class-struggle (Accessed on 23 August 2018.)

Chisholm, L., S. Motala & S. Vally 2003. *South African Education Policy Review, 1993 - 2000.* Johannesburg: Heinemann.

Carnoy, M. 2006. *Higher Education and Economic Development: India, China, and the 21st Century - Working Paper No. 297.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Center for International Development. http://scid.stanford.edu/pdf/SCID297.pdf (Accessed on 12 August 2018.)

Castells, M. 2010. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Volume 1: The Rise of the Network Society.* 2nd Edition. Oxford. Wiley Blackwell.

Christie, P. 2006. Changing Regimes: Governmentality and Education Policy in Post-apartheid South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development* 26: 373 - 381. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2005.09.006

Connel, R. 2013. The Neoliberal Cascade and Education: An Essay on the Market Agenda and its Consequences. *Critical Studies in Education* 54,2: 99 - 112. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2013.776990

Department of Higher Education and Training 1997. *White Paper 1 on the Transformation of Higher Education.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Higher Education and Training 2013. *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training.* Pretoria: South African Government.

Department of Higher Education and Training 2012. *National Development Plan.* Pretoria.

Dewey, J. 1910. *How we Think.* New York: D.C. Heath and Co. https://doi.org/10.1037/10903-000

Doll, W. 2008. Complexity and the Culture of Curriculum. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 40,1: 190 - 201. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2007.00404.x

Etieyibo, E. 2016. Why Ought the Philosophy Curriculum in Universities in Africa be Africanised. *South African Journal of Philosophy* 35, 4: 404-417. https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2016.1242208

de Clercq, F. 1997. Policy Intervention and Power Shift: An Evaluation of South Africa's Education Restructuring Policies. *Journal of Education* 12, 3: 127 - 146.
https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093970120302

Giroux, H. & S. Giroux 2004. *Take Back Higher Education: Race, Youth and the Crises of Democracy in the Post-civil Rights Era*. New York: Palgrave McMillan.
https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403982667

Foucault, M. 1991. Governmentality. In Rabinow, P. (ed.): *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Green. M. 1978. *Landscapes of Learning.* New York and London: Columbia University Press.

Hamilton, D. 2003. Instruction in the Making: Peter Ramus and the Beginnings of Modern Schooling. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association. Chicago.

IKS – Indigenous Knowledge Systems 2004. *Department of Science and Technology.* Pretoria: Republic of South Africa.

Le Grange, L. 2016. Decolonising the University Curriculum. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, 2: 1 - 12.
https://doi.org/10.20853/30-2-709

Makgoba, M. & S. Seepe 2004. Knowledge and Identity: An African Vision of Higher Education Transformation. In Seepe, S. (ed.): *Towards an African Identity of Higher Education*. Pretoria: Vista University and Skotaville Media.

Morrow, W. 2009. *Bounds of Democracy: Epistemological Access in Higher Education*. Cape Town: HSRC.

Munyai, K. 2017. How Learning Empathy can Help Build Better Community Projects for Africa. *Conversation Africa*. Available at:
http://theconversation.com/how-learning-empathy-can-help-build-better-community-projects-in-africa-75900

McLaren, P. 1998. Revolutionary Pedagogy in Post-Revolutionary Times: Rethinking the Political Economy of Critical Education. *Educational Theory* 48, 4: 431- 463.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1998.00431.x

Motala, E. & J. Pampallis 2001. *Education and Equity: The Impact of State Policies on South African Education*. Johannesburg: Heinemann.

Murris, K. 2016. Rhodes must Fall: A Post-humanist Orientation to Decolonizing Higher Education Institutions. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, 30: 274 - 294.
https://doi.org/10.20853/30-3-653

Ogunniyi, M.B. 1988. Adapting Western Science to Traditional African Culture. *International Journal of Science Education* 10: 1 - 9.
https://doi.org/10.1080/0950069880100101

Ogunniyi, M. B. 2007. Teachers' Stances and Practical Arguments Regarding a Science – Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Part 1. *International Journal of Science Education* 29, 8: 963 - 986.
https://doi.org/10.1080/09500690600931020

Peters, M. 2005. The New Prudentialism in Education: Actuarial Rationality and the Entrepeneurial Self. *Educational Theory* 55, 2: 267 - 282.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0013-2004.2005.00002.x

Peters, M. & T. Besley 2018. China's Double First-class University Strategy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory of Education* 50, 12: 1075 - 1079.
https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1438822

Postma, D. 2016. The Ethics of Becoming in a Pedagogy for Social Justice. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, 3: 310 - 328.
https://doi.org/10.20853/30-3-651

Patočka, J. 1998. *Body, Community, Language, World.* (Kohak, E. trans.). Chicago: Carus Publishing Company.

Pinar, W. 2004. *What is Curriculum Theory*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Sayed, Y. & J. Jansen (eds.). 2001. *Implementing Education Policies: The South African Experience*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Shay, S. 2014. Curriculum in Higher Education: Beyond False Choices. In Branett, R. & P. Gibbs (eds): *Thinking about Higher Education.* New York: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03254-2_10

Steger, M.B. & R. Roy 2010. *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford Press.
https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780199560516.001.0001

Taylor, F. 1911. *The Principles of Scientific Management.* New York: Harper and Brothers.

Tesar, M. 2013. Lessons of Subversion: Ethics and Creativity in Neoliberal Academia. In Peters, M. & T. Besley (eds.): *The Creative University.* Sense Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6209-245-7_9

Trani, E.P. & R.D. Holsworth 2010. *The Indispensable University: Higher Education, Economic Development and the Knowledge Economy*. UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.

Tyler, R. 1949. *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Varela, F. 1999. *Ethical Know-how: Action, Wisdom and Cognition*. Stanford California: Stanford University Press.

Oscar Koopman
Faculty of Education
Mowbray Campus
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Cape Town
koopmano@cput.ac.za